

Attitudes and Action in International Refugee Policy: Evidence from Australia

1. Introduction

Does invoking principles or obligations affect support for policy at home? This question is particularly relevant in the human rights arena, where domestic mechanisms play a crucial role in holding governments to account.¹ Activists have long understood this. Campaigns by human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as international organizations regularly center on making citizens aware of abuses, attempting to get them to think about these practices as unacceptable and in breach of accepted principles/duties, and mobilizing individuals to push for change.²

A growing experimental literature explores these and related questions, commonly finding that citizens are less willing to support policies breach international human rights law.³ A broader body of experimental work – on military intervention, trade policy, drone strikes, humanitarian intervention, and climate change – largely echoes these findings.⁴ This research sheds important light on how international law (IL) can be harnessed for more humane policy, but its heavy focus on legal frames is not consistent with the reality that abuse can typically be couched in a variety of ways. Additionally, this work focuses heavily on policy attitudes. Studies of whether (and why) individuals decide to *take action*

¹ Conrad and Ritter 2019; Dai 2013; Lupu 2013; Simmons 2009; von Stein 2016.

² Keck and Sikkink 1998; McEntire et al. 2015.

³ Ausderan 2014; Chaudoin 2014; Chilton 2014; Chilton and Versteeg 2016; Lupu and Wallace 2019; Wallace 2013, 2014. But see Cope and Crabtree 2020, 2021.

⁴ Chapman and Chaudoin 2020; Chaudoin 2014; Kreps and Wallace 2016; Kreps and Maxey 2018; Tingley and Tomz 2014, 2019; Tomz and Weeks 2021.

are relatively rare, even though many prominent theories of human rights law see this as a key link in the chain of framing and policy accountability.⁵

This article considers whether people respond differently to abuses if they are framed differently – as violating IL, being morally repugnant, or harming the country’s international reputation. This approach extends the existing literature on IL framing, and has practical implications for NGOs and other activists, who are undoubtedly as concerned with *which* message to send as they are with *whether* to send it. We investigate policy attitudes and (stated intention to take) action. This approach, too, has implications for activists, who would no doubt like to know whether their task lays chiefly in changing attitudes, or in converting existing attitudes to action.⁶

We examine these questions in the context of refugee policy, which has attracted limited focus in the experimental IR/IL literature, despite its high political salience in many countries. We focus on Australia’s ‘boat arrivals’ policy, which – while among advanced democracies’ most draconian – is not unique.⁷ Most legal scholars agree that it breaches key principles enshrined in international human rights law, most importantly protection regardless of method of arrival, detention, and treatment of children.⁸ These principles have important moral foundations, and underpin domestic concerns that the policy tarnishes Australia’s global reputation.⁹

Using a novel survey experiment on a nationally representative sample of Australians, we expose respondents to one of three experimental conditions (or a control) in which we

⁵ Conrad and Ritter 2019; Risse et al. 1999, 2013; Simmons 2009.

⁶ Miller et al. 2010.

⁷ Dehm and Walden 2018; McAdam 2013; McAdam and Chong 2014; UNHCHR 2018.

⁸ Chong and McAdam 2014; Schloenhardt and Craig 2015.

⁹ Allard and Whyte 2015; Amnesty International 2015; Carens 1992; Manne 2018.

hold the underlying breaches constant, but vary how the violations are framed. We make several key findings. First, framing current policy as a violation of IL, morally repugnant, or reputationally costly all reduce policy support. Second, the frames are not interchangeable in their impacts on attitudes. International legal frames have the strongest effects, generating significantly more attitudinal opposition than moral or reputational frames. Third, it is much harder to induce action than to change attitudes.

On the question of *whether* to frame, we find evidence of causal mediation for each frame vs. the control, but this does not explain much of the total difference in interest in mobilizing (which is generally very low). We also find that framing (vs. saying nothing at all) may invoke negative anti-mobilization reactions, and offer some tentative ideas why. On the question of *how* to frame, we find that couching policy in IL or moral terms results in similar willingness to take action. Both framing approaches invoke more willingness to mobilize than does highlighting international reputational costs, but for different reasons. Couching current policy in international legal, rather than reputational, terms makes people more interested in mobilizing largely because it changes attitudes about the policy itself. In contrast, calling attention to moral principles over reputation drives up willingness to take action chiefly through some other process(es) that is independent of attitudes. In both cases, it is also possible that reputational frames stir up unique anti-mobilization reactions.

2. Frames, Attitudes, and Action

Framing is the act of selecting some part of a perceived reality and making it more prominent, which in turn can influence whether targets notice a problem, how they make

sense of it, whether they remember it, and how they act on it.¹⁰ Scholars usually emphasize two components of framing: (1) selecting information and arguments about why a practice is good or bad; and (2) using established narratives, tropes, or images to shape how people understand what is at stake and weigh various considerations.¹¹ In practice, human rights campaigns rarely engage in one without the other. For instance, the anti-apartheid movement drew attention to the injustice of mobility restrictions and counter-insurgency tactics, while also encouraging the public to view these as racist and a violation of civil rights.¹² This is relevant in the design of our survey experiment (discussed later), which has elements of (1) and (2).

Four key points emerge from existing studies on framing effects, human rights, and mobilization. First, frames seldom exist in a vacuum where only one message is available. Instead, there are usually a variety of ways to frame the same human rights problem, even for actors with the same end policy goal.¹³ Second, changing peoples' opinions is not always easy, but frames are usually more successful when they appeal to individuals' experiences or to principles that are valued in their society.¹⁴

Third, inciting action is usually harder than shifting attitudes, because action it is costlier. This is especially challenging in the human rights arena, where ordinary citizens usually do not have a material stake in abuses, and typically struggle to connect personally with the plight of the abused.¹⁵ Finally, frames that invoke standards or principles that

¹⁰ Entman 1993.

¹¹ Druckman and Chong 2007; Snow and Benford 1988.

¹² Klotz 1995.

¹³ Chong and Druckman 2007; Druckman 2001; Tarrow 2011.

¹⁴ Benford and Snow 2000; Payne 2001; Finnemore and Sikkink; Checkel 1999.

¹⁵ Adida et al. 2018; Bansak et al. 2016; Payne 2001; McEntire et al. 2015.

people care about can nonetheless successfully change attitudes and incite mobilization. A common strategy in such cases involves linking the problem to a standard that a wider audience values. Women's rights groups, for instance, have long understood this and have framed their efforts as a matter of equality, liberty, democracy, and discrimination, depending on the prevailing discourse at the time.¹⁶

Our survey experiment compares three frames commonly found in the international human rights literature: violation of IL, immorality, and/or harm to a country's international reputation. Here, we provide a brief overview of each and discuss empirical findings where relevant.

Scholars identify three key reasons why citizens may oppose policies that breach IL. Laws clarify which practices are acceptable, which can increase sensitivity to 'rights gaps.'¹⁷ Appealing to treaties also invokes the rule of law, which may be more universally-accepted and objective where other principles are more ambiguous within and across societies.¹⁸ Finally, invoking law can incite other judgments about whether a particular practice is acceptable.¹⁹ Prominent theories of international human rights law also advance specific arguments about how legal obligation spur mobilization.²⁰ In addition to making people more critical of policy (which may directly incite action), laws may also help make this process more successful by providing (1) a focal point for collective action and (2) another tool in the enforcement arsenal.²¹

¹⁶ Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Miller et al. 2010; Keck and Sikkink 1998.

¹⁷ Rights gaps are simply the distance between what governments promise to do, and what they are actually doing. See Dai 2013 and Simmons 2009.

¹⁸ Eilstrup-Sangiovanni and Bondaroff 2014; Hafner-Burton et al. 2015.

¹⁹ Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Tomz 2008.

²⁰ Conrad and Ritter 2019; Risse et al. 1999, 2013; Simmons 2009.

²¹ Conrad and Ritter 2019; Dai 2013; Simmons 2009.

The majority of existing experimental human rights research focuses on how people perceive international legal breach. Much of it finds that people oppose practices when framed as violating IL: Americans oppose the use of torture on captured combatants in contravention of the Convention Against Torture (CAT), are against solitary confinement if it violates international legal standards, and support punitive measures against governments that refuse to obey IL.²² In the related but distinct area of war conduct, international legal frames reduce Americans' support for civilian bombings and drone strikes.²³ Some findings are more mixed, especially in non-US respondent pools.²⁴ Whereas Indian citizens are less supportive of torturing opposition groups if this is inconsistent with international legal obligations, Argentines are not responsive to these frames, and Israelis are *more* supportive of using torture if it contravenes IL.²⁵ Another study finds a similar 'backlash' effect among Turks, who are most likely to back restrictive refugee policies if they breach IL.²⁶ To our knowledge, there is no experimental work on how IL affects willingness to mobilize. The finding that activists value it as a tool for holding leaders to account is consistent with this notion, but not conclusive about impacts on mobilization in practice.²⁷

Moral framing underpins the practice of 'naming and shaming' human rights violators.²⁸ The question of *which* moral principle a frame taps into is potentially highly relevant. For

²² Chilton 2014; Putnam and Shapiro 2017; Wallace 2013.

²³ Chilton 2015; Kreps and Wallace 2016.

²⁴ See Chilton and Versteeg 2016 and Cope and Crabtree 2021, who find weaker or even null effects among Americans.

²⁵ Lupu and Wallace 2019.

²⁶ Cope and Crabtree 2020.

²⁷ Hafner-Burton et al. 2015.

²⁸ Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Hafner-Burton 2008; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Murdie and Davis 2012; Snow and Benford 1988.

instance, a frame that emphasizes a duty to prevent and alleviate all forms of human suffering would likely incite stronger criticism of restrictive refugee policy than would a frame that accentuates an obligation to attend to family/kin/fellow citizens – and these impacts would likely vary from person to person depending on their own moral values.²⁹ To be broadly effective in changing attitudes, moral frames must appeal to principles that attract the support of, and are salient to, the target population.³⁰ The bar for spurring mobilization is even higher: moral frames must make people feel “entitled to act on their outrage.”³¹ Activists often accomplish this by transforming an issue that only a few people have a material stake in into one that everyone has a moral stake in.

Two experimental studies indicate that framing human rights as a moral challenge affects policy attitudes. One finds that the even the simple act of *asking* people to consider the morality of targeting enemy civilians in wartime makes them less willing to condone the practice.³² Similarly, another reports that framing civilian bombings as immoral reduces support for the practice.³³ To our knowledge, only one experimental study compares the impact of different frames on attitudes, but it finds no difference between couching civilian bombing as immoral, emphasizing international legal breach, or appealing to both simultaneously.³⁴ Turning to mobilization, one (non-experimental) study argues

²⁹ See Kertzer et al. 2014 and Rathbun et al. 2016, who show that moral foundations theory’s five values are associated with foreign policy attitudes; and Severson and Coleman 2015, discussed below. As discussed later, our survey experiment makes a general appeal to moral duties, but we encourage future research to consider whether frames that tap in to different elements of morality might affect people differently.

³⁰ Benford and Snow 2000; Busby 2010; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni and Bondaroff 2014; Keck and Sikkink 1998.

³¹ Miller et al. 2010: 104.

³² Carpenter and Montgomery 2020.

³³ Chilton 2015.

³⁴ Chilton 2015.

that framing developing-world debt relief in religious terms was successful in mobilizing American Christians because it tapped in to a value they held dear. Yet, this frame fell flat in more secular societies.³⁵ We are unaware of any experimental work on moral frames and human rights action. Beyond the human rights arena, scholars report that whereas moral frames can incite attitudinal change, they do not necessarily rouse political action.³⁶

In the human rights arena, (some) governments demonstrably seek to foster a reputation as members of the international community ‘in good standing.’³⁷ But do *individuals* care about their country’s global reputation, and are they willing to act on that basis? The crisis bargaining and conflict literature demonstrates that citizens care about maintaining a reputation for resolve and keeping promises, and that hawks and doves care about different elements of reputation.³⁸ It is unclear whether these insights carry over to human rights, where discourse focuses more heavily on ‘good standing’ and adherence to international principles.

There is little individual-level evidence about how frames affect attitudes toward human rights, or how these frames compare to others on offer. One study, while not specifically focused on frames, finds that Americans who support humanitarian intervention are motivated more by moral duty than by reputational concerns.³⁹ Another finds that ‘naming and shaming’ reduces support for abusive policies, but the difference falls short of

³⁵ Busby 2010.

³⁶ Albertson and Busby 2015.

³⁷ Risse et al. 1999. A broader literature on reputation and compliance with IL exists, but we do not investigate that question here because it would obfuscate the legal and reputational mechanisms we aim to disentangle. See Tomz 2008.

³⁸ Brutger and Kertzer 2018; Croco 2011.

³⁹ Kreps and Maxey 2018.

statistical significance.⁴⁰ To our knowledge, there is no experimental research on how invoking international reputation affects human rights mobilization. Observational evidence from the issue of developing-world debt suggests that the movement became much more successful in Japan when activists abandoned a religious frame and adopted a more culturally-salient terms like 'being a good international citizen.'⁴¹

The strongest counterargument to the above is that framing human rights in legal, moral, and/or reputational terms can induce backlash. For instance, individuals may not consider IL a viable or legitimate source of domestic authority.⁴² Framing a question in legal terms may also cue cost/benefit thinking, suppressing other considerations like moral duties. Whether the latter have a stronger pro-rights pull is an open question. Moral framing also faces significant hurdles when there are competing perspectives on what is acceptable and salient.⁴³ Backlash against international reputational appeals has received less attention in the human rights literature, but it is not hard to imagine – following research on international conflict – that they could backfire among people who care about other aspects of reputation, are tired of hearing this criticism, or simply think governments should focus on other concerns.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Ausderan 2014. This could be due the study's small sample size. However, the frames were also somewhat mixed, invoking reputation and IL for American respondents but only reputation for Indian respondents. Overall, we approach this study's results with caution.

⁴¹ Busby 2010. See also van der Veen 2011.

⁴² Chapman and Chaudoin 2020; Cope and Crabtree 2020; Lupu and Wallace.

⁴³ Eilstrup-Sangiovanni and Bondaroff 2014.

⁴⁴ Brutger and Kertzer 2018.

3. International Refugee Law and Policy in Australia

In 2020, the world's population included over 34 million refugees and asylum-seekers. Just before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, more than 4,650 people submitted new asylum applications each day globally.⁴⁵ Along with climate change, refugee displacement is one of the world's most pressing challenges, with profound implications for economic stability and national security. Some have called it a 'wicked problem' that forces democratically-elected leaders to strike a balance between protecting vulnerable people and sustaining support for these policies (which are often unpopular) at home.⁴⁶ The COVID-19 pandemic has rendered these questions more complex, though no less pressing.

We focus on Australia for several reasons. First, refugee politics is salient there, making our survey relevant to respondents and our findings germane to current debates.⁴⁷ Second, while acknowledging that each country is unique and that Australia's refugee politics and boat arrivals in particular are highly charged, it shares with other advanced democracies a long history of immigration and asylum.⁴⁸ Its refugee population per capita is virtually identical to Britain's and is very much in the middle of the worldwide distribution.⁴⁹ Its policies toward boat arrivals are draconian, but they are not unique.⁵⁰ Similar elements have been replicated or are under discussion in the US, Canada, and the UK, to name a few.⁵¹ Third, the majority of existing experimental HRA research relies on American

⁴⁵ UNHCR 2020.

⁴⁶ Bansak et al. 2016; Manning and Reinecke 2016.

⁴⁷ McAdam and Chong 2014.

⁴⁸ McAdam 2013.

⁴⁹ UNHCR 2017.

⁵⁰ Dehm and Walden 2018; McAdam 2013; McAdam and Chong 2014; UNHCHR 2018.

⁵¹ On the American case, c.f. Cope and Crabtree 2021. On Canadian policy, see Amnesty International 2021. On the UK, see UNHCR 2021.

respondents. Following others, we argue that it is crucial to investigate whether findings ‘travel.’⁵²

Refugee resettlement first became politically salient in Australia in 1976, when a Vietnamese fishing boat carrying five Indochinese refugees arrived in Darwin Harbour; 2000 followed over the subsequent five years.⁵³ In response, the Australian government introduced policies to deter asylum-seekers reaching the country by sea, while prioritizing those who applied from abroad. The arrival of a Norwegian freighter (the *MV Tampa*) – whose crew rescued almost 500 Hazara refugees from international waters near Australia in 2001 – thrust the issue into the limelight again, where it has remained ever since.⁵⁴

The Tampa incident spurred the entrenchment of two particularly problematic practices (from a human rights perspective).⁵⁵ The first is ‘turnbacks,’ wherein government coastguards intercept vessels with asylum-seekers and turns – or even tows – them back to their departure point. The second is mandatory detention at Australian-run facilities offshore. A third practice – child detention – was less a deliberate policy choice than a result of the reality that refugees often travel as families, or have children while in detention. Most elements of these policies enjoy bipartisan political support in Parliament, but reactions have been more critical among segments of the Australian population and abroad.⁵⁶

⁵² Lupu and Wallace 2019; Cope and Crabtree 2021.

⁵³ Phillips 2017a.

⁵⁴ Dowding and Martin 2017; McAllister 2003.

⁵⁵ Phillips 2017b; Schloenhardt and Craig 2015.

⁵⁶ See Dehm and Walden 2018; Lowy Institute 2016, 2017; McAdam 2013; McAdam and Chong 2014. Child detention has garnered the strongest opposition, but it remains in place.

These three elements are at the heart of Australia’s current policy. They are also part of our experiment (discussed later), but they are not the experimental treatment. Rather, they form the underlying basis for why current policy is problematic. Our experiment holds that basis constant but varies how it is framed – as breaching IL, morally objectionable, or reputationally harmful. We discuss each below.

Legal Basis

Legal scholars and practitioners argue that Australia’s designation of asylum-seekers who arrive by boat as ‘illegal’ breaches the Refugee Convention, which requires that asylum-seekers who enter without a visa not be penalized as long as they show good cause for how they arrived.⁵⁷ Most also agree that turnbacks breach the Convention’s ‘non-refoulement’ principle, which requires parties not to expel or return refugees when doing so would threaten their life and/or freedom.⁵⁸ Australia’s offshore detention system violates the Convention’s requirements of humane treatment and protection from arbitrary detention, as well as various rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).⁵⁹ A UN Special Rapporteur has found that the detention system violates the CAT, and a class-action suit on this matter is currently underway in the Australian High Court.⁶⁰

For decades, Australian Human Rights Commissioners have been unanimous that mandatory immigration detention breaches international legal obligations to children – most notably the requirement that young people only be detained as a last resort, and

⁵⁷ Goodwin-Gill 2001; McAdam 2013; McAdam and Chong 2014.

⁵⁸ UN Human Rights Council 2021.

⁵⁹ These include prevention of arbitrary detention and protection from cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. UNHCR 2013a, 2013b; UN Human Rights Committee 2016.

⁶⁰ UN Human Rights Council 2015b; Van Sant 2018.

never arbitrarily.⁶¹ The Commission has identified a range of breaches of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), including deprivation of liberty, arbitrary and unlawful interference in family life, failure to provide education and a safe environment, and failure to act in the best interests of unaccompanied minors. The report makes evident that detention, especially when indefinite, breaches the CRC by causing children extreme physical, emotional, psychological and developmental distress.⁶²

Moral Basis

The moral principle that refugees should not be punished for how they arrived is crucial because it is often gravely dangerous or impossible for those fleeing persecution to obtain a visa beforehand. Even those who see our main moral duties as being to our *own* community maintain that we have a moral obligation not to return refugees who reach our shores if this would result in significant harm or loss of life.⁶³ Detainees suffer neglect, inhumane treatment, and serious abuse – and in some cases were left to fend for themselves after the Manus Island facility closed.⁶⁴ Physicians argue that mandatory detention constitutes torture because it is designed to deter/punish those who arrive by boat by exposing them conditions that maximize suffering and suicidality.⁶⁵ Others argue that the system is particularly morally bereft because it is deliberate and not the result of capacity problems.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Australian Human Rights Commission 2014; Dechent et al. 2019.

⁶² Australian Human Rights Commission 2014; UNHRC 2018.

⁶³ Betts 2015; Carens 1992; Walzer 1983.

⁶⁴ Doctors without Borders 2018; Human Rights Watch 2017.

⁶⁵ Isaacs 2016.

⁶⁶ Manne 2018.

Critics see the harm to children as especially heinous. The moral premise that young people should not be imprisoned is well-accepted: “[d]etaining children because of their parents’ migration status will always violate the principle of the best interests of the child.”⁶⁷ The Australian Medical Association unequivocally condemns the practice due to the risks to children’s development and health, and over 80% of Australian pediatricians agree that it is a form of child abuse.⁶⁸ However, removing children from detention breaches the moral imperative that families should not be separated. The government has argued that detention of children is necessary for this reason.

International Reputational Basis

UN officials and many member-states have criticized Australia’s turnbacks as a “poor benchmark” for Australia’s neighbors that “should not be considered a model by any country.”⁶⁹ Some argue that turnbacks compromise Australia’s ability to use its reputation as a “good global citizen” to press for advantage, in addition to infuriating regional allies and undermining long-term cooperation.⁷⁰ The UN and many member-states have condemned Australia’s offshore detention system for decades, most notably during its (nonetheless successful) 2017 bid for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council and during its 2015 Universal Periodic Review in that body – during which a prominent Australian scholar noted, “It was manifestly clear that we are not role models on asylum. We are pariahs.”⁷¹ When two detainees won human rights and literary awards, mainstream media

⁶⁷ Committee on the Rights of the Child 2012. See also Archard and Mcleod 2002.

⁶⁸ Corbett et al. 2014; Doctors Without Borders 2018.

⁶⁹ Human Rights Council 2015a: 12.

⁷⁰ Allard and Whyte 2015.

⁷¹ Millar 2015.

labeled it an embarrassment that “cast a lasting stain on the country’s human rights reputation.”⁷²

Australia’s detention of children has gained worldwide attention, and is arguably the most infamous aspect of the country’s boat arrivals policy. The despair and degree of physical and psychological trauma they have experienced are documented in the ‘Nauru files’ – a cache of over 2000 leaked reports from the detention facility. The files unleashed concern throughout the Australian and international press about harm to the country’s international standing and possibly entrenching a “pariah status.”⁷³

4. Text Analysis of Australian Media Coverage

Above, we argued that Australia’s current policy can be framed as breaching IL, violating moral standards, and/or as harming the country’s international reputation. These form the basis of our survey experiment, which we discuss below. In this section, we briefly investigate whether these frames are present in Australian public discourse. To this end, we used *Factiva* to collect all articles that include the words ‘boat’ along with ‘refugee’ or ‘asylum’ in the major daily Australian newspapers for the three years prior to our survey experiment. The Appendix provides greater detail. Table 1 presents an example of each frame from the corpus. Figure 1 shows that moral frames appear the most frequently, followed by international legal and then reputational frames.⁷⁴ The reasons for this are unclear, and of course article prevalence is a blunt and imperfect measure of frame

⁷² Human Rights Watch 2019.

⁷³ Farrell et al. 2016; Maguire 2016.

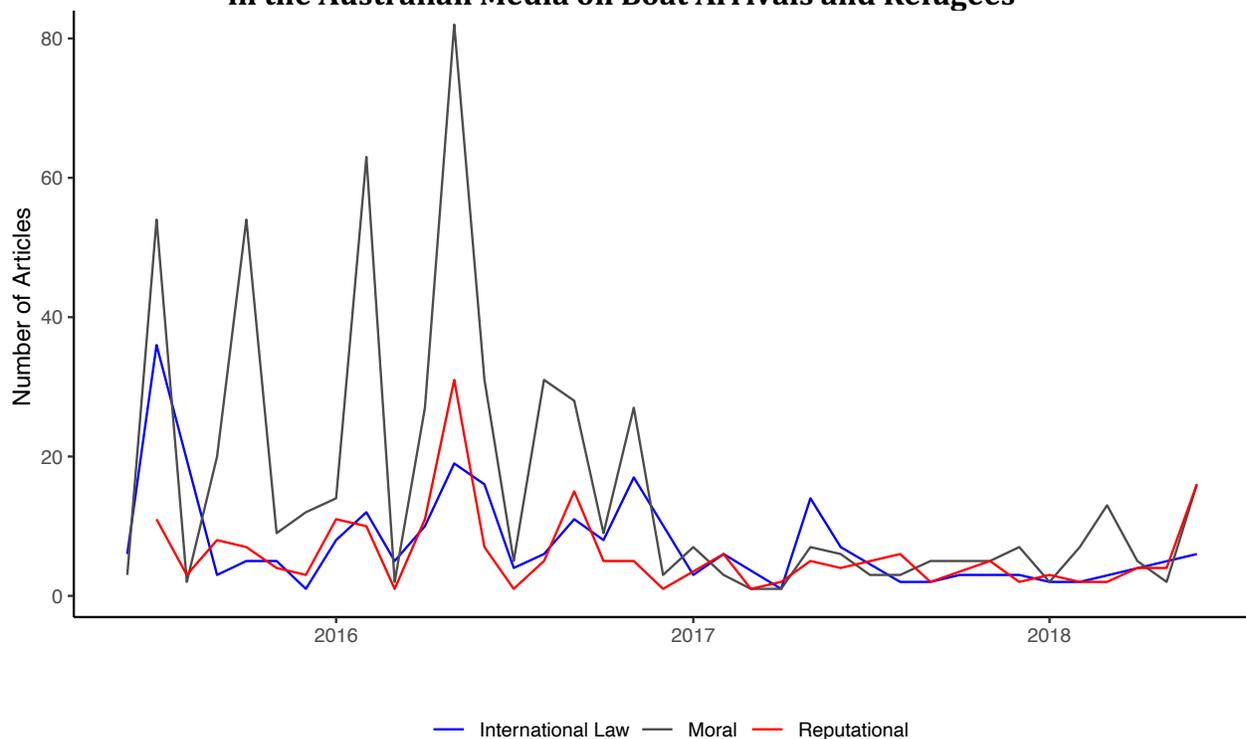
⁷⁴ The Appendix contains greater detail. The May 2016 surge in Figure 1 reflects coverage of the Papua New Guinean Supreme Court’s decision that the Manus Island detention facility was unconstitutional.

prevalence. Nonetheless, we argue that Figure 1 provides sufficient confidence in the external validity of our frames.

Table 1. Example Frames from Australian Media Coverage of Australia’s ‘Boat Arrivals’ Policy

Frame Type	Example
International Law	"What they did in 2014 is actually a denial of their own international obligation because they signed the UN Refugee Convention." ⁷⁵
Moral	"It's time to go back, ask [...] whether we are discharging our ethical and moral obligation to people who are very vulnerable." ⁷⁶
Reputational	The “system is a festering wound that is killing people and eroding our national character and reputation.” ⁷⁷

Figure 1. International Legal, Moral, and Reputational Frames in the Australian Media on Boat Arrivals and Refugees



⁷⁵ Jewell Topsfield. “Fate Uncertain for Refugees in Indonesia Awaiting Resettlement in US.” *The Age*, January 31, 2017.

⁷⁶ The Editor. “The Figures are in: \$2b for Human Misery is not a Great Result.” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, August 21, 2016.

⁷⁷ Cameron Stewart. “Moral Compass a Spin Over Asylum-Seekers.” *The Australian*. May 12, 2016.

5. A Survey Experiment on Perceptions of Australian Boat Arrival Policy

We conducted our survey experiment using Ipsos, which maintains a respondent panel that is representative of the Australian population in terms of geographic coverage, gender, and other demographics.⁷⁸ All respondents received an initial three-sentence, factual overview of existing policy. Because there is a great deal of misperception and misinformation on this topic, it was important to ensure that all respondents had some baseline accurate information. Three treatment groups then received a framing treatment, while the fourth (control) group proceeded directly to attitudinal questions.

We limited the scope of our frames in three main ways. First, we concentrated on Australia's policy toward refugees who arrive by boat because it offers a clear and tangible context in which to test some of the literature's most common frames. The breaches of IL, moral challenges, and reputational costs are evident and well-documented. For most respondents, refugees in general – and those who arrive by boat in particular – are an outgroup.⁷⁹ Consequently, *baseline* support for restrictive policy should be higher than in a hypothetical involving an ingroup member. However, it is unclear whether this should affect treatment impacts. On the one hand, it is possible that no type or amount of positive framing alters attitudes in contexts where negative attitudes are deeply entrenched.⁸⁰ On the other hand, it is precisely in the context of negative attitudes that there is the most “room to move” opinion. Overall, we do not have strong theoretical reasons to expect our frames to have different impacts in contexts involving other types of

⁷⁸ We conducted the survey in July and August 2018, using Ipsos. See the Appendix for the full instrument and further detail on registration, IRB, etc.

⁷⁹ McAllister 2003.

⁸⁰ Druckman and Chong 2007.

refugee/migrant/rights abuse, but this is an interesting question to explore in future research.

Second, we focused on frames that criticize existing policy. Australian public discourse is replete with alternate frames: common narratives in support of current policy include security concerns/deterrence, 'queue jumping', 'unlawful' migration, and the dangers of the ocean passage.⁸¹ However, we investigated frames that criticize existing policy because these align most closely with the relevant literature, and for comparability reasons. Third, our frames were diagnostic – they identified a problem and attributed blame.⁸² This scope condition was necessary to make the project tractable, and it aligns with vignettes in existing research. Nonetheless, in future research, it would be illuminating to investigate whether prognostic, motivational, and/or other types of frame are most successful at getting people to mobilize.⁸³

The experiment involved presenting each respondent with the same underlying information while varying some key consideration(s): anchored in IL, moral considerations, or international reputation. One-quarter of respondents – the control group – received no additional information.⁸⁴ The remaining respondents were randomly shown one of the three frames indicated in Table 2. We then asked all respondents whether they

⁸¹ Dowding and Martin 2017; McKay et al. 2011.

⁸² Benford and Snow 2000; Snow and Benford 1988.

⁸³ Snow and Benford 1988; McEntire et al. 2015.

⁸⁴ This is consistent with other studies. C.f., Adida et al. 2018; Bansak et al. 2016; Cope and Crabtree 2020; Chilton 2014, 2015; Lupu and Wallace 2019; McEntire et al. 2015; Tomz 2008. We considered whether to expose the control group to a neutral or unrelated placebo, but opted for no treatment because it was very difficult to create a placebo that was neither suspiciously unrelated to the topic nor itself a positive or negative frame.

approve or disapprove of existing policy, and whether they would sign a petition, donate to an NGO, or attend a protest urging a change to these policies.⁸⁵

Table 2. Experimental Treatment Vignettes

International Law	Moral	Reputation
<i>Critics of this policy argue that it breaches <u>international agreements that Australia is a party to</u>. They say it violates the <u>Refugee Convention</u>, which <u>legally obligates countries to protect refugees regardless of how they arrive</u>. They argue that the detention facilities violate <u>a core treaty on standards of humane treatment</u>, and <u>breach a children's rights treaty requiring children to be protected and not imprisoned</u>.</i>	<i>Critics of this policy argue that it breaches <u>standards of human dignity</u>. They say it violates <u>a moral obligation Australia has to protect refugees regardless of how they arrive</u>. They argue that the detention facilities violate <u>ethical standards of humane treatment</u>, and <u>breach the principle that children should be protected and not imprisoned</u>.</i>	<i>Critics of this policy argue that it <u>harms Australia's international reputation</u>. They say it violates <u>an obligation that all countries have, to protect refugees regardless of how they arrive</u>. They argue that the detention facilities violate <u>internationally accepted standards of humane treatment</u>, and <u>breach the international principle that children should be protected and not imprisoned</u>.</i>

Our approach naturally has limitations. While frames are ubiquitous in public discourse on this debate in Australia and elsewhere, drawing a causal path from frame exposure to policy attitudes and action in practice is challenging. Contrary to real-world experience, it is harder for survey respondents to ‘tune out’ frames, and for reasons discussed above, our analysis does not explore counter-frames.⁸⁶ Furthermore, in line with other studies that use quasi-behavioral measures, we ask respondents whether they would participate in various types of political action.⁸⁷ Ultimately, of course, this does not tell us whether they

⁸⁵ C.f., Hangartner et al. 2019. We did not ask respondents whether they would support a party that opposes Australia’s policy, because we do not think this would be realistic. Key aspects of the policy attract bipartisan consensus in Parliament. See Dehm and Walden 2018.

⁸⁶ Druckman 2001.

⁸⁷ Hangartner et al. 2019; McEntire et al. 2015. For simplicity, we use the expression “would sign a petition/protest/donate” throughout, but acknowledge that ultimately these questions gauge *intention* to take action.

would actually take those actions – but it does measure intent beyond expression of attitudes.

6. Results

Policy Attitudes

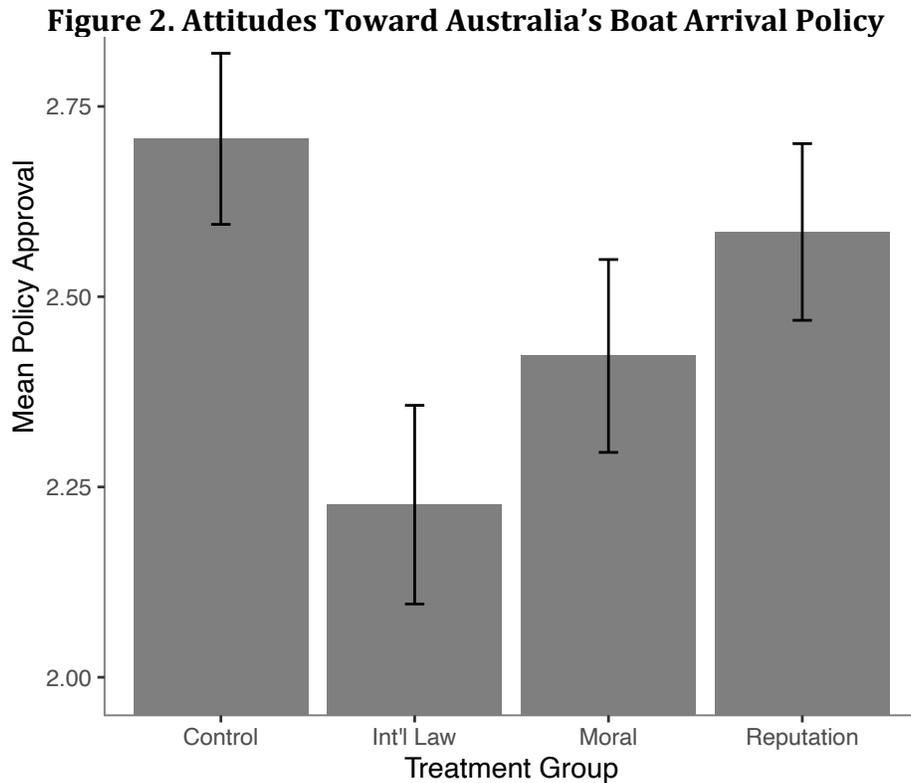
We begin by exploring graphically whether policy attitudes differ across treatment groups. Figure 2 displays mean policy approval values, along with 95% confidence intervals. Across all groups, the policy is popular – the mean value across the entire sample is 2.5 on a 0 to 4 scale, with over half of respondents approving or strongly approving. This is consistent with historical surveys.⁸⁸ As expected, the control group approves most strongly; each treatment group is less approving but with interesting variation.⁸⁹ Those who receive the IL frame are most strongly opposed, followed by those who receive the moral frame. Of the three interventions, reading about harm to Australia’s reputation has the smallest impact.

Before engaging in hypothesis testing, we consider the question of balance across treatment groups. There is significant debate over whether balance testing is even statistically justified. Some argue that it is statistically meaningless if we know that treatments were assigned randomly via automation (which is now standard fare with firms such as Ipsos). From this perspective, balance testing is inappropriate and potentially problematic because it is based on the flawed notion that random assignment implies equal distribution of all characteristics across treatments (when, in fact, it only guarantees that those characteristics are distributed stochastically). Put simply, randomized data are ‘clean’

⁸⁸ Australian Election Study various years; Lowy Institute 2016, 2017.

⁸⁹ See Table 5A in the Appendix for comparisons of each frame.

and should be treated as such: balance testing and inclusion of pretreatment covariates in treatment effects models are unwarranted.⁹⁰



Mean values and 95% confidence intervals. Survey question: Do you approve or disapprove of Australia's current policy regarding people who arrive here by boat? 0 = Strongly disapprove, 1 = Disapprove, 2 = Neither/nor, 3 = Approve, 4 = Strongly approve.

Those who favor balance testing point to two main considerations. First, it can help identify and control for differential attrition rates or faulty randomization mechanisms. Second, even in the absence of attrition or randomization problems, imbalance that arises by chance poses a potential threat to inference, and therefore should be identified. The most common procedure is to include pretreatment covariates in the outcome model, potentially with interactions of the treatment and the pretreatment covariate(s) and/or robust standard errors, to control for heteroskedasticity. This approach can minimize bias

⁹⁰ Mutz et al. 2019, 34.

in comparisons of the treatment and control groups, increases estimate precision, and allows the researcher to assess heterogeneity in treatment effects.⁹¹ On the other hand, critics argue that even randomization that produces improbable distributions should be sufficient for inference, and that balancing might induce false positives (or negatives).⁹²

We see merit in both arguments. Rather than taking sides, we use both approaches. Looking first at balance, we observe that the distribution of pretreatment covariates across the four groups is equal for the most part, but with some imbalance on ethnic attitudes and voting intentions. This potentially undermines inference because ethnic attitudes and party preference are presumably latent to views on boat arrivals. For parsimony, we report unbalanced OLS results in the main text, and present models with covariates in the Appendix. Our results are largely consistent whether we adjust or not for unbalanced randomization, and are robust to alternate specifications.⁹³

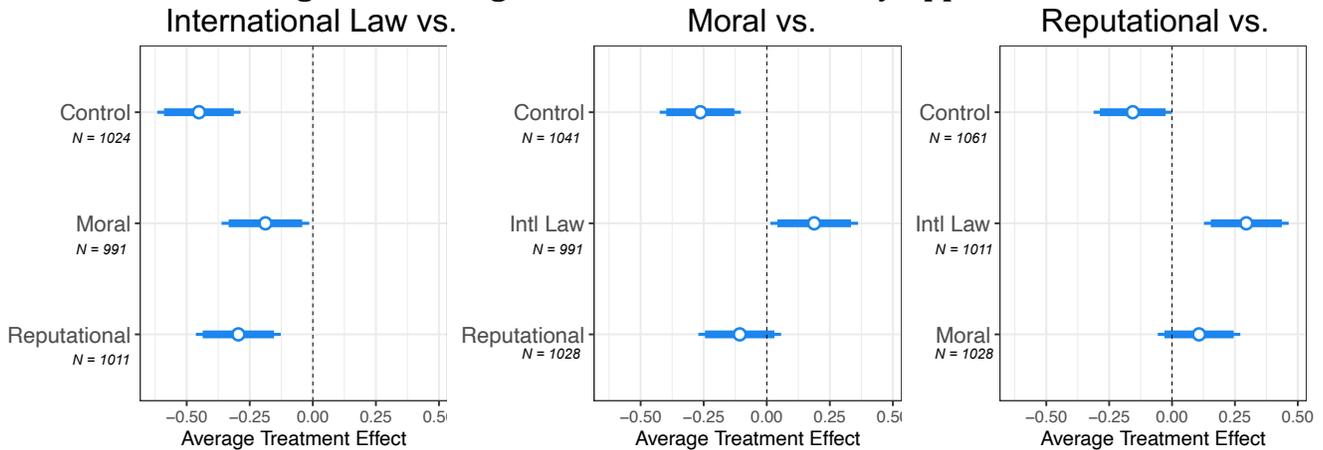
Because we are interested in comparing each frame against the control condition as well as alternate frames, we display several sets of comparisons in Figure 3 below. These indicate whether the frames' impacts differ from the control, and whether they are distinct from each other. For example, if we want to know how each frame compares to the control, we should look across the first row of each slide. If we want to know whether appealing to IL has stronger or weaker impacts as compared to moral appeals, we should look to the second row of the first slide (or, conversely, the second row of the second slide).

⁹¹ Athey and Imbens 2017.

⁹² See Mutz et al. 2019.

⁹³ See the Appendix for balance tests, power analysis, full model output, and further discussion.

Figure 3. Average Treatment Effects, Policy Approval



OLS coefficients. Thick line represents 90% confidence interval; thin line represents 95% confidence interval. Scale ranges from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Full results in Table 1a and 2a (Appendix).

Three main findings emerge from our analyses of policy attitudes. First, each experimental condition has negative and statistically significant effects compared to the control, suggesting that framing Australia’s policy as a breach of IL, morally repugnant, or reputationally damaging significantly decreases its support. This is not altogether surprising given that survey respondents tend to respond negatively to negative frames, but it is nonetheless useful to know that perspectives *are* responsive to framing – in an area where attitudes are thought to be deeply entrenched (and, according to some, unmovable).⁹⁴

Second, emphasizing breach of international legal obligations has a much stronger (negative) impact on policy attitudes versus moral or reputational framing, as evidenced by its larger and statistically significant ATE in comparison to the two other treatment conditions. One potential explanation for this finding is that law offers greater clarity. While one can question whether treaty obligations are relevant just as one can debate

⁹⁴ Manne 2018.

whether moral standards are applicable or international reputation worth caring about, treaties make it near-impossible for governments to credibly claim that the standards were unclear, unknown, or never consented to. This may, in turn, lead to greater sensitivity to “rights gaps.”⁹⁵ Future research should gauge whether this is the case with carefully-tailored survey measures.

Finally, moral frames have stronger effects than reputational frames, but this difference is not statistically significant at standard thresholds.⁹⁶ In other words, when it comes to reducing policy support, couching debates in moral terms is likely a better strategy than emphasizing reputational costs, but we cannot be sure of this. However, we are confident that it is a better strategy than saying nothing, and inferior to invoking IL.

We also conducted the analyses with several predictors, as robustness checks. The results appear in the Appendix (Table 1a, Model 2). The coefficients become slightly smaller, and the reputational treatment becomes more marginally significant, but overall, the findings do not differ in any notable ways from those reported in Figure 3. Consistent with expectations and previous research, we find that more educated people and women oppose Australia’s current policy. Conversely, those with less tolerant attitudes regarding other ethnic groups and wealthier individuals (controlling for education) are more supportive. The results are also as expected with regard to partisan politics: in comparison to those who supported the center-right Coalition currently in office, Labor supporters, Greens supporters, and independents are more critical. Power analysis (displayed in Table 3a of the Appendix) shows that the sample is sufficiently powered for the most part, but

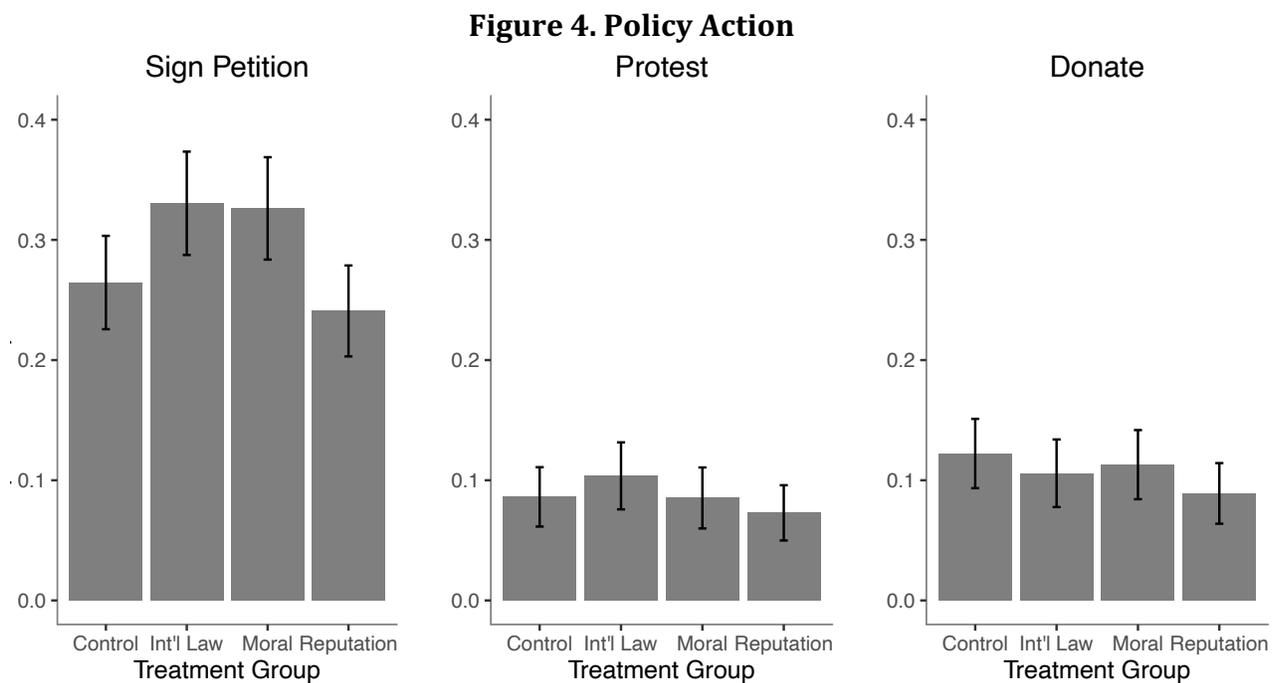
⁹⁵ Abbott et al. 2000; Dai 2013; Simmons 2009.

⁹⁶ See Table 2a (Appendix) for Wald tests of the frame comparisons.

not for the comparison of the moral and reputational treatments.⁹⁷ A larger sample would likely result in a significant difference between these two groups, but that hypothesis cannot be confirmed here.

Policy Action

We argued earlier that research on framing human rights issues should expand its scope by exploring whether individuals can be mobilized to act. In this section, we explore respondents' stated willingness to sign a petition, attend a protest, and/or donate to an NGO in opposition to the existing policy. Figure 4 displays the percentage of respondents in each group who reported willingness to participate in each activity.



Grey bars represent the proportion of respondents who responded that they would participate in the activity. Lines with ticks represent 95% confidence intervals.

⁹⁷ Following standard practice, we consider a threshold of .80 sufficient. A sample of about 1400 respondents would be necessary to achieve that threshold if we were to conduct the survey on a new sample (assuming the differences we observed reflect the true population parameters).

It is immediately clear from Figure 4 that people are not particularly enthusiastic about taking *any* form of action, although they are more willing to sign a petition than to attend a protest or to donate.⁹⁸ This is not surprising: in most contexts, signing a petition requires very little effort, while protesting involves time, and donating of course involves money. This is also consistent with resource mobilization theory, which has shown that people become less willing to engage as actions become costlier.⁹⁹

For hypothesis testing, we collapse the three policy action variables into a scale for parsimony, and conduct OLS analyses.¹⁰⁰ Figure 5 displays the comparisons using the same approach as for policy attitudes. Three main findings emerge. First, the IL and moral groups are more likely than the control to be interested in mobilizing, but these differences are not distinguishable from zero at standard thresholds. Second, the reputational group is *less* interested than the control in taking action, although this falls short of standard thresholds of statistical significance. Third, consistent with the policy approval results, the IL and moral treatments have significantly stronger effects on mobilization than the reputational treatment.¹⁰¹

Overall, the above findings are consistent with the analyses of policy attitudes in some comparisons – particularly that respondents who have received an IL or moral frame are more likely to express interest in acting. However, it is surprising that (1) the treatment

⁹⁸ A t-test of the difference of means $p < .001$ across the entire sample.

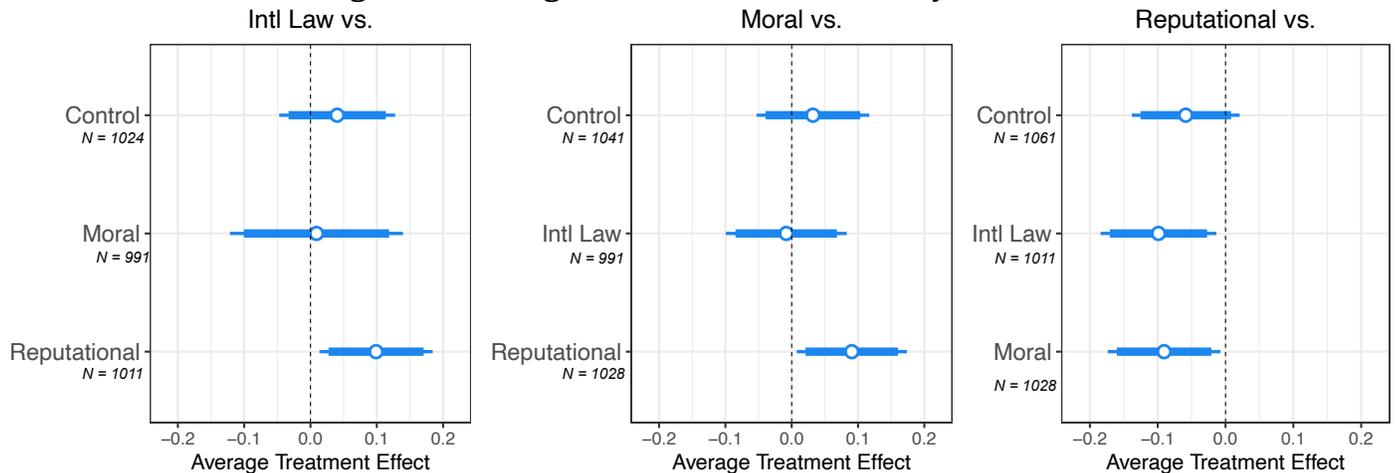
⁹⁹ Klandermans 1984. See also Handgartner et al. 2019. Our data also support this idea, with wealthier individuals being more willing to donate, even controlling for policy approval.

¹⁰⁰ See Table 5a of the Appendix. Factor loadings range from .475 to .547. Cronbach's α is .550 and is highest with all three variables. Given that Cronbach's α is not quite at the 0.7 threshold commonly used, we also model the three outcomes separately. See Sections IVa and IVb of the Appendix.

¹⁰¹ See Table 6a (Appendix) for Wald tests of the frame comparisons.

groups are not more strongly in favor of mobilizing vs. the control; and (2) the reputational group is less interested than the control in mobilizing. Based on the policy approval findings, we would also have expected a larger difference between the IL and moral groups, but that does not appear to be the case. (We speculate why in the next section).

Figure 5. Average Treatment Effects, Policy Action



OLS coefficients with confidence intervals. Dependent variable is a factor based on willingness to sign a petition, protest, and donate (see Figure 1a and Table 4a in Appendix). Thick line represents 90% confidence interval; thin line represents 95% confidence interval. Full results in Table 5a and 6a (Appendix).

Three points are worth mentioning here. First, as discussed above (Figure 4), baseline interest in acting is very low. In theory, treatments can have strong effects precisely in contexts where there is “room to move,” but our survey suggests the contrary: it is challenging (for our frames) to stimulate interest in policy action – even when it is straightforward to shift policy attitudes. Second, given how small the treatment effects are in most cases, the study design is underpowered. In future studies, larger samples would be necessary to determine actual effect sizes.¹⁰² Low power decreases the likelihood that we

¹⁰² Assuming that we are observing the true population effect, these would range from about 1600 for the IL-reputational comparison, to 231,000 (!) for the IL-moral comparison. The latter would be prohibitive in any plausible scenario we can envisage.

are observing the true population effect; it is possible that the “effect” we are observing reflects noise rather than reality.¹⁰³ A degree of caution is therefore warranted regarding the policy action findings. Finally, given that our frames are negative, it is possible and perhaps even likely that they generate negative reactions simply because negativity sticks.¹⁰⁴ As we discuss below, there may also be specific substance to this negativity – perhaps a ‘backlash of inaction’ of sorts.

Consistent with other work, we also find that educational attainment and being a Labor or Greens supporter drive up interest in mobilization, and that people who are older or have less tolerant views of people of other ethnicities are typically less interested in political action on Australia’s boat arrivals policy.¹⁰⁵

Mediation Analysis

Thus far, we have considered policy attitudes and action in isolation. We now bring them together, asking whether exposure to a particular frame makes people more willing to mobilize by generating discontent with current policy. To do this, we conduct causal mediation analysis. Some scholars contend that mediation analysis is not sensible if direct links between a treatment and dependent variable do not exist.¹⁰⁶ We agree with others that this criterion is overly restrictive; some relationships might exist *only* via mediation, while in other relationships, a mediated and an oppositely-signed direct effect may both

¹⁰³ Button et al. 2013.

¹⁰⁴ Avdagic and Savage 2021.

¹⁰⁵ See Sections IVa and IVb of the Appendix for robustness checks.

¹⁰⁶ C.f. Baron and Kenny 1986.

exist but may only be perceptible if parsed via mediation analysis.¹⁰⁷ Both are theoretically interesting and worth investigating empirically.

Figure 6 displays the results of the mediation analysis.¹⁰⁸ We again note that the results should be interpreted with caution, given concerns about power discussed above. We focus first on comparisons to the control. The average causal mediation effect (ACME) is positive and statistically significant for each treatment group. The relationship between frames and mobilization is most strongly conditioned by policy attitudes for the IL group, followed by the moral, then the reputational.¹⁰⁹ However, in no case do frame-induced shifts in policy attitudes explain much of the total difference interest in mobilizing, as evidenced by the low proportion mediated. Most who receive these frames and in turn develop more critical attitudes do not subsequently become more likely to say they would try to “do something” about it.

We also find evidence of competitive mediation in these comparisons to the control, as indicated by the negative direct effect. This suggests an omitted mediator that operates in tandem with attitudinal shifts, which reduces interest in mobilizing.¹¹⁰ Given that it exists for each frame in vs. the control, this may simply reflect a common negative response to the negative tenor of our frames.¹¹¹ It is also possible that respondents are experiencing a more complex reaction to the frame content, perhaps a ‘backlash of inaction’ of sorts. This might

¹⁰⁷ Zhao et al. 2010. Before conducting the mediation analysis, we ran separate regressions for each comparison pair, including the treatment variable and policy approval as predictors, as recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986). In each case, policy approval is significant and negative, as one would expect.

¹⁰⁸ See Imai et al. 2011 for greater detail, and Tables 8a and 9a of the Appendix for the full results and power analysis.

¹⁰⁹ We determine this directly in the frame comparisons below.

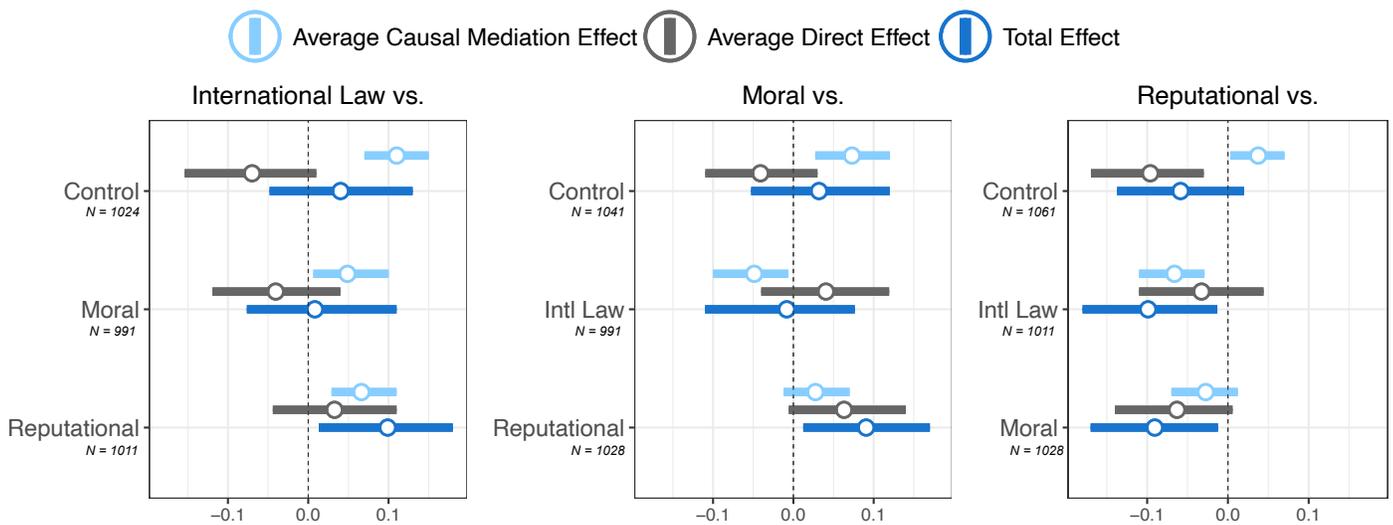
¹¹⁰ Zhao et al. 2010.

¹¹¹ Avdagic and Savage 2021.

involve sense of guilt (which can demobilize),¹¹² hopelessness over whether action would indeed lead to policy change, or a genuine distaste for what the message is conveying. This may be one reason some refugee activist groups now emphasize more positive messages in their appeals for change.¹¹³ Future research could disentangle these possibilities with specifically tailored questions. The total effect echoes the average treatment effect in Figure 5 as one would expect, so we do not discuss it further.

Turning to frame comparisons, causal mediation effects are strongest for the IL group. As compared to moral appeals, IL frames impact more strongly on mobilization via attitudinal change. However, this pathway does not explain much of the total variation in mobilization.¹¹⁴ There are no other notable (direct) effects on mobilization in that comparison. Ultimately, as in Figure 5, framing current policy in international legal or moral terms has roughly the same net impact on stated interest in taking action.

Figure 6. Mediation Analysis



OLS coefficients with 95% confidence intervals. Dependent variable is a factor based on willingness to sign a petition, protest and donate (see Table 4a in Appendix). Full results in Tables 8a and 9a (Appendix).

¹¹² Kleres and Wettergren 2017.

¹¹³ C.f. Welcoming America 2018.

¹¹⁴ This is given by the proportion mediated, which is far from statistically significant ($p = .840$).

We reported above (Figure 5) that couching debates in international legal or moral terms resulted in significantly more (expressed) interest in mobilizing than emphasizing reputational considerations. The mediation analysis sheds some light on why. Invoking IL over reputation incites action (chiefly) by generating discontent.¹¹⁵ As discussed above, this may be because IL offers greater clarity that abuses breach an accepted standard, which in turn either makes people believe mobilization is more appropriate or more likely to matter (or both). In contrast, while invoking morality over reputation also spurs greater interest in taking action, this is primarily through a process other than attitudinal change.¹¹⁶ This could be because moral appeals invoke pro-mobilization responses (complimentary mediation). For instance, appealing to morality may foment a stronger sense of duty, independent what it does to policy perceptions.¹¹⁷

In both comparisons (IL-reputational and moral-reputational), it is also possible that reputational frames are invoking unique(ly strong) anti-mobilization reactions (competitive mediation) such as the ‘backlash of inaction’ discussed above. They are flip sides of the same coin in our model setup. To this point, when asked what he thought of recent UN criticisms of Australia’s immigration detention, then-Prime Minister Tony Abbott responded, “I really think Australians are sick of being lectured to by the United

¹¹⁵ This is the only comparison in which a significant portion of the difference in willingness to take action owes to differential impacts on policy attitudes ($p < .001$). Others are more marginally significant and would likely fall into a standard threshold with a larger sample.

¹¹⁶ This is evidenced by the direct effect ($p = .076$). The ACME is also positive, resulting in a net positive impact on interest in mobilizing – but it falls short of standard thresholds of statistical significance ($p = .184$), as does the proportion mediated ($p = .192$), possibly due to low power.

¹¹⁷ Rescher 1992. The comparison of IL and moral framing is also consistent with this, as evidenced by the direct effect, but not at standard levels of statistical significance ($p = .310$), possibly due to low power. It is also conceivable that this reflects an anti-mobilization effect of IL vs. moral framing (controlling for attitudinal impacts), but we think this less likely, given the comparisons to reputational framing.

Nations.”¹¹⁸ Our results suggest that he might have been right (on that question). Further research could shed light on this via questions that aim to gauge these different reactions.

7. Conclusion

This article is based on two key premises. First, frames seldom exist in a vacuum where only one message is available; rather, norm entrepreneurs are invariably as concerned with which message to send as they are with whether to send it. Second, changing attitudes is important, but so, too, is inciting action. Our survey experiment on Australia’s ‘boat arrivals’ policy confirms that it matters *whether* abuses are framed: citizens do care when their government breaches IL, flouts moral duties, or takes actions that harm the country’s international reputation. It also matters *how* abuses are framed: citizens care most about international legal violations, followed by moral, and finally reputational transgressions.

We also find that translating that care into action is challenging. On the question of whether to frame, our results are suggestive of two distinct challenges. First, most people simply are not interested in mobilizing – even if they are aware of the associated problems and have consequently become more critical of what their government is doing. Second, *any* kind of negative framing may make people less interested in taking action. On the question of how to frame, our study indicates that appealing to IL or moral considerations is more effective than invoking reputational harm, although for different reasons. Our research consistently shows that emphasizing international reputational harm has the weakest impacts on mobilization, and may even be worse than saying nothing at all.

¹¹⁸ Cox 2015.

We see several important implications for future research on international law, human rights, and related areas. One key question is whether our findings hold in other contexts, countries, and/or framing approaches. Australia's refugee policy is highly salient in domestic politics, and while not unique, it is undeniably controversial. On the one hand, this may give experimental frames stronger impacts because people draw from underlying emotional tropes. On the other hand, it could dampen impacts because predispositions are entrenched,¹¹⁹ or because Australians have learned over time that no amount of mobilization will yield significant policy change. Only with further cross-national research will we know whether and when these findings travel.

We urge future research in this vein to explore attitudes as well as action: this is key to testing some of the literature's most prominent theories. Additionally, our findings point to important questions about the processes that underlie differential responses to frames. We have suggested that IL frames may have the strongest impacts because they offer clarity that a standard has been breached, whereas moral frames may invoke the strongest sense of duty. It is also possible that all negative frames, and especially reputational frames, elicit feelings of guilt and/or despondency. Further theoretical development and survey questions specifically aimed at gauging these complex reactions can shed important light on these important questions.

¹¹⁹ Bechtel et al. 2015.

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APPENDIX

I. Results

Table 1a. Average Treatment Effects, Policy Approval

	Model 1	Model 2
International Law	-.452** [-.616, -.287]	-.352** [-.502, -.201]
Moral	-.264** [-.427, -.100]	-.230** [-.380, -.081]
Reputational	-.156 [-.318, .005]	-.129 [-.276, .018]
Education		-.169** [-.238, -.101]
Income		.008 [-.001, .017]
Age		.084** [.030, .139]
Ethnic Distance		.249** [.203, .295]
Female		-.120* [-.228, -.013]
Party: Labor		-.881** [-1.024, -.737]
Party: Greens		-1.408** [-1.624, -1.191]
Party: Other/ Independent		-.353** [-.537, -.169]
Party: Don't know/ Won't vote		-.724** [-.878, -.570]
Constant	2.702** [2.588, 2.816]	3.071** [2.761, 3.382]
Observations	2052	2008
R ²	.015	.207
F Statistic	10.179**	43.290**

** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. OLS coefficients with 95% confidence intervals in brackets.

0 = Strongly disapprove, 1 = Disapprove, 2 = Neither/nor, 3 = Approve, 4 = Strongly approve.

Table 2a. Wald Tests, Equality of Coefficients in Table 1a

	Model 1			Model 2		
	Intl Law Frame	Moral Frame	Reputational Frame	Intl Law Frame	Moral Frame	Reputational Frame
Intl Law		.028	< .001		.121	.004
Moral	.028		.203	.121		.186
Reputational	< .001	.203		.004	.186	

Table 3a. Power Analysis: Policy Approval

	Intl Law Frame	Moral Frame	Reputational Frame
Control	.999 (<i>N</i> = 1024)	.989 (<i>N</i> = 1041)	.720 (<i>N</i> = 1061)
Intl Law Frame		.840 (<i>N</i> = 991)	.996 (<i>N</i> = 1011)
Moral Frame	.840 (<i>N</i> = 991)		.403 (<i>N</i> = 1028)
Reputational Frame	.996 (<i>N</i> = 1011)	.403 (<i>N</i> = 1028)	

$\alpha = .05$

Table 4a. Factor Analysis

Factor	Loading	Uniqueness
Petition	.475	.775
Protest	.547	.700
Donate	.515	.735
Cronbach's α		.550

Table 5a. Average Treatment Effects, Policy Action

	Model 1	Model 2
International Law	.040 [-.045, .125]	-.003 [-.084, .078]
Moral	.032 [-.053, .116]	.014 [-.067, .095]
Reputational	-.059 [-.142, .025]	-.084* [-.163, -.004]
Education		.070** [.033, .108]
Income		-.002 [-.007, .003]
Age		-.077** [-.106, -.047]
Ethnic Distance		-.041** [-.066, -.016]
Female		-.015 [-.073, .043]
Party: Labor		.289** [.212, .366]
Party: Greens		.596** [.479, .713]
Party: Other/ Independent		.003 [-.096, .103]
Party: Don't know/ Won't vote		.059 [-.024, .142]
Constant	-.002 [-.061, .056]	-.014 [-.181, .154]
Observations	2,052	2,008
R ²	.003	.117
F Statistic	2.133	21.998**

** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. OLS coefficients with 95% confidence intervals in brackets.
Dependent variable is derived through factor analysis (see Table 4a).

Table 6a. Wald Tests, Equality of Coefficients in Table 5a

	Model 1			Model 2		
	Intl Law Frame	Moral Frame	Reputational Frame	Intl Law Frame	Moral Frame	Reputational Frame
Intl Law		.852	.024		.693	.052
Moral	.852		.037	.693		.018
Reputational	.024	.037		.052	.018	

Table 7a. Power Analysis: Policy Action

	Intl Law Frame	Moral Frame	Reputational Frame
Control	.098 (N = 1024)	.081 (N = 1041)	.159 (N = 1061)
Intl Law Frame		.052 (N=991)	.348 (N = 1011)
Moral Frame	.052 (N=991)		.306 (N = 1028)
Reputational Frame	.348 (N = 1011)	.306 (N = 1028)	

$\alpha = .05$. Dependent variable is derived through factor analysis (see Table 4a)

Table 8a. Mediation Analysis

	Intl Law vs. Control	Moral vs. Control	Reputational vs. Control	Intl Law vs. Moral	Intl Law vs. Reputational	Moral vs. Intl Law	Moral vs. Reputational	Reputational vs. Intl Law	Reputational vs. Moral
ACME†	.110** [.070, .150]	.073* [.027, .120]	.037* [.003, .070]	.049* [.006, .100]	.066** [.029, .110]	-.049* [-.100, -.006]	.028 [-.021, .070]	-.066** [-.110, -.029]	-.028 [-.070, .021]
Average Direct Effect	-.070 [-.154, .010]	-.041 [-.110, .030]	-.096* [-.170, .030]	-.041 [-.119, .040]	.033 [-.044, .110]	.041 [-.040, .119]	.063 [-.006, .140]	-.033 [-.110, .044]	-.063 [-.006, .140]
Total Effect	.040 [-.048, .130]	.032 [-.053, .120]	-.059 [-.137, .020]	.008 [-.076, .110]	.099* [.013, .180]	-.008 [-.110, .076]	.091* [.012, .170]	-.099* [-.180, -.013]	-.091* [-.170, -.012]
Proportion Mediated	2.740 [-20.5, 24.0]	2.284 [-18.0, 25.1]	-.639 [-6.23, 4.81]	5.914 [-10.5, 15.9]	.669* [.259, 2.53]	5.914 [-10.5, 15.9]	.303 [-.285, 1.06]	.669* [.259, 2.53]	.303 [-.285, 1.06]
Obs.	1041	1041	1061	991	1011	991	1028	1011	1028

***p<.01. * p<.05. Coefficients with 95% confidence intervals in brackets.
Dependent variable is derived through factor analysis (see Table 4a).*

Table 9a. Power Analysis: Mediation

	Intl Law Frame	Moral Frame	Reputational Frame
Control	.122 (N = 1024)	.121 (N = 1041)	.113 (N = 1061)
Intl Law Frame		.130 (N=991)	.122 (N = 1011)
Moral Frame	.130 (N=991)		.118 (N = 1028)
Reputational Frame	.113 (N = 1011)	.118 (N = 1028)	

$\alpha = .05$

II. Text Analysis

We identified 1784 articles between July 2015 and July 2018, based on our key search parameters: (1) 'boat' and (2) 'refugee' and/or 'asylum.' Pre-processing was fairly limited because we are chiefly interested in identifying the presence of terms we have identified as being associated with legal, moral, and reputational arguments – rather than conducting a far-reaching analysis of the corpus. We used Quanteda; pre-processing included stemming and removal of URLs and stopwords. We also dropped some expressions that might obfuscate interpretation. For instance, we dropped any instance of 'convention' that did not pertain to the refugee convention, e.g., 'conventional,' 'convention centre,' 'annual convention,' 'ALP convention,' 'party convention,' and 'climate change convention.' Similarly, we dropped any reference to reputation that was not about Australia's reputation (e.g., "Peter Dutton has a reputation as a hard-nosed politician").

Below, we provide some examples from the corpus. Our goal is simply to show some of the common international legal, moral, and international reputational formulations that exist:

"The UN Refugee Convention says countries shall not punish people for seeking Asylum and should never return refugees to their country of origin. We signed that convention."¹

"The government claims that the bill is consistent with international law. We strongly disagree. The bill would illegally punish refugees for entering Australia by boat" in violation of "Article 31 (1) of the Refugee Convention [and] would also violate Australia's human rights obligation to protect families and children."²

"My statute says I must speak out if particular acts are contrary to Australia's obligations under international law."³

"For any Christian, be they priest, brother or lay, the duty of care to children is far greater than any obligation under secular law. It is a sacred moral duty."⁴

"What a pity our leaders have propagated hysteria over boat arrivals, instead of leading us towards a culture of compassion where the odd boat arrivals are accepted and dealt with humanely within our moral obligation as global citizens."⁵

¹ David Isaacs and Alanna Maycock. "Australia is Hurting Children to Make a Point." *The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 13, 2017.

² Ben Saul and Jane McAdam. "Turnbull Disregards the Law with Cruel Refugee Ban." *The Sydney Morning Herald*. November 10, 2016.

³ Michael Gordon. "The Cat Among the Pigeons." *The Age*, June 17, 2017.

⁴ Mark Porter. "A Sacred Duty." *The Newcastle Herald*. February 10, 2017.

⁵ Lainie Anderson. Out of Sight, Out of Mind – the Shame of Our Nation." *The Advertiser*. May 8, 2016.

“The treatment in recent years by Coalition and Labor governments of people seeking asylum has, *The Age* has consistently argued, been shameful. It is a blot on a nation that prides itself on fairness, decency and opportunity, a nation that has long been enriched economically and socially by immigration, by cultural diversity. We have also argued our governments' policies are not only morally dubious by being harsh to the point of inhumane, they also contravene international law. Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which enshrines the legal right of people fleeing persecution.”⁶

“We understand it's part of Immigration Minister Peter Dutton's job to sell the government's troubling treatment of asylum seekers in offshore processing centres on Manus Island and Nauru. That means making no admissions or concessions about inhumane practices that have drawn widespread international condemnation and blackened Australia's reputation.”⁷

“We are the generation that will inherit the damage done to our national character, reputation and most significantly the harm done to the mental health and wellbeing of those who have sought our help and protection.”⁸

The policies have “a deep and abiding impact on the nation's international reputation, which matters.”⁹

To create Figure 1 (main article), we identified specific terms that align with international legal, moral, or reputational arguments. In most cases, it was evident to which of the three frames a specific term applied, but when it was not, we read the article for context and categorized it accordingly. For instance, the term ‘obligation’ appears in reference to IL in some cases, and in relation to moral codes in others. We hand-coded these. The table below displays the terms we included in each frame.

Terms Included in Each Frame		
International Law	Moral	Reputational
convention	compassion	embarrass/ed/ing
international law	duty of care	global citizen
international legal	decent/cy	international pariah
legal duty	ethic/ethics/ethical	international standing
legal obligation	moral/ly	global standing
legal responsibility	moral duty	national character
ratify/ratified/ratification	moral obligation	reputation
treaty	moral responsibility	

⁶ The Editors. “Film Shows Why Asylum Policy Must be Changed.” *The Age*, May 9, 2016.

⁷ The Editor. “Secrecy the Only Winner in Manus Court Settlement.” *Sydney Morning Herald*. June 16, 2017.

⁸ Aquinas College Class of 2016. One in, All in. *Gold Coast Bulletin*, December 6, 2016.

⁹ Claire Higgins. “Australia is Bankrupting its Global Standing, and it’s all for just \$200 a Fortnight.” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, August 29, 2017.

III. Sample

We worked with Ipsos Australia¹⁰, spending 10 days in the field in July/August 2018. The sample size was largely determined by Australia’s population (24.6 million people), margin of error parameters, and the project’s budget. We determined that with approximately 500 respondents per group, we could achieve a margin of error of about 4.5% with a 95% confidence level. Ipsos uses quotas on region, gender, and age to ensure that the sample broadly represents the Australia population. The basic demographics from the survey are generally consistent with what we observe in the general Australian population (Australian Election Study 2019). The table below provides comparisons.

The main area of potential concern is education – our survey population underrepresents individuals with the US equivalent of a trade school or community college diploma, and overrepresents those with a high school diploma or less, or a Bachelor’s degree or higher. We gauge whether this is a problem by reconducting the analyses and weighting the observations by education level as observed in the AES data. The results are highly similar to those obtained without weighting and do not alter any of our findings. Those results are not included in the interest of space, but they are available upon request.

Comparison of Cumulative Percentages in Australian Population (Australian Election Study [AES]) and Experiment

	Demographic	AES 2019	Experiment
<i>Age</i>	18 to 34	25.9	28.3
	35 to 49	30.4	27.5
	50 to 64	23.2	25
	65+	20.5	19.2
<i>Gender</i>	Male	49.8	51.3
	Female	48.2	48.7
	Other/Skipped	1.9	0.0

¹⁰ www.ipsos.com/en-au. The survey is registered at egap.org/registration/[redacted to maintain anonymity], with IRB number [redacted to maintain anonymity].

Continued). Comparison of Cumulative Percentages in Australian Population (Australian Election Study [AES]) and Experiment

	Demographic	AES 2019	Experiment
<i>Income</i>	<\$20,000	10.3	4.6
	\$20,000-\$39,999	13.7	20.3
	\$40,000-\$59,999	14.2	16.4
	\$60,000-\$79,999	8.1	11.9
	\$80,000-\$99,999	11.0	10.4
	\$100,000-\$124,999	18.7	15.7
	\$150,000-\$199,999	9.6	5.0
	\$200,000+	6.3	4.3
	Other/skipped	8.0	11.3
<i>Education</i>	High school or less	22.3	30.3
	Other tertiary qualification	49.3	32.2
	BA or higher	25.2	35.4
	Other/skipped	3.21	2.13
<i>Birthplace</i>	Australia	74.7	78.5
	UK	5.5	6
	NZ	1.2	2.3
	Other	18.6	13.2
<i>Region</i>	New South Wales	32	34.8
	Victoria	26.1	25.7
	Queensland	19.8	19.1
	South Australia	7.1	6.9
	Western Australia	10.3	9.3
	Tasmania	2.9	2.4
	Northern Territory	0.6	0.5
	Australian Cap Territory	1.3	1.4

III. Balance Tests

We assess balance across various demographic, attitudinal/identity-based, and geographic factors. We present the data visually. P-values from likelihood ratio tests for the equality of joint distributions are available upon request. Figure 1a looks at the balance across gender and age group. The balance across gender generally looks good, with the differences never achieving statistical significance. Balance is generally good across age group, but the 35-49 age group is overrepresented in the IL group as compared to the moral ($p < .05$), and the 50-64 age group is

underrepresented in the IL group as compared to the control ($p < .05$). This is potentially a threat to inference because older individuals are more supportive of Australia’s boat arrivals policy.¹¹

Figure 1a. Balance Across Gender and Age Group

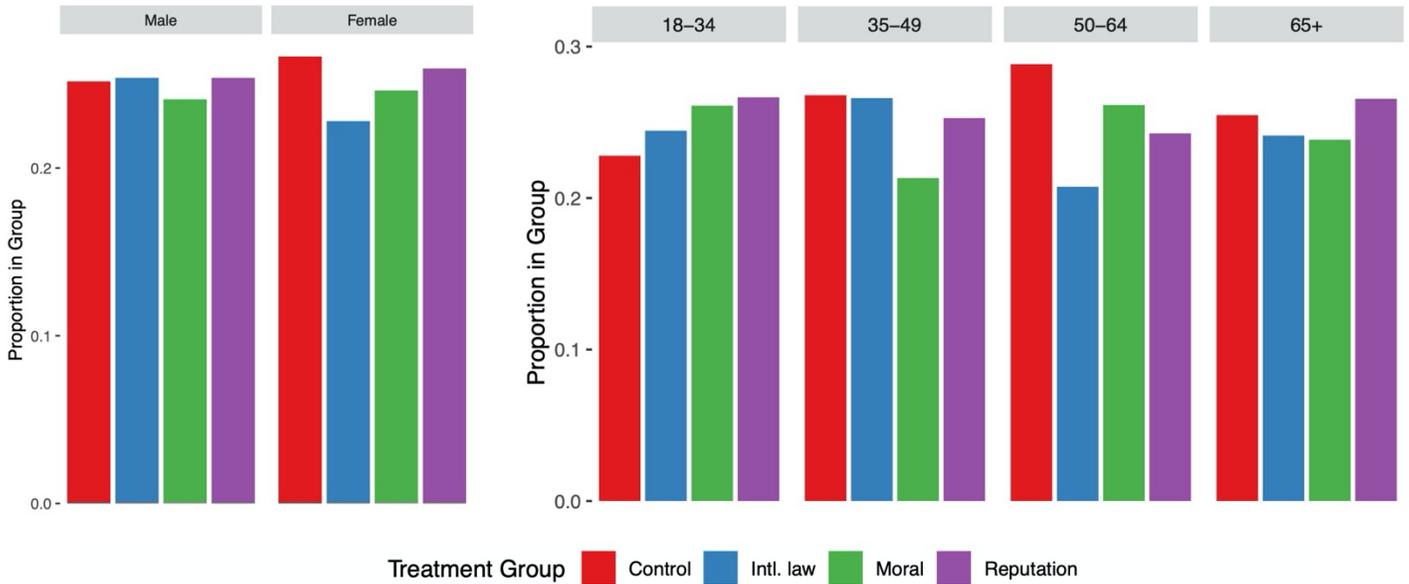
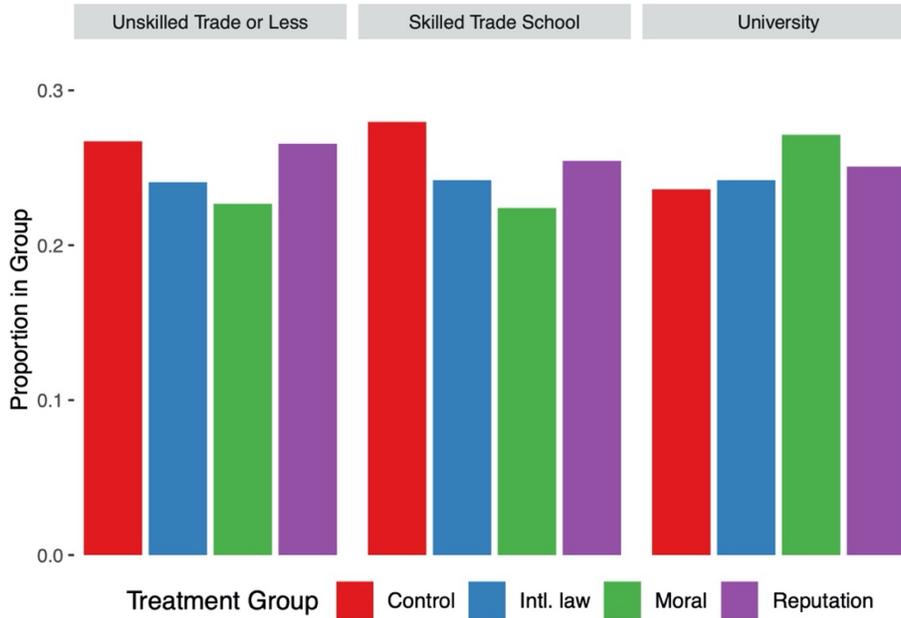


Figure 2a explores balance across education level. Here, we find one area of imbalance: more people with a university degree (BA or higher) are more heavily assigned to the moral treatment as compared to the control. This is potentially a threat to inference because educated people are more critical of existing policy.¹² Balance across all other comparisons is good.

¹¹ Among the control group and for each treatment group, older individuals favor existing policy significantly more strongly ($p < .01$).

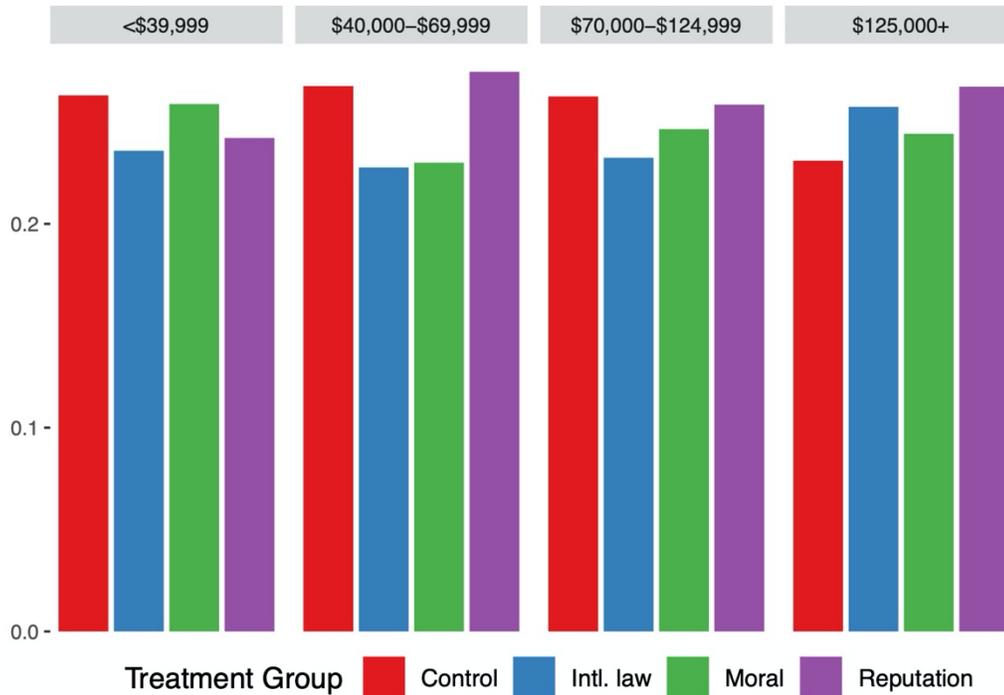
¹² Among the control group and across each treatment, people with a BA or higher are significantly more critical of Australia’s boat arrivals policy ($p < .01$).

Figure 2a. Balance Across Education



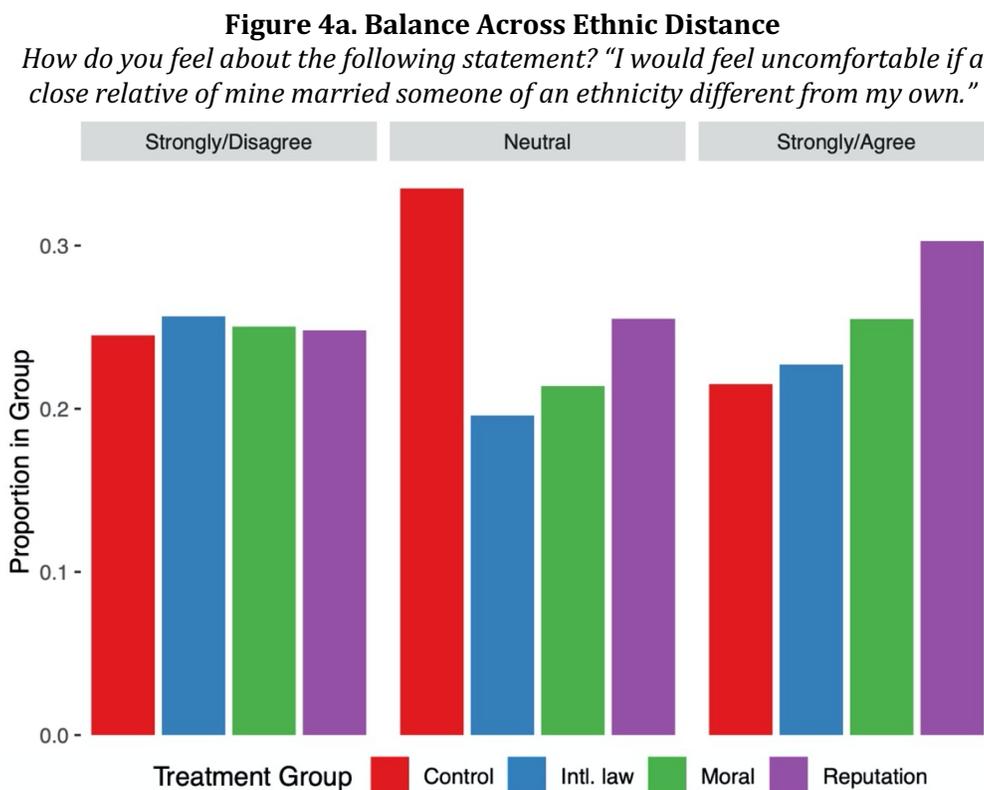
Next, we look at balance across the income distribution. Figure 3a demonstrates that there is very little imbalance for this covariate.

Figure 3a. Balance Across Income



Next, we turn to two attitudinal/identity factors that might also affect peoples' views on refugees. The first is ethnic identity. To gauge 'ethnic distance,' we asked respondents how they

would feel if a close relative married someone of an ethnicity different to their own.¹³ Figure 4a reveals some areas of concern. First, the IL group contains more ethnically inclusive individuals ($p < .01$ compared to the control and $p < .05$ compared to the reputation group). Second, the control group contains more people who are neutral on the ethnic distance question ($p < .05$ or smaller in all three comparisons). Finally, the reputational group has more ethnically distant individuals, particularly compared to the control ($p < .05$). This imbalance creates a potential threat to inference because ethnically-distant individuals support existing policy more strongly.¹⁴



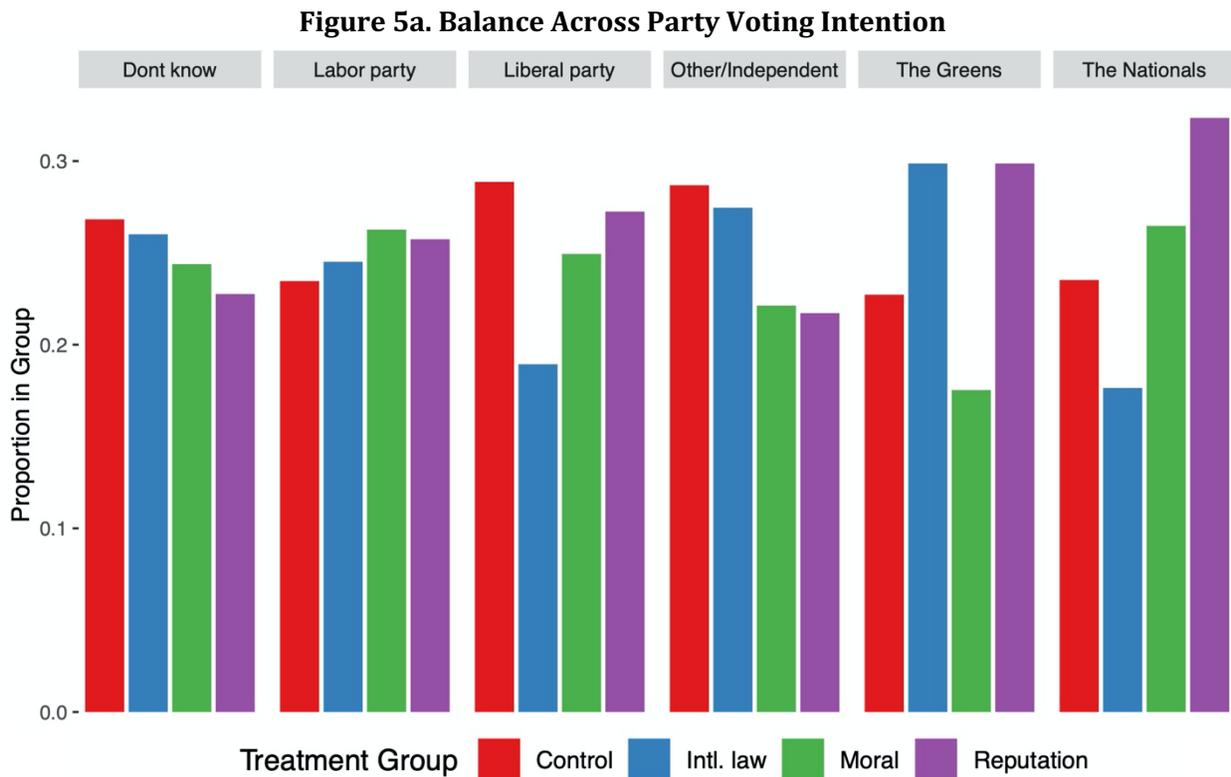
Next, we look at the distribution of voting intention across treatment group. Although Australia’s boat arrivals policy has general bipartisan consensus in Parliament, the right-leaning Liberals and Nationals, who currently form a coalition government, are particularly well-known for their tough

¹³ It is not common practice in Australian surveys to ask about race or ethnicity. In the survey, we used the term ‘ethnicity,’ as it is somewhat more prevalent.

¹⁴ Across each treatment as well as the control, more ethnically-distant individuals are significantly more opposed to existing policy ($p < .001$). See also Huynh and Neyland 2020.

stance. In contrast, Green Party MPs are outspoken in their criticism of the policy. Among voters, Greens/Labor supporters tend to oppose the policy, whereas Coalition supporters are more favorable.¹⁵

Figure 5a shows two areas of potential concern. First, Greens supporters are underrepresented in the moral group; this difference is statistically significant ($p = .031$) in comparison to the IL frame. Second, there is a noticeable under-assignment of Liberal Party supporters to the IL frame. These differences are statistically significant or very close to standard thresholds in comparison to all three other groups. This imbalance potentially poses a potential threat to inference because support for existing policy is strongly related to political party preference.¹⁶



¹⁵ Carson et al. 2016.

¹⁶ Among the control group and each treatment, those who intended to vote for the Liberal-National coalition in the next Federal election are significantly more supportive of policy as compared to all other groups ($p < .001$). Those who intended to vote for the Greens are more critical of existing policy as compared to Labor voters ($p < .05$), too.

IV. Robustness Checks

a. Discussion

Other than the models with covariates displayed in Tables 1a and 5a above (discussed in the main text), we conducted one other series of robustness checks. We which analyzed petition, protest, and donation separately rather than as a factor. The results are largely consistent with those discussed in the main text, with one potential exception: the IL and moral groups are somewhat more strongly inclined to sign a petition as compared to the control ($p = .067$ and $.080$, respectively), but that is not the case for attending a protest or donating. This suggests that the IL and moral frames are better able to induce low-cost action than high(er) cost action in comparison to the control.

As in the analysis with a factor as the dependent variable (Model 2 of Table 5a), including covariates in the model renders these differences indistinguishable from zero for the IL frame ($p = .432$) and more marginally significant for the moral frame ($p = .165$). Those who receive the reputational frame are also significantly less likely to say they would donate when covariates are included, but otherwise the results do not change notably for petition and protest. Therefore, one's conclusions about whether frames affect willingness to sign a petition (and about whether reputational frames affect willingness to donate) depend somewhat on one's views on rebalancing. If one does not think rebalancing is appropriate, IL and moral framing do drive up willingness to take this low-cost form of action. If one thinks covariates should be included, treatment does not affect any form of mobilization as compared to the control condition.

The frame comparisons are largely the same whether analyzed as one factor or as three separate models (petition, protest, donate), although the differences between frames are sometimes smaller in the separate models – the baseline probability of expressing interest in taking any single action is low.

We also conducted mediation analysis for each outcome separately (Tables 13a to 18a below). Not surprisingly (given the results discussed above), the differences are more pronounced for petition and more muted for protesting or donating. Inducing willingness to take these costlier types of action is much harder across the board. One could go into some detail on the differences between petition and protest/donate theoretically, but this does not fundamentally alter the findings discussed in the main article.

b. Tables

Table 10a. Average Treatment Effects, Policy Action

	<i>Petition</i>		<i>Protest</i>		<i>Donate</i>	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
International Law	.152 [-.010, .314]	.069 [-.103, .241]	.090 [-.123, .302]	-.003 [-.231, .225]	-.055 [-.259, .148]	-.131 [-.347, .085]
Moral	.144 [-.017, .304]	.121 [-.050, .291]	-.001 [-.217, .215]	-.058 [-.289, .174]	.009 [-.190, .207]	-.011 [-.220, .199]
Reputational	-.074 [-.237, .089]	-.135 [-.308, .039]	-.087 [-.307, .132]	-.166 [-.401, .070]	-.154 [-.359, .051]	-.245* [-.463, -.026]
Education		.122** [.043, .201]		.111* [.004, .217]		.187** [.087, .287]
Income		-.010 [-.020, .0004]		-.001 [-.015, .013]		-.001 [-.014, .012]
Age		-.124** [-.187, -.061]		-.160** [-.248, -.073]		-.201** [-.283, -.119]
Ethnic Distance		-.182** [-.237, -.127]		-.069 [-.142, .005]		.028 [-.037, .093]
Female		.077 [-.047, .201]		-.186* [-.354, -.019]		.011 [-.145, .167]
Party: Labor		.678** [.509, .847]		.649** [.412, .886]		.311** [.099, .523]
Party: Greens		1.219** [.976, 1.461]		.833** [.534, 1.132]		.684** [.412, .956]
Party: Other/ Independent		.180 [-.046, .407]		-.076 [-.450, .298]		-.146 [-.467, .174]
Party: Don't know/ Won't vote		.239* [.053, .425]		.138 [-.138, .414]		.082 [-.152, .317]
Constant	-.461** [-.577, -.345]	-.593** [-.953, -.233]	-1.356** [-1.506, -1.206]	-1.386** [-1.870, -.902]	-1.188** [-1.327, -1.050]	-1.334** [-1.782, -.886]
Observations	2052	2008	2052	2008	2052	2008
Log Likelihood	-1227.550**	-1078.820**	-608.659	-537.366	-701.727	-631.322

** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. Probit coefficients with 95% confidence intervals in brackets.

Table 11a. Wald Tests, Equality of Coefficients in Table 10a

	Model 1			Model 2		
	Intl Law Frame	Moral Frame	Reputational Frame	Intl Law Frame	Moral Frame	Reputational Frame
International Law		.921	.007		.557	.023
Moral	.921		.009	.557		.004
Reputational	.007	.009		.023	.004	
	Model 3			Model 4		
International Law		.409	.114		.646	.178
Moral	.409		.449	.646		.378
Reputational	.114	.449		.178	.378	
	Model 5			Model 6		
International Law		.542	.362		.281	.329
Moral	.542		.124	.281		.038
Reputational	.362	.124		.329	.038	

Table 12a. Power Analysis: Policy Action

	<i>Petition</i>			<i>Protest</i>			<i>Donate</i>		
	Intl Law Frame	Moral Frame	Reputational Frame	Intl Law Frame	Moral Frame	Reputational Frame	Intl Law Frame	Moral Frame	Reputational Frame
Control	.133 (N = 1024)	.125 (N = 1041)	.067 (N = 1061)	.057 (N = 1024)	.050 (N = 1041)	.056 (N = 1061)	.053 (N = 1024)	.051 (N = 1041)	.073 (N = 1061)
Intl Law Frame		.050 (N=991)	.227 (N = 1011)		.057 (N=991)	.703 (N = 1011)		.054 (N=991)	.059 (N = 1011)
Moral Frame	.050 (N=991)		.217 (N = 1028)	.057 (N=991)		.055 (N = 1028)	.054 (N=991)		.076 (N = 1028)
Reputational Frame	.227 (N = 1011)	.217 (N = 1028)			.055 (N = 1028)		.059 (N = 1011)		

Table 13a. Mediation Analysis: Petition

	Intl Law vs. Control	Moral vs. Control	Reputational vs. Control	Intl Law vs. Moral	Intl Law vs. Reputational	Moral vs. Intl Law	Moral vs. Reputational	Reputational vs. Intl Law	Reputational vs. Moral
ACME [†]	.073** [.046, .100]	.044** [.018, .070]	.023** [.001, .050]	.033** [.003, .060]	.048** [.019, .080]	-.033** [-.060, -.003]	.018 [-.010, .050]	.048** [.019, .080]	-.018 [-.050, .010]
Average Direct Effect	-.036 [-.087, .010]	-.008 [-.055, .040]	-.053 [-.103, .010]	-.036 [-.089, .010]	.020* [-.032, .070]	.036 [-.010, .089]	.051* [.001, .100]	.020* [-.032, .070]	-.051* [-.100, -.001]
Total Effect	.036 [-.022, .090]	.036 [-.017, .090]	-.030 [-.079, .020]	-.003 [-.058, .060]	.069* [.006, .130]	.003 [-.060, .058]	.068* [.011, .120]	.069* [.006, .130]	-.068* [-.130, -.006]
Proportion Mediated	2.003 [-11.4, 15.0]	1.209 [-6.2, 13.0]	-.763 [-.109, .807]	-13.228 [-13.7, 17.1]	.703* [.298, 2.28]	-13.228 [-13.7, 17.1]	.261* [.272, .880]	.703* [.298, 2.28]	.261* [.272, .880]
Obs	1024	1041	1061	991	1011	991	1028	1011	1028

** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. Coefficients with 95% confidence intervals in brackets. [†]Average causal mediation effect.

Table 14a. Power Analysis: Mediation (Petition)

	Intl Law Frame	Moral Frame	Reputational Frame
Control	.124 ($N = 1024$)	.121 ($N = 1041$)	.113 ($N = 1061$)
Intl Law Frame		.130 ($N = 991$)	.122 ($N = 1011$)
Moral Frame	.130 ($N = 991$)		.118 ($N = 1028$)
Reputational Frame	.122 ($N = 1011$)	.118 ($N = 1028$)	

$\alpha = .05$

Table 15a. Mediation Analysis: Protest

	Intl Law vs. Control	Moral vs. Control	Reputational vs. Control	Intl Law vs. Moral	Intl Law vs. Reputational	Moral vs. Intl Law	Moral vs. Reputational	Reputational vs. Intl Law	Reputational vs. Moral
ACME [†]	.024** [.014, .040]	.016** [.007, .030]	.008* [.000, .020]	.010* [.006, .020]	.014* [.006, .020]	-.010* [-.020, -.006]	.006 [-.003, .020]	-.014* [-.020, .006]	-.006 [-.020, .003]
Average Direct Effect	-.011 [-.048, .020]	-.021 [-.053, .010]	-.022 [-.052, .010]	.008 [-.026, .040]	.013 [-.021, .040]	.008 [-.026, .040]	.009 [-.025, .040]	-.013 [-.040, .021]	-.009 [-.040, .025]
Total Effect	.014 [-.025, .050]	-.005 [-.035, .030]	-.014 [-.044, .020]	.018 [-.018, .050]	.028 [-.006, .060]	.018 [-.018, .050]	.009 [-.025, .040]	-.028 [-.060, .006]	-.009 [-.040, .025]
Proportion Mediated	1.747 [-27.2, 13.9]	-2.824 [-13.8, 14.1]	-.587 [-7.7, 5.63]	.575 [-4.5, 7.2]	.519 [-4.80, .134]	.575 [-4.5, 7.2]	.661 [-4.1, 4.5]	.519 [-4.80, .134]	.661 [-4.1, 4.5]
Obs	1024	1041	1061	991	1011	991	1028	1011	1028

***p<.01. * p<.05. Coefficients with 95% confidence intervals in brackets.*

Table 16a. Power Analysis: Mediation (Protest)

	Intl Law Frame	Moral Frame	Reputational Frame
Control	.051 (N = 1024)	.049 (N = 1041)	.047 (N = 1061)
Intl Law Frame		.052 (N=991)	.050 (N = 1011)
Moral Frame	.052 (N=991)		.047 (N = 1028)
Reputational Frame	.050 (N = 1011)	.047 (N = 1028)	

$\alpha = .05$

Table 17a. Mediation Analysis: Donate

	Intl Law vs. Control	Moral vs. Control	Reputational vs. Control	Intl Law vs. Moral	Intl Law vs. Reputational	Moral vs. Intl Law	Moral vs. Reputational	Reputational vs. Intl Law	Reputational vs. Moral
ACME [†]	.023** [.013, .030]	.016** [.005, .030]	.008* [.000, .020]	.010* [.001, .020]	.013** [.005, .020]	-.010* [-.020, .001]	.006 [-.003, .010]	-.013** [-.005, -.020]	-.006 [-.010, .003]
Average Direct Effect	-.035 [-.073, .000]	-.019 [-.057, .020]	-.035 [-.070, .001]	-.020 [-.062, .020]	.003 [-.033, .040]	.021 [-.020, .062]	.020 [-.018, .060]	-.003 [-.040, .033]	-.020 [-.060, .018]
Total Effect	-.012 [-.051, .020]	-.003 [-.042, .030]	-.027 [-.062, .010]	-.010 [-.050, .030]	.016 [-.021, .060]	.010 [-.030, .050]	.026 [-.013, .060]	-.016 [-.060, .021]	-.026 [-.060, .013]
Proportion Mediated	-1.679 [-21.2, 16.3]	-6.040 [-10.8, 12.4]	-.283 [-2.4, 2.2]	-.995 [-9.9, 9.2]	.793 [-6.3, 7.7]	-.995 [-9.9, 9.2]	.229 [-.97, 1.67]	.793 [-6.3, 7.7]	.229 [-.97, 1.67]
Obs	1024	1041	1061	991	1011	991	1028	1011	1028

** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. Coefficients with 95% confidence intervals in brackets.

Table 18a. Power Analysis: Donate

	Intl Law Frame	Moral Frame	Reputational Frame
Control	.055 ($N = 1024$)	.056 ($N = 1041$)	.053 ($N = 1061$)
Intl Law Frame		($N = 991$)	.052 ($N = 1011$)
Moral Frame	.056 ($N = 991$)		.053 ($N = 1028$)
Reputational Frame	.052 ($N = 1011$)	.053 ($N = 1028$)	

$\alpha = .05$

V. Survey

The survey proceeded in six steps:

- (a) All respondents: obtain consent.
- (b) All respondents: demographic questions, a voting intention question, and an ethnic distance question.
- (c) All respondents: receive basic information about existing policy.
- (d) All respondents: receive basic information on the government's justification for existing policy.
- (e) Respondents are randomly divided into four groups: control, international law, moral, and international reputation. The control group receives no vignette. Each of the three treatment groups receive a vignette that emphasizes a particular set of considerations (international law, moral factors, or international reputation).

We had concerns about potential word-ordering effects. Therefore, for each treatment group, half of respondents receive (d) first and (e) second, and the other half receive (e) first and (d) second.¹³⁶ For the control group, there is no 'before' or 'after' since there is no vignette.

- (f) All respondents: post-treatment questions about policy approval and policy action.

Full Survey Instrument

a. [Obtain consent]

To begin with, the following demographic questions are simply for classification purposes – to ensure that we speak to a broad cross section of the Australian population.

b1. *In which of the following areas do you live? (Select one)*

- 1. Sydney
- 2. Rural NSW
- 3. Melbourne
- 4. Rural Victoria
- 5. Brisbane
- 6. Rural Queensland
- 7. Adelaide
- 8. Rural South Australia
- 9. Perth
- 10. Rural Western Australia
- 11. ACT
- 12. Northern Territory
- 13. Hobart
- 14. Rural Tasmania

b2. *And which of these would best describe the area in which you live? (Select one)*

- 1. Within a capital city
- 2. Within a major Regional city
- 3. Within a rural town or its surrounds
- 4. More than 5km from the nearest town

¹³⁶ Post-survey comparison of these subgroups revealed no significant differences in responses, so we analyzed them together.

b3. Please tell us which age group you belong to: (Select one)

1. Under 18 **[TERMINATE]**
2. 18 to 34
3. 35 to 49
4. 50 to 64
5. 65 years or older

b4. Are you... (Select one)

1. Male
2. Female
3. Other

b5. What is the highest level of formal education that you have completed? (Select one)

1. Higher degree or post graduate diploma
2. Bachelor degree
3. Undergraduate diploma
4. Associate diploma
5. Skilled vocational
6. Basic vocational
7. Completed highest level of school
8. Did not complete highest level of school
99. Prefer not to say

b6. For socio-demographic classification, which of the following best describes your **annual household income** before taxes?

This includes the combined income of all those living in your household, considering income from all sources (e.g. from employment, pensions, state benefits, investments or other sources) (Select one)
[income brackets suppressed to conserve space]

b7. In what country were you born? (Select one)

[country list suppressed to conserve space]

b8. At the next Federal election, who would you be most likely to vote for? (Select one)

[1 → 4 RANDOMIZED]

1. Labor party
2. Liberal party
3. The Nationals
4. The Greens
96. Other/Independent
97. Don't know
99. I don't intend to vote

b9. How do you feel about the following statement? "I would feel uncomfortable if a close relative of mine married someone of an ethnicity different from my own." (Select one)

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

What comes next is information that we would like to you read with your full attention. You will subsequently be asked questions that relate to this content, therefore please consider this carefully.

c. Policy explanation (all respondents):

Under Australian law, anyone who arrives in Australia by boat without a visa is not allowed to enter the country. Instead, they are sent to an offshore processing and detention facility. Even if they're later found eligible for refugee status, they will never be allowed to settle in Australia.

d. Government justification (all respondents):

The government of Australia states that this policy is necessary to protect our borders and to deter people from making the dangerous passage to this country.

e. Treatments: respondents randomly divided into four groups:

(1) **Control:** no additional information.

(2) **International law treatment:**

Critics of this policy argue that it breaches international agreements that Australia is a party to. They say it violates the Refugee Convention, which legally obligates countries to protect refugees regardless of how they arrive. They argue that the detention facilities violate a core treaty on standards of humane treatment, and breach a children's rights treaty requiring children to be protected and not imprisoned.

(3) **Moral treatment:**

Critics of this policy argue that it breaches standards of human dignity. They say it violates a moral obligation Australia has to protect refugees regardless of how they arrive. They argue that the detention facilities violate ethical standards of humane treatment, and breach the principle that children should be protected and not imprisoned.

(4) **Reputational treatment:**

Critics of this policy argue that it harms Australia's international reputation. They say it violates an obligation that all countries have, to protect refugees regardless of how they arrive. They argue that the detention facilities violate internationally accepted standards of humane treatment, and breach the international principle that children should be protected and not imprisoned.

For each treatment group in (e) above, half of respondents receive (d) first and (e) second, and the other half receive (e) first and (d) second. For the control group, there is no 'before' or 'after' since there is no vignette.

[NEW SCREEN; ALL RESPONDENTS]:

f1. *Do you approve or disapprove of Australia's current policy regarding people who arrive here by boat? (Select one)*

1. Strongly approve
2. Approve
3. Neither approve nor disapprove
4. Disapprove
5. Strongly disapprove

f2. *Would you participate in any of the following activities? (Select all that apply)*

[RANDOMIZE 1-3]

1. Sign a petition urging the government to change its policies toward people who arrive by boat
 2. Attend a protest urging the government to change its policies toward people who arrive by boat
 3. Donate money to an organisation working to change government policies toward people who arrive by boat
99. None of the above