Moral Outrage and Immigration Policy during the Trump Administration

<u>Introduction</u>

Earlier this year, in response to footage of inhumane treatment of immigrant children at a federal detention center in McAllen, Texas, more than 600 protest marches took place across the United States (McCausland, Guadalupe, and Rosenblatt 2018). From New York City to Wyoming, individuals took action in opposition to the Trump administration's zero-tolerance immigration policy. Many Americans overcame the collective action problem, bearing the costs of individual action for the advancement of collective objectives (Olson 1965). And perhaps even more puzzlingly from a rational choice perspective, the protest objectives did not include shared benefits for the groups of individuals protesting. Rather, verbalized through slogans such as "compassion not cages" and "families belong together," protesters sought to change a policy that affected third-party victims of what they deemed to be a moral injustice.

Those engaging in costly actions to oppose the policy justified their decisions with moral language. For example, Representative Pramila Jayapal from Washington, who was arrested with 500 others for occupying a Senate office building in protest, stated, "The idea of kids in cages and asylum seekers in prisons and moms being separated from breast-feeding children, this is just beyond politics, it really is just about right and wrong" (Yoon-Hendricks and Greenberg 2018).

In this paper, I will explore moral outrage as an explanatory variable for understanding variation in political behavior involving recent immigration issues in the United States. I conceptualize moral outrage as a form of anger in the specific context of a perceived moral violation committed against third-party victims. The first section of the paper will turn to

existing literature on emotions to draw comparisons between moral outrage and two similar emotions, anger and indignation. I argue that moral outrage is similar to these emotions in that it entails System 1 processing and intuitive judgments, the cognitive appraisal that an injustice has been committed by a perpetrator, and the action tendency to seek to bring about change through coercion.

The second section of the paper will explore moral outrage and other emotions through several recent immigration issues. First, I study media coverage and public reception of the zero-tolerance policy both before and after a "moral shock" in order to show how moral outrage seemed to influence public perceptions and political behavior related to the policy. Second, I briefly look at birthright citizenship as an example of an issue absent the emotional components to provoke moral outrage. Third, I analyze how distinct cognitive appraisals led to divergent emotional responses among Americans over President Trump's travel ban executive order. Finally, I use the case of "angel families" to explore a strategy used by political elites of blocking the dominant emotional response to one political issue by focusing public attention on a different issue that induces a competing emotional response.

Section I: Theory and Existing Literature

Anger, Indignation, and Moral Outrage

The primary emotion that I seek to analyze is moral outrage, which I hypothesize to be closely connected to anger and indignation. The purpose of exploring the connection between moral outrage and anger is that anger is one of just five emotions for which there is a high level of agreement among scientists about the nature of the emotion (Ekman 2016). Thus, by examining the potential similarities between moral outrage and anger, it is possible to gain a clearer understanding of the role that moral outrage may play in influencing political behavior.

Specifically, I hypothesize that there are similarities between anger and moral outrage in terms of cognitive appraisals, action tendencies, and information processing.

Cognitive appraisals

According to Elster (2009), anger is characterized by the belief that another party has imposed an unjust harm on the self. Petersen and Zukerman (2010) state, "anger is defined by appraisal that an individual or a group has committed an offensive action against one's self or group" (561-562). In contrast, indignation is used to describe an offensive action or injustice committed against individuals outside of the group. Drawing the distinction between anger and indignation, Costalli and Ruggeri (2015) state, "anger is an emotion regarding the self…where a person has directly suffered a wrongdoing and therefore reacts emotionally against the perpetrator. Indignation, however, is about a wrong done to a third party. Indignation emerges when an actor, B, perceives that actor/organization A has unjustly harmed an individual or group C" (128).

The concepts of anger and indignation described by these scholars are similar to how social psychologists and political scientists define moral outrage. In summarizing conceptualizations from several existing studies, Rothschild and Keefer (2017) state that moral outrage entails, "feelings of anger, which are directed at a third-party for violating some moral standard of justice or fairness" (209). Thomas and McGarty (2009) describe moral outrage as an emotion reflecting a desire to restore justice on behalf of third parties who have been victimized. Pagano and Huo (2007) associate moral outrage with "assigning blame for the victims' suffering to an external perpetrator" (231).

In short, anger, indignation, and moral outrage all entail the appraisal that an injustice was committed by a perpetrator. A key difference is that morally outraged individuals and those

who feel indignation are not the direct victims of the injustice that has been committed. In this paper, I will most closely examine the emotion of moral outrage, as opposed to anger, because in the immigration cases analyzed, those directly affected by immigration-related government actions are often not the same people or even members of the same group of people expressing outrage or participating in collective action on immigrants' behalf. Based on the frequent use of moral language surrounding the immigration issues under study, moral outrage also seems to be a more relevant emotion to consider than indignation.

Social Functions and Action Tendencies

Anger differs from most negative-valence emotions in terms of social functions and relationship goals. Angry individuals seek to engage with the source of conflict. As Fischer and Roseman (2007) point out, "the social function of anger can be conceptualized as attaining a better outcome by forcing a change in another person's behavior" (104). In their experiments comparing anger with contempt, the authors find that individuals in an angry state were more likely to seek to coerce others, and that the intensity of a subject's anger was significantly and positively associated with the coercion goal.

Research in psychology also offers some potential insights as to why angry individuals might be more likely to act on their coercion goals through protest, despite the costs of collective action. Leith and Baumeister's (1996) psychological experiments suggest that angry individuals downplay the costs and risk of their actions when making decisions. Lerner and Keltner's (2001) experiments indicate that angry individuals may be highly optimistic in their risk estimates. They also find that anger is associated with a heightened sense of individual control over outcomes.

Existing conceptualizations in the literature on moral outrage suggest that it is associated with similar social functions and action tendencies. Even though individuals are not directly

4

impacted by the perpetrator's actions, the perceived sense of moral injustice motivates them to remedy the unjust situation or punish the responsible parties. For example, an experiment conducted on moral outrage and international development activism found that individuals who were primed to feel a sense of moral outrage were more likely to demonstrate a commitment to taking collective action in support of distant victims (Thomas and McGarty 2009). Through a survey experiment on emotions surrounding the Iraq War, Pagano and Huo (2007) found that individuals who felt moral outrage toward Saddam Hussein and his regime were more likely to support actions aimed at punishing the perpetrators responsible for victimizing the Iraqi people.

Intuitive Judgments

Thirdly, I hypothesize that moral outrage is similar to indignation and anger in that it involves rapid, intuitive judgments. Kahneman and Sunstein (2007) describe two cognitive systems of the brain. System 1 is the intuitive system, which is characterized by automatic, effortless, and associative processes, while System 2 is more reflective and monitors the intuitive proposals of System 1. For the authors, System 1 is most relevant to the moral intuitions associated with indignation and outrage.

Other research in psychology also suggests that there is a link between anger and this heuristic-based, intuitive cognition. Lerner and Tiedens (2006) provide evidence that anger has depth of processing effects. Individuals who are angry rely on automatic and readily available cognitions and do not engage in careful or detailed processing. Likewise, Goldberg, Lerner, and Tetlock (1999) describe angry individuals as "intuitive prosecutors" who lower their thresholds for attributing intent and recommending punishment if they have witnessed a wrongdoing. They argue that anger increases one's desire to assign blame, often leading one to overlook mitigating details about a situation.

Therefore, based on the existing literature on moral outrage and its proposed similarities with anger outlined in this section, one should expect individuals to feel morally outraged if they perceive that a perpetrator has committed a moral injustice against a third-party victim. Individual perceptions of moral wrongdoing should be based on quick, intuitive judgments of right and wrong. Based on these judgments, the morally outraged should be motivated to bring about change or punish the perpetrator through action, feeling a heightened sense of individual control and low levels of risk associated with the actions taken to change the situation.

Section II: Analyzing Moral Outrage Through Recent Immigration Issues

The Zero-Tolerance Policy and Family Separations

The first immigration issue under study, President Trump's zero-tolerance policy, provides on opportunity to explore the above hypotheses about moral outrage empirically. I argue that coverage of children treated inhumanely at a federal detention center in Texas served as a clear "moral shock," defined in the social movement literature as an unexpected event or information that sparks a sense of moral outrage (Jasper 1998). By process tracing the events before and after this moral shock, I am able to observe some potential behavioral effects of moral outrage. Before the moral shock, the zero-tolerance policy was a peripheral issue for many Americans. Following the moral shock on June 17, 2018, the policy was transformed into what was perceived by many to be a blatant moral transgression by the Trump administration, capturing the attention of the country and spurring many individuals to action.

In March 2017, a senior Department of Homeland Security (DHS) official reported to CNN that the administration was considering the option of separating children from adults if they were found entering the country from the southern border illegally. One stated goal of the policy was to deter the exploitative use of children by adults who seek to cross the border illegally and

remain in the country. DHS spokesman David Lapan stated, "The journey north is a dangerous one, with too many situations where children – brought by parents, relatives or smugglers – are often exploited, abused or may even lose their lives" (Mallonee 2017). Under the proposed policy, all adults found illegally crossing the border would be apprehended and kept in federal criminal detention facilities as their cases were processed. Their children would be held separately under federal or state custody.

Though there was still no formal implementation of the policy, already in December 2017 a group of eight immigration rights advocacy organizations submitted a joint complaint to the Department of Homeland Security about family separations. The statement cites family unity as a fundamental human right recognized by the United States Supreme Court and then goes on to identify 155 cases of child-family separations that had occurred at the border as of October 2017, with an increase occurring since the Trump administration's public discussions of the proposed policy that March (Women's Refugee Commission 2017).

On April 6, 2018, Attorney General Jeff Sessions notified U.S. Attorney's Offices along the Southwest border of the new "zero-tolerance" policy. In his memorandum, he ordered the criminal prosecution of all adult migrants entering the country illegally (Department of Justice 2018). One of the implications of the policy was an increase in child-family separations, as children could not be held in federal detention facilities with their parents (Hegarty 2018). A Google News search of articles published in the days following the announcement shows fairly minimal coverage of the topic and no attempts to frame it as morally egregious policy. For example, The Washington Post and The New York Times did not cover the announcement, and articles on April 6 from CBS News, Fox News, Reuters, and NPR all discuss the topic on policy

grounds and ignore the issue of family separations ("Sessions Orders 'Zero Tolerance' Policy on Illegal Border Crossings" 2018; Shaw 2018; Lynch and Rosenberg 2018; Gonzales 2018).

On May 7, 2018, one month after the memorandum was delivered by Sessions, he gave two speeches addressing immigration law enforcement in San Diego, California and Scottsdale, Arizona. He outlined the stipulations of the zero-tolerance policy, this time explicitly mentioning the implication for family separations. In California, he stated, "I have put in place a 'zero tolerance' policy for illegal entry on our Southwest border. If you cross this border unlawfully, then we will prosecute you. If you are smuggling a child, then we will prosecute you and that child will be separated from you as required by law" (Sessions 2018a). He added in the Arizona speech, "If you don't like that, then don't smuggle children over our border" (Sessions 2018b)

Sessions' May speeches received far greater media attention than the announcement made one month earlier, and some expressed outrage. For example, many advocacy organizations staunchly opposed the policy, and seemed to view it as a moral transgression. Amnesty International's Americas Director said the that the policy "will cause untold damage to thousands of traumatized families" (Associated Press 2018).

Yet, Sessions' speeches did not generate mass public outcry. Much of the debate about zero tolerance centered on policy ineffectiveness. A New York Times article argued that the new policy "could flood the immigration courts" and "create new detention space shortages" (Jordan and Nixon 2018). A Vox piece claimed that the Trump administration was using dubious immigration statistics to justify the migrant deterrence strategy (Lind 2018). Meanwhile, the administration stood by Sessions' announcement and debated the issue on policy and moral grounds. For example, in an interview following the speeches, Chief of Staff John Kelly stated that the policy served as a tough deterrent, and he pushed back against any characterizations of

the legislation as a heartless policy (NPR 2018). Several weeks later, on June 14, Sessions defended the policy through a Bible verse, citing the command to "obey the laws of the government because God has ordained them for the purpose of order" (Gonzales 2018).

A couple of days later, on June 17, 2018, a moral shock changed the dynamics of the debate over the zero-tolerance policy and generated moral outrage throughout the country. Reporters were given access to a holding facility for immigrant children in McAllen, Texas. The Associated Press article showed photos of the inhumane conditions in the facility and described the scene, "Hundreds of children wait in a series of cages created by metal fencing. One cage had 20 children inside. Scattered about are bottles of water, bags of chips, and large foil sheets intended to serve as blankets…" (Merchant 2018). One day later, ProPublica, a New York City non-profit, released audio from inside the same border detention facility. Adding to the moral shock value, the audio captured distraught children crying for their parents while Border Patrol agents mocked them (Thompson 2018).

Following the release of these emotional-charged materials, the zero-tolerance policy immediately captured the attention of the nation. According to Google Trends data looking at search terms related to the policy, attention surrounding the issue increased dramatically during the week of June 17 – June 23, 2018 (Hegarty 2018).

Opposition to the zero-tolerance policy intensified and the policy was now framed primarily in emotional and moral terms. In her reporting from McAllen, Texas on June 18, Gayle King of CBS News reported that "the Statue of Liberty is really weeping today" (King 2018). Senator Ted Cruz asserted that "all Americans were rightly horrified by the images we are seeing on the news," and he proposed working on legislation to reunite families (Coaston 2018). Hundreds of clergies across the U.S. signed an open letter to the president and the American

people, denouncing the policy in the strongest terms and stating, "there must never again be internment camps, concentration camps, or forced detention camps by any other name on American soil….The current policy is ethically and morally unconscionable" (Newton 2018). Responding to an open-ended survey question asking Americans to describe the practice of separating children from their parents when families try to enter the United States illegally, the most frequently-used words by a national sample of likely voters were "sad", "terrible", "bad", "wrong", "disgusted", and "horrible" (Quinnipiac University 2018).

Emotional responses and moral objections to the policy were accompanied by many instances of collective action. Hundreds of marches took place across the country in the days following the moral shock. Protest slogans centered on supporting the victims of the transgressions ("families belong together") and evoked the horrific images from the detention facilities ("compassion not cages"). In New York City, marchers chanted, "When children are under attack, what do we do? Stand up, fight back!" (Yoon-Hendricks and Greenberg 2018).

Marches were not the only form of collective action exercised. For example, in the week following coverage of the child detention facilities, a San Francisco couple raised over $15 million through a Facebook fundraiser to help detained migrant parents post bond. Discussing the motivation behind the action, Dave Willner stated, "It was the closest thing we could do to hugging that kid," referencing a photo he had seen of a crying child at the border (Cunha and Selk 2018).

As a result of the mass outrage generated by the emotionally-charged content, the Trump administration was forced to retreat on its policy, signing an executive order to end the separation of families at the border that same week (Shear, Goodnough, and Haberman 2018). While debate and controversy over the policy continued after the signing of the order, the goal of

retracing the process up to this point is to analyze the apparent role that moral outrage played in the specific case of the zero-tolerance policy, and to draw broader, tentative conclusions about the potential for moral outrage to explain variation in political behavior.

First, based on the language used in response to coverage of the detention facilities, many Americans perceived there to be a moral injustice being committed against third-party victims, in this case immigrant children and their families. Second, while evidence of System 1 cognition is a bit difficult to prove through this case analysis, the public outcry on social media was more or less immediate following the moral shock, suggesting that rapid judgments were made about the moral transgression. Third, Americans across the country acted on their appraisals of the situation and intuitive judgments about the moral transgression by participating in collective action in defense of victims and in opposition to the Trump administration, who they saw as the clear perpetrator. Moral language was employed by protesters to justify their decisions to participate in collective action.

Furthermore, the lack of interest in the zero-tolerance policy prior to the moral shock highlights the role of emotional, outrage-inducing imagery in focusing attention on a political issue. If we connect moral outrage back to anger, this is in line with research by Newhagen (1998) that demonstrated that images inducing anger are highly effective at capturing attention and have more powerful effects on viewers than fear-inducing, disgust-inducing, or non-emotional content. Members of the Trump administration had been discussing the policy of separating children and families for well over a year, and Attorney General Sessions explicitly announced the systematic separation of immigrant children from their law-breaking parents in stark terms in his May speeches. Advocacy organizations and media outlets such as the New York Times had published information on the numbers of immigrant children separated from

their families in the preceding months (Dickerson 2018). Yet, even with all of this information available, many individuals did not pay attention until presented with morally-shocking, emotional content. Borrowing from the psychology research on the connection between emotions and beliefs, the emotion-inducing content seemed to strengthen beliefs and convictions about a policy that many Americans were previously ambivalent about (Frijda and Mesquita 2000).

Finally, the emotional content seemed to shift perceptions about the justness of the policy. Before the footage was released, the Trump administration had debated the issue on moral grounds related to ensuring order and a system of laws. For some Trump supporters, this argument was still convincing, even after the coverage of the detention facilities (Savidge, Smith, and Grinberg 2018). But for many, the emotional response that the images provoked seemed to greatly discredit moral arguments about order. Related to the idea of intuitive cognitive processing, much of the public ignored mitigating details about whether the parents of these children had knowingly broken the law and placed their children in harm's way by including them on a dangerous journey across the border. Rapid judgments were made based on the immediately available, emotional content of victimized children in U.S. government facilities. The Trump administration was the perpetrator and immigrants were victims.

Birthright Citizenship and Abstract Issues

The case of the family separation policy represents an ideal case for moral outrage. Presented with highly emotional imagery and audio of children (empathetic victims) being detained in cages (morally offensive action), who had been placed there because of a government policy that had been publicly defended by the current administration (clear perpetrator), many responded with moral outrage. However, the status of the issue prior to the moral shock also

suggests that some immigration and political issues may not have the content for producing a sense of moral transgression.

Throughout 2017 and the first half of 2018, some activists, politicians, and media outlets strongly opposed the Trump administration's zero-tolerance policy and attempted to draw attention to the issue among the public. However, their policy debates and abstract statistics did not provoke emotional or moral responses, even among those opposed to the Trump administration. It was not until children were pictured in brutal conditions that the policy elicited a sense of moral injustice among the masses. This suggests that some issues, like President Trump's recent proposal to change birthright citizenship laws, may not have the emotional content to produce moral outrage for most people, no matter how the issues are framed. For example, while legal experts argue that birthright citizenship reforms pose a serious threat to the United States Constitution (Epps 2018), for most people there is no moral transgression to spark outrage. Mass deportations of individuals born in the United States would represent a potential moral shock, but as stands, the victims of the proposal remain in the abstract.

Travel Ban Policy

The issue of inhumanely-detained immigrant children represents an ideal case for moral outrage. Birthright citizenship exemplifies abstract, non-emotional issues that are unlikely to produce outrage. Between these two extremes, there exist a set of issues that produce moral outrage for some individuals, while others feel competing emotions or low emotional arousal. An exemplary case of this is the Trump administration's travel ban policy. Before delving into the details of this policy and the divergent emotional responses, it is useful to return to some of the existing literature on emotions.

Given that moral outrage involves individuals cognitively appraising a situation and passing a judgment about whether or not an action is unjust or morally reprehensible, moral outrage is shaped by an individual's preexisting concepts of right and wrong, perceptions of the actors involved, and other factors that precede a moral shock. Discussing moral outrage in the context of the U.S. Central America peace movement, Nepstad and Smith (2001) state, "one's values and identity shape the way the information is perceived and the degree of importance placed on responding to the situation. Therefore, emotional reactions must be seen as the result of an interactive process of information, culture, organizational and relational ties, and identity" (158-159).

Specific emotional reactions must also be seen as interacting or competing with other possible emotional responses. As Petersen (2002) states, "Emotions are the mechanisms that heighten the saliency of a particular concern. They act as a 'switch' among a set of basic desires" (37). Thus, if an individual feels certain negative emotions or longer-term negative sentiments (Frijda and Mesquita 2000) with respect to immigrants, such as fear or scorn, then they may be less likely to perceive infringement on the rights of immigrants as an outrage-inducing moral transgression. This is because more salient concerns override considerations of the rights of immigrants. Thus, even when presented with emotional imagery that is morally-shocking for some people, other individuals whose concerns are guided by alternative emotions may be less likely to feel morally outraged for the victims.

The framing of issues by elites can also play a role in how an issue is perceived and which emotional response is activated. In the context of political issues, movement activists, politicians, and media outlets may seek to frame an issue in a certain way in order to trigger either a response of moral outrage from their targeted audience or some other, competing

emotion. Through the case of the travel ban, I will explore how different personal appraisals of a situation and elite framing can influence whether or not an individual feels a sense of moral outrage. I will then look at the case of "angel families" to examine an elite strategy of seeking to combat an emotional reaction to one political issue by inducing competing emotional reactions through other issues.

On January 27, 2017, President Trump signed an executive order that suspended travel to the United States from seven majority-Muslim countries, and suspended the U.S. Refugee Admissions program. As news broke about the executive order and as news stories were shared of immigrants from these countries being detained, there was a collective action response from some Americans. By some counts, approximately 150,000 people participated in protests in airports and town squares in over 30 cities across the country during the two days following the signing of the executive order (Leung and Perkins 2018; Bacon and Gomez 2017). The rapid, coordinated response was aided by a high level of social media activity, but motivations to participate seemed to be at least partially driven by the emotion of moral outrage.

The moral shock eliciting an emotional reaction was coverage of unsuspecting refugees, travelers, and immigrants, including individuals with visas and green cards, being barred from boarding flights from overseas, pulled off of planes, or detained at U.S. airports (Walters, Helmore, and Dehghan 2017). Traditional and social media sources provided coverage of these individuals being detained, and focused on sharing stories of innocent immigrants trying to reunite with their families and refugees fleeing brutal circumstances, all of whom now had their status in the United States placed in question (Rosenberg 2017; Bacon and Gomez 2017). Responding to the news, a spokeswoman for the New York Immigration Coalition told reporters, "This is absolutely dehumanizing. I am livid, it's outrageous. We are sending someone to JFK

airport to speak to customs and border control about this, people are in a state of shock"

(Walters, Helmore, and Dehghan 2017).

Activists were not the only ones who seemed to feel morally outraged and take action.

However, in contrast to the family separations policy, the distinction between victims and

protesters, used in this paper to draw the distinction between anger and moral outrage, is less

clear. Some protesters seemed to see the executive order as a direct injustice to themselves or

their loved ones. Two Muslim immigrants at the Phoenix airport said that they wore hijabs in

order to make a statement that the country that they love accepts people like them. A Boston

protester held a sign stating, "Dear Donald. Me again. Marching for my immigrant husband and

my Muslim friends. Back off!" (Newman 2017).

But other protesters justified their actions referencing broader moral implications of the

order that offended their values as Americans. Slogans focused on refugees being welcome in the

United States ("No hate. No fear. Refugees are welcome here."), and many protesters talked

about the U.S. being a country of immigrants. Others highlighted that these immigrants were

victims needing protection from an oppressive, racist policy and president (Walters, Helmore,

and Dehghan 2017; Bacon and Gomez 2017).

As had been done in the case of the zero-tolerance policy, Democratic leaders and others

evoked the symbol of the Statue of Liberty. Chuck Schumer stated, "Tears are running down the

cheeks of the Statue of Liberty tonight as a grand tradition of America, welcoming immigrants,

that has existed since America was founded, has been stomped upon" (Owen et al. 2017). Nancy

Pelosi also stated that the executive order betrayed the Statue of Liberty, called the order

unconstitutional and immoral, and quoted Pope Francis in stating, "it's a hypocrisy to call

yourself a Christian and chase away a refugee or someone seeking help" (Pelosi 2017).

For those who perceived immigrants and refugees from these countries to be innocent victims with a right to be in the United States, President Trump's executive order represented a moral transgression. The timing of the event and preexisting perceptions of the perpetrator were also important. Taking place one week after Trump's polarizing inauguration and the 2017 Women's March, some Americans had a low threshold for appraising a Trump administration policy as morally offensive.

Yet, much of the country did not share the protesters' perceptions of moral transgression. The country was more or less evenly split on the policy. Reuters and Ipsos surveys of 1,201 adults conducted on January 30 and 31, 2017, found that 48 percent agreed with the executive order and 41 percent disagreed (Chalabi 2017). Moral outrage seemed to be competing with at least one other emotion: fear. For some Americans, immigrants from Muslim-majority countries were perceived to be a threat to the country. Muslim immigrants entering the country without adequate vetting presented a potentially threatening situation. This perspective is summarized through three quotes from individuals around the time of the passage of the executive order (Newman 2017):

> *"Sadly, for whatever reason, it seems that the majority of terrorists worldwide seem to be of the Muslim faith. The mad rush to bring them in at all costs actually is not a good thing."*

> *"There's many, many fine Muslim people in this world, but there's many, many people who want to kill us, and we need to vet them, and we need to find out."*

> *"Every American has sympathy for the innocent person who is looking to come to America for a better life, but the process must without exception prioritize America's national security first."*

The way in which different individuals appraise a situation is influenced by a variety of factors. Some individuals may be dispositionally more fearful than others and thus more likely to support a risk-averse policy like Trump's executive order. Or the appraisal could be influenced by past

emotional experiences. The second quote is from a woman who also discussed her husband being killed in the attacks on September 11, 2001. The appraisal-tendency framework tells us that emotional processes, "guide subsequent behavior and cognition in goal-directed ways, even in response to objects that are unrelated to the original cause of the emotion" (Lerner and Keltner 2001). Thus, even though immigration may not be directly related to the attacks on September 11, 2001, individuals like this woman, who are influenced by this past emotional experience, may have a more risk-averse perspective related to Muslim people or homeland security-related issues. They favor policies that they believe will help accomplish their salient goal of making sure "people who want to kill us" do not kill us.

Furthermore, elites seek to frame issues and connect them to the emotional response that they want to produce. As referenced above, Democratic leaders sought to frame the executive order in a way that would provoke a sense of violation of American norms, evoking the symbol of the distraught Statue of Liberty. On the other hand, President Trump's executive order was entitled, "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States." In a statement released two days after the signing of the executive order, Trump said, "this is not about religion – this is about terror and keeping our country safe" (Trump 2017). A Trump administration official went into greater depth in connecting the policy to fear and prevention of real threats, stating, "There are 1,000 open ISIS investigations, approximately, inside the United States. There's a very strong nexus between our immigration and visa programs and terrorist plots and extremist networks inside the United States" (Jones 2017).

Regardless of the weight of specific factors – disposition, past experience, elite framing – in causing some individuals to appraise refugees and Muslim immigrants as fear-inducing or threatening, the point is that different emotions lead individuals to prioritize some goals over

others. For those influenced by fear in their perspectives on immigration policy, a primary goal is to protect against threat. Refugees and immigrants being stripped of rights did not spark moral outrage among these people because they felt that there were more pressing concerns.

There may also have been other emotional factors at play that inhibited feelings of moral outrage over the travel ban. For example, following Harris and Fiske's (2009) discussion on infrahumanization, it could be the case that some Americans were prejudiced against immigrants or Muslim immigrants specifically, and thus did not see immigrant outgroups as empathetic victims. Thus, even if injustices were committed with a clear perpetrator, there is less likely to be a drive among these individuals to take action to correct the issue or punish the wrongdoer. Relatedly, some Americans may feel scorn toward immigrant outgroups. If the scorned are seen by the scornful to "not merit attention" (Fiske 2010, 4), then they are certainly not perceived to merit costly action to correct the moral injustices committed against them.

"Angel families"

The travel ban represents one case of an immigration issue for which there was significant variation in individual appraisals and emotional responses from the public. As demonstrated through competing discourses from the Trump administration and Democratic Party leaders, elites sought to frame the travel ban issue in ways that would prompt emotional responses favorable to their goals and policy positions. The case of "angel families" sheds light on an alternative elite strategy. Rather than seeking to frame Issue A in a favorable manner, elites may draw attention to Issue B as a way of combatting the dominant emotional response brought about by Issue A.

Five days after the footage of children in cages was released, President Trump invited 14 relatives of individuals killed by illegal immigrants, a group he terms "angel families," to the

White House. Against the backdrop of angel family members holding photos of deceased relatives, President Trump delivered a speech on immigration. In the speech, he asked, "Where is the media outrage over the catch-and-release policies that allow deadly drugs to flow into our country? Where is the condemnation of the Democrats' sanctuary cities that release violent criminals into our communities?" (Gstalter 2018). Directly referencing the moral outrage over child-family separations at the border, Trump mentioned in his speech that these angel family members were "permanently separated" from their loved ones who had been killed.

For the Trump administration, the zero-tolerance policy had become a clear political loss by the end of June 2018. Due to the overwhelmingly negative emotional backlash over the border detention facility footage, President Trump had been forced to reform the policy. There was no longer much space for attempting to frame Issue A, family separations, in a positive light. Instead, the Trump administration turned to a second highly emotional immigration issue, the deaths of American citizens at the hands of immigrants who were in the country illegally, to elicit emotional reactions favorable to a strict stance on illegal immigration.

If individuals were convinced by Trump's charges that Democratic policymakers were responsible for allowing dangerous, illegal immigrant criminals to roam the country freely, then they may have felt a sense of anger towards Democrats for placing Americans like themselves in danger. Or, even if individuals did not perceive Democrats as responsible for the injustices, the angel families issue painted illegal immigrants as a real threat to ordinary Americans and could have provoked fear. Either way, by highlighting Issue B, President Trump was attempting to combat or block the emotional response of moral outrage over inhumane treatment of immigrant children by providing stimulus for alternative emotional reactions related to the broader issue of illegal immigration. In response, Democrats like Senator Warren sought to refocus attention on

family separations. When asked about an Iowa girl murdered by an illegal immigrant one month after Trump's speech, she said that she was sorry for the family and others in the community, but that there was a need to focus on "real problems," making reference to injustices being committed against migrant families at the border (Schwartz 2018).

In short, the angel families issue highlights how, in addition to attempting to influence emotional responses through narratives and framing within a single issue, politicians may also seek to influence the public's emotions by giving prominence to certain issues over others.

Conclusion

This paper has used emotions to help explain variation in political behavior in the context of recent immigration issues in the United States. I have focused primarily on moral outrage, an emotion related to anger that involves the cognitive appraisal that a moral injustice has been committed against a third-party victim and the action tendency of seeking to remedy the situation. I have argued that moral outrage can help us understand the behavioral responses that many Americans had to media coverage of inhumane detentions of immigrant children in Texas and apprehensions of immigrants in airports across the country following the Trump administration's travel ban. Through the travel ban policy, I have also showed how the same issue can elicit distinct emotional responses, depending on personal appraisals. Lastly, I examined how elites try to manipulate these appraisals or focus attention on some issues over others to try to provoke their desired emotional responses.

Future research can build on the arguments made in this paper. First, this paper looks at just a couple of cases of events that produced moral outrage. In both instances, the moral shocks were powerful images of empathetic victims – children in detention facilities and nonthreatening immigrants at airports – being detained or apprehended. By expanding the range of cases under

study, future research could seek to draw broader conclusions about what characteristics of issues and types of emotional content consistently produce moral outrage. As suggested in cases in this study, is it always necessary to have concrete victims and images or audio of the injustice being committed? And are certain types of victims, like children, more likely to inspire outrage-driven action on their behalf?

Second, given charges often made about manipulated or faux outrage, it may be useful to complement this study's approach of looking at public reactions to political events, with survey measures of moral outrage. I argue that because there were notable changes in political behavior and willingness to engage in costly political action following the moral shocks under study, individuals were likely influenced to some extent by an emotional response that inspired action. However, individuals may also have been influenced by other factors, such as social incentives to participate in collective action or to publicly denounce President Trump's treatment of immigrants. Thus, to add to the findings in the present study, it may be useful to measure moral outrage in a setting in which individuals are less influenced by environmental pressures. For example, through a survey experiment, participants could be presented with a diverse set of news stories and images, and asked to rate the extent to which they feel moral outrage about each story. Analyzing patterns in the responses could help improve our understanding of what issues seem to elicit moral outrage when individuals are isolated from outside social pressures.

While recognizing this space for future research to further build upon our understanding of moral outrage in the context of immigration and other political issues, this paper has sought to make a contribution to the study of moral outrage as an emotion that can help us to explain variation in outcomes in political science.

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17.S950 Emotions and Politics
Fall 2018