

The Art and Science of Framing Issues Effectively

Presentation Structure

- All Politics Is Moral!
- Morality is Physical and Automatic
- Origins of Morality
- Framing Issues Effectively

All Politics Is Moral!

Lessons from Political Science

All Politics Is Moral

Moral Foundations Theory

There are five universal morals:

Universal Morals	Characteristics
Harm & Care	Strong empathy for those that are suffering and care for the most vulnerable
Fairness & Reciprocity	Life liberty and justice for all
Purity & Sanctity	Related to the evolution of disgust, that makes us see carnality as degrading and renunciation as noble
In-Group Loyalty	Tribalism, patriotism, nationalism
Authority & Respect	Mechanisms for managing social rank, tempered by the obligation of superiors to protect and provide for subordinates

These morals are innate at birth. They exist across cultures and many species.

All Politics Is Moral

Moral Foundations Theory

An individual's moral composition drives his/her political affiliation:

Universal Morals	Democrats	Republicans	Personal Memes
Harm & Care	High	Moderate	Individualizing Foundations
Fairness & Reciprocity	High	Moderate	
Purity & Sanctity	Low	Moderate	Binding Foundations
In-Group Loyalty	Low	Moderate	
Authority & Respect	Low	Moderate	

All Politics Is Moral

Personal Memes

UNIVERSAL VALUES	1	2	3	4	5
	Harm & Care	Fairness & Reciprocity	Purity & Sanctity	In-Group Loyalty	Authority & Respect

PERSONAL MEMES	Individualizing Foundations		Binding Foundations	
	Individual Equality	Piety	Self-Sacrifice	
	Personal Rights	Self-Restraint	Duty	
	Individual Welfare	Personal Responsibility	Social Hierarchy	
	Widespread Care	Obedience	Respect	
	Widespread Nurturing	Cultural Boundaries	Anti-Traitors	
	Protection of Vulnerable individuals	Patriotism	Personal Morality	
		Social Order	Loyalty	
	...	Social Cohesiveness	...	

All Politics is Moral

EXERCISE: Name some other personal memes

DEMOCRATIC MEMES

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

REPUBLICAN MEMES

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

All Politics Is Moral

What is Morality?

- Morality is the collection of “principles concerning the distinction between ... good and bad behavior.” – *Google Dictionary*
- Philosophers have long posited that morality is rooted in the sole requirement that **well-being** be maximized.
- Well-being is maximized when individuals act in accordance with social norms that facilitate cooperation with others.
- These social norms are referred to as **memes**.



Morality is Physical and Automatic

Lessons from Cognitive Science

Morality Is Physical and Automatic

Passive Frame Theory

- Thought is physical; it results from previously established complex neural pathways in the brain.
 - ~98% of brain power is unconscious thinking to process sensory inputs.
 - ~2% of brain power is subsequently engaged to implement voluntary decisions and physical actions.
- Pathways that produce behaviors that increase **well-being** are reinforced while pathways that don't are inhibited.
- This process is known as habit formation.
- This implies that habit formation is the process by which social memes are encoded in neural pathways.

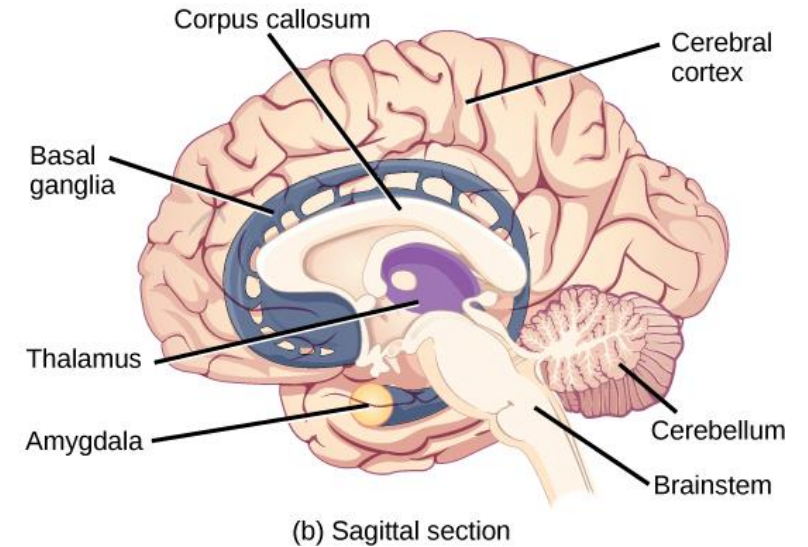


I'm a genius!

Morality Is Physical and Automatic

Habit Formation

- Research shows that habits are formed by the Basal Ganglia through repetition over 18 to 254 days.
- Habits are encoded in the unconscious brain.
- Habits often represent social memes with associations to:
 - Specific language (e.g. words and phrases)
 - Sensory inputs (e.g. vision, hearing, smell, and touch)
 - Internal emotional states (e.g. anger, fear, happiness)
 - Other memes

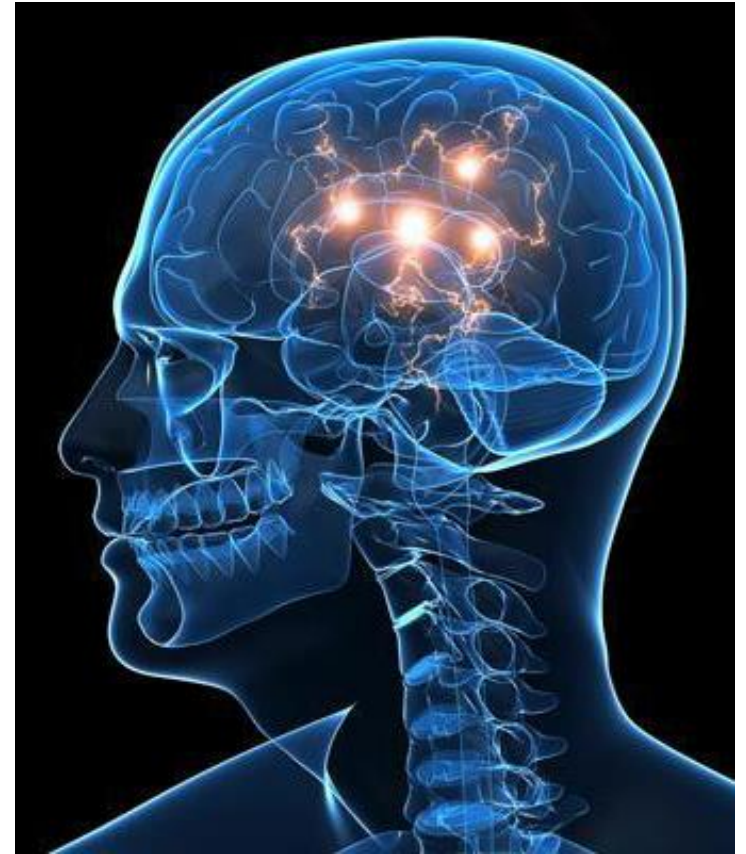


Morality is a result of automatic subconscious processes!

Morality Is Physical and Automatic

Subsequent Neural Activation

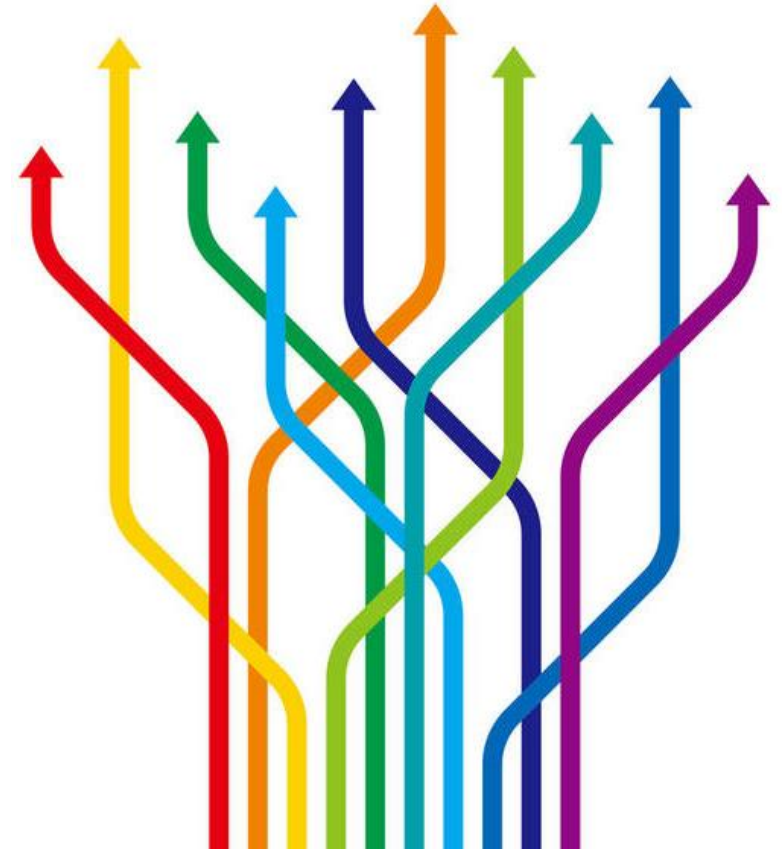
- Neural pathways (memes) are activated when associated words, phrases or sensory inputs are evoked.
- Each time a neural pathway (meme) is activated, associated pathways (memes) are also activated.
- This often results in a cascade of multiple neural pathways (memes) being activated together.
- The full cascade contributes to the action or decision that results.
- Each time a neural pathway is activated, it is reinforced.



Morality Is Physical and Automatic

Consequences for Political Discourse

- Humans are not inherently rational!
- Existing values serve as a filter through which we judge new information.
- Arguments are often framed within one's own values system instead of the values of the person one wishes to influence.
- When facts and statistics are incongruent with one's existing values, the values stay and the facts and statistics are discarded.
- Incongruent facts and statistics activate encoded values in the neural pathways and actually reinforce them.



Morality Is Physical and Automatic

Influencing the Opposing Side

- Frame issues within their values system.
- Never use frames with which they are already familiar.
- Reframe issues using frames that invoke different values within their values system than the values they currently use to filter facts and statistics.



Morality Is Physical and Automatic

Key Take-Aways

- Unconscious Thinking
 - Constitutes 98% of brain activity.
 - Is physical and automatic.
 - Is shaped by the process of habit formation.
- Morality
 - Is the result of activating unconscious automatic processes.
 - Is the collection of all social memes encoded in the unconscious brain.
- Each time a neural pathway (meme) is activated, it is reinforced even when incongruent facts and statistics are presented.
- Arguments must be properly framed to activate memes that will change minds based on the individual values of the person you want to influence.

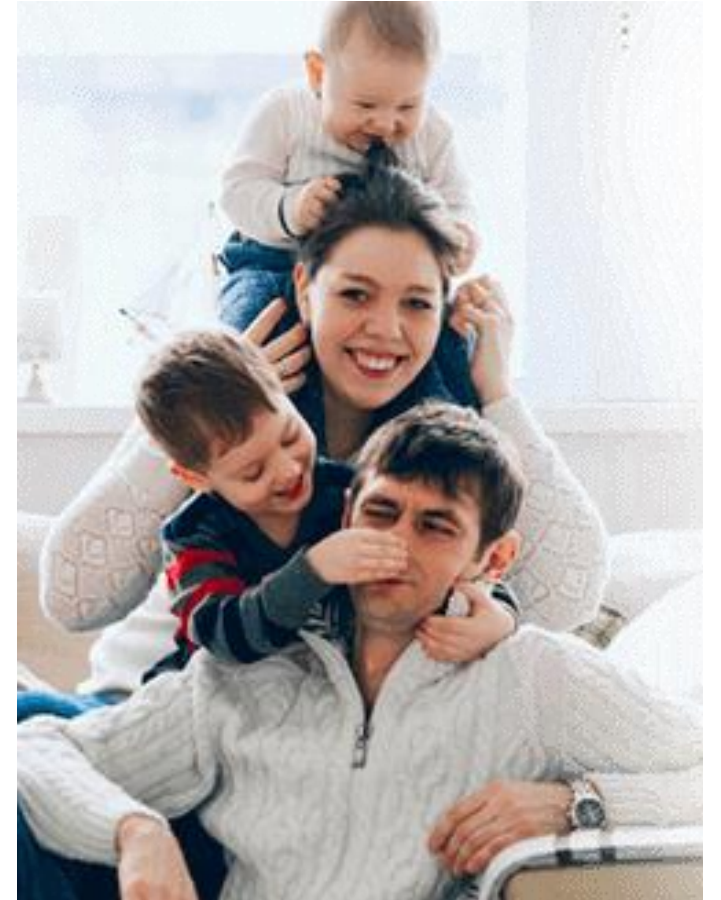
Origins of Morality

Lessons from Social Science

Origins of Morality

Social Influences of Morality

- Both family and cultural memes are represented in an individual's psyche as values.
- Family centric values tend to get reinforced over cultural values, but not always.
- Most people in the United States fall on a continuum between two idealized family social systems
 - Authoritative Parent Model
 - Authoritarian Parent Model
- Individual values derived from these parenting systems tend to be retained into adulthood and are passed down to one's progeny.



Origins of Morality

Authoritative Parenting Model

- **Parenting Philosophy:** Teach children responsibility, empathy, and creativity to thrive as adults in a society that is neither inherently hostile nor friendly but commands respect.
- **Egalitarian Family Structure:** Parents have equal authority and set boundaries to protect their children, but Maintain respect for autonomy in thought and feeling:
 - Support their children's interests and goals
 - Trust in their children's sense of fairness and good judgment
 - Protect their children from doing injury to self and others by communicating values and discussing their behavior with them.
 - Use discipline to guide and teach.
 - Allow their children to participate in family decisions
 - Serve as mentors to their adult children

Corresponds to the Individualizing Foundation (Democrats).

Origins of Morality

Authoritarian Parenting Model

- **Parenting Philosophy:** Teach children self-discipline, self-reliance, and respect for authority to thrive as adults in a society that is harsh and unforgiving.
- **Hierarchical Family Structure:** Father sets family policies, mother implements family policies, children are subordinate to parents:
 - Discourage self-indulgent behavior.
 - Nurture their children through tough-love.
 - Protect their children from doing injury to self or others by setting rules and expecting conformance without question.
 - Use discipline to punish and control.
 - Discourage verbal give-and-take.
 - Refrain from interfering in the lives of their adult children .

Corresponds to the Binding Foundation (Republicans).

Origins of Morality

Key Take-Aways

- Research shows the Authoritarian Parenting Model is much worse for overall well-being with higher rates of:
 - Low Self-Esteem
 - Substance Abuse
 - Dependence on Others, Especially Higher Authorities
 - Increased Aggressiveness
 - Lack of Empathy
 - Increased Self-Harm
 - Lower Levels of Socialization
 - Higher Abuse of Others
- Moral values
 - Are predominantly influenced by family social dynamics early in life.
 - Are not static but change very slowly.
 - Influence party affiliation.

Framing Issues Effectively

Framing Issues Effectively

What Are Frames?

- Frames are not messages; messaging is about using clever phrases.
- Frames reach deeper; they change our relationship with the world and how we think about it.
- Frames associate issue with specific moral values of a target audience.
- Frames are more powerful than facts
 - Facts are discarded while values are not.
 - Values are hard-wired whereas facts are not.
 - Values have associations to emotions, senses, and memes.
- Frames must address issues on multiple levels.

Framing Issues Effectively

Levels of Analysis

- Level 1: Universal Values / Principles
 - Harm & Care, Fairness & Reciprocity, Purity & Sanctity, In-Group Loyalty, Authority & Respect
- Level 2: Personal Memes
 - Examples: Security, Equality, Social Order, Piety, Duty, Self-Restraint, Self-Sacrifice
- Level 3: Issue Categories
 - Examples: Environment, Human Rights, Immigration
- Level 4: Specific Issues
 - Example: Global Warming, Women's Health, Border Protection
- Level 5: Programs & Policies
 - Example: Paris Climate Agreement, Planned Parenthood Funding, DOCA

Framing Issues Effectively

EXAMPLE: Affordable Care Act

Affordable Care Act Frames (Democrats vs Republicans)

LEVELS OF ANALYSIS		DEMOCRATS		REPUBLICANS		
LEVEL 1	Universal Values	Harm & Care	Fairness & Reciprocity	Purity & Sanctity	In-Group Loyalty	Authority & Respect
LEVEL 2	Personal Memes	Individual Equality		Personal Responsibility		
		Individual Welfare		In-Group Loyalty		
		Personal Rights		Tax Relief		
		Widespread Nurturing		American Exceptionalism		
		Widespread Care		Smaller Government		
		Protection of Vulnerable		Ineffective Government		
LEVEL 3	Issue Category	Healthcare		Social Welfare		
LEVEL 4	Specific Issue	Universal Health Care		Obama Care		
LEVEL 5	Policy	Affordable Care Act		Obama Care		

Framing Issues Effectively

EXAMPLE: Affordable Care Act

- **A Typical Democratic Frame**

Cover the Uninsured - *“Health care is a fundamental human right and all people, regardless of age, socioeconomic status, race, sex, or ability should have access to medical services. There are 45 million uninsured Americans. 18,000 people die per year because they lack insurance. This needless suffering is unacceptable in a country as rich as ours. It is time for us to join the rest of the industrialized world and cover the uninsured with a government sponsored single payer system.”*

- **A Better Approach**

Cover Everyone - *“Health care costs are skyrocketing out of control, placing all of us at risk for losing health insurance through no fault of our own. In today’s rapidly changing economy, job turnover is at an all-time high, which means that all of us are just one pink slip away from being uninsured and risking financial catastrophe. It is our shared responsibility to ensure that every American can have the security from health care costs that we all need in order to take care of ourselves and our families.”*

Framing Issues Effectively

Which memes do the highlighted phrases tie into?

- *“fundamental human right”*
- *“all people ... should have access to medical services”*
- *“needless suffering is unacceptable”*
- *“government sponsored single payer system”*
- *“placing all of us at risk”*
- *“all of us are just one pink slip away ...”*
- *“our shared responsibility”*
- *“care of ourselves and our families”*
- Personal Rights
- Individual Equality
- Protection of Vulnerable
- Widespread Care, Ineffective Gov’t
- In-Group Loyalty
- In-Group Loyalty
- In-Group Loyalty
- Widespread Care, Personal Responsibility

Framing Issues Effectively

EXAMPLE: Affordable Care Act

Strongest Arguments (Determined by Kaiser Focus Groups)

- It's the right thing to do
- It's cheaper in the long run to make sure people can access care
- A rapidly changing economy means anyone can lose insurance
- Untreated illness can have serious consequences
- Aging workers are at risk
- Illness can wipe families out
- The uninsured are hard working
- What if you didn't have health insurance
- Preventative care for everyone means less disease

Framing Issues Effectively

Some Useful Frames

Instead of ...	Use
National Debt, National Deficit	Revenue Depletion, Revenue Neglect, Undertaxing
Debt Financing	Maintenance Costs
Gov't Spending	Investment / Stimulus / Taxes at Work
Taxes, Tax Relief, Tax Burden	Citizenship Dues / Fees
Gov't Services / Gov't Agencies	Civic Tasks / Task Forces
Entitlements	Earned Benefits
Pensions / Benefits / Severance	Deferred Pay
Birth Control, Birth Control Pills	Pregnancy Prevention
Pro-Choice	Pro-Liberty, Pro-Family, Family Freedom
Partial Birth Abortion	Development Prevention
Workers	Profit Creators / Company Assets
Conservative Fiscal Policies	Deficit Creation Policies

Framing Issues Effectively

Key Take-Aways

- Think about the underlying values of your own frame of reference with respect to an issue.
- Think about the underlying values of your target audience.
- Look for opportunities to turn their values into support for your issue.
- Create new frames to activate the memes of your target audience.
 - Use positive (not negative) associations to their personal memes.
 - Avoid arguments against their existing frames. This only reinforces the existing frame.
- Democrats do not have to move to the right to win elections!
- Work with others and use repetition to reinforce the frame through multiple points of contact.

Framing Issues Effectively

EXERCISE: Build arguments that evoke Republican personal memes for the following Democratic issues:

NATIONAL ISSUES

- Global Warming
- Immigration
- Women's Rights
- Gun Control
- LGBT Rights / Gay Marriage
- \$15 Minimum Wage
- Other: _____

LOCAL ISSUES

- Water Conservation (Poseidon)
- Plastic Bag Bans
- Funding for Homeless Shelters
- School Lunch Programs
- Community Greenspace
- Wetland Protection
- Other: _____

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