

Framing

November 16, 2020

General

- Design moral and unmoral frames and pretest both on MTurk, then use the ‘proven’ frames for the survey experiment. This is a chapter on framing where I apply both methods in the experiment, analyze the methods’ performances, and analyze the substantive results in terms of moral frames (the latter is where I produce/add some nuance in our understanding of framing)
- Using the experiment as the application for both papers
 - Paper I: One half of the sample gets the ordinal probit education categories, the other gets the original ones without giving respondents **Don’t Know/Refuse** options. Compare the differences between the ordered probit and the original results whilst knowing which one is closer to the truth based on the simulation results
 - Paper II: Use the resulting completely observed data, introduce random missing data, and show how the ordinal affinity score method performs on ordinal variables compared with other method . Assess the performance of the ordinal affinity score method because we know the true values of the completely observed data

Order

- Rework theory, design frames/questionnaire
- Pre-test
- New IRB approval
- Pre-analysis plan and pre-registration
- Field experiment
- Analysis of the results

Rework theory, design frames/questionnaire

- I have sent Liz an email with my current framing chapter and the questionnaire from the previous experiment. I recall that she had various input on the chapter setup, the experiment design, and the questionnaire, so I thought it best to start out from these documents. She emailed back with general instructions to sharpen up the theoretical part. I then researched the literature, and we had a Zoom call on June 23. The main change from that talk is that I will juxtapose moral frames (i.e. values) with self-interest frames. This is more precise and clear-cut than the vague ‘amoral’ frame category that we can’t be sure even exists
- After researching and reading a lot, I emailed Liz again with the following design idea. She signed off on it. It’s not a major change. I basically only adds a moderator as a further nuance:

- Moral conviction literature tells us that people with moralized attitudes hold those attitudes strongly. I take from this that these people’s attitudes can’t be moved, no matter what opposing or supporting moral or self-interest frames we give them. We can only move the attitudes of people who don’t hold highly moralized attitudes, since there is room for movement here
- I thus suggest to separate respondents into those who hold moralized attitudes on an issue and those who don’t. To do so, I would first give all respondents descriptions of what ‘moral’ is and what ‘self-interest’ is, for instance: “Moral concerns what people should or should not do etc.” and “Self-interest concerns actions and attitudes that only suit yourself etc.” (obviously I need to flesh these out much more). I will take the ‘moral’ description directly from Ryan. He essentially took Skitka’s moral conviction measure (below) and added the ‘moral’ description. I will take that and further add the ‘self-interest’ description
- I would then use Tim Ryan’s version of Skitka’s moral conviction measure (asking respondents “To what extent is your position on [issue] a reflection of your core moral beliefs and convictions” and “... connected to your fundamental beliefs about right and wrong?”) – with the tweak that I don’t ask them about their position on the issue, but about their attitude towards the issue overall. Let’s say that the issue is abortion. I give respondents the descriptions of ‘moral’ and ‘self-interest’. I then ask them: “To what extent is your position on abortion a reflection of your core moral beliefs and convictions” and “To what extent is your position on abortion connected to your fundamental beliefs about right and wrong?” – but without actually asking them about their position yet (basically leaving that open until they get the frame). The alternative is that I ask them about their position on abortion twice. I would here (1) ask them where they stand on abortion on 1-5 Likert, (2) give them the descriptions, (3) measure moral conviction, (4) randomly assign a frame, (5) ask them where they stand on abortion on 1-5 Likert again. The big problem with that is anchoring. Liz agrees with my approach. While it’s better to have people write down their stands (more concrete for them and also allows me to be more precise in my analyses), the downside effect of anchoring is a pretty big (too big) downside
- After I measure moral conviction on their attitude towards the issue (1-5 Likert; “Not at all”, “Slightly”, “Moderately”, “Much”, “Very much”), every respondent randomly gets one of the five frames: opposing moral frame, opposing self-interest frame, control frame, supporting moral frame, supporting self-interest frame. Every respondent then registers his support/opposition to the issue on another 1-5 Likert scale (“Strongly oppose” ... “Strongly approve”)
- For the respondents with highly moralized attitudes on the issue, their support-/opposition for the issue should be statistically the same across all frames – since their attitudes are set and can’t easily be moved. For the respondents without highly moralized attitudes on the issue, the frames should move responses towards support or opposition, depending on the direction of the frame. For these people, we can see whether the moral or the self-interest frames cause bigger shifts. I would expect moral frames to cause bigger shifts for highly moralized, since moral arguments likely fall on fertile ground here. For low moralized, I would expect

- self-interest frames to cause bigger shifts, since these people reject the importance of morals for the issue
- Insights that I can see:
 - * We can test which issues are considered more moral than others
 - * We can test whether people with highly moralized attitudes really stick to their pre-formed attitudes, no matter what they're exposed to
 - * We can test whether people with low moralization are more influenced by moral or self-interest frames
 - * We can test whether people with no moralization are most influenced by arguments based on self-interest
 - Reorganize chapter outline
 - Expand framing section
 - Outline differences between equivalency and emphasis frames (I'm looking at emphasis)
 - Outline differences between emphasis frames and new information (Leeper & Slothuus)
 - Clearly express that we do know why frames work (Zaller: Frames move persuasive information to the top of one's mind) but that we don't know why some frames are successful at moving persuasive information to the top of one's mind and others aren't. This was not initially clear to Liz
 - Set up section on morality from the literature
 - Incorporate Stoker on public opinion in the public sphere (i.e. her stuff on ethics)
 - Is there theorizing on “value frames” or “moral frames” (Stoker, Google Scholar)?
 - Jamie's article he sent me
 - Chris Wolsko
 - Willer and Feinberg (how they used MFT)
 - I need a description of ‘morality’. I can take that from Tim Ryan
 - I need criteria along which I can construct the frames. For morals or values, Moral Foundations Theory is an option. Liz has also written about this in her diss. I'm not sure whether to go with MFT, since it's so party-ID based, though
 - Feldman chapter in the Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology (some time around 2016 or so) – gives a more complete overview of the field
 - Kinder on the “primary ingredients” of public opinion (one of which is “matters of principle”), Feldman on values, Milton Rokeach on values
 - Set up section self-interest from the literature
 - Look at the paper I wrote for Liz' class for works on self-interest
 - I need a description of ‘self-interest’
 - I need criteria along which I can construct the frames
 - Choose issues based on the literature and what works for perceived self-interest
 - Design issue frames built on morals and self-interest
 - Do I use stuff from MFQ?
 - Connect everything up coherently
 - Send it to everyone for feedback
 - Email Lucid to arrange experiment to be run before the end of the year
 - Morals

- Leave out moral conviction, it just complicates things because conviction and MFT don’t play well together → DONE
- Play down the language on Haidt a bit. He exaggerates the differences between parties. There is nothing sacred about pid in Haidt, the values are what matters. He just shows that Dems and Reps differ on average with respect to the foundations, i.e. not all Dems have the Dem pattern and vice versa → DONE
- As I talk about moral vs. nonmoral issues, make sure to mention that I’m about moral and self-interest frames, not the issues. Don’t get lost in the issue discussion, so that readers won’t think I’m mainly about the issues → DONE
- Fix disjuncture between theory and design: I say that moral frames work because people have emotional attachments to their morals/values/whatever, but then I posit that moral frames work among people without moral conviction. Why would morals influence people who don’t seem to have morals? → DONE
- Forget about pid, just ask people about their moral preferences, the same way I ask about their self-interest tax burdens (directionality, where you stand). Measure self-interest, measure moral foundations for each respondent (i.e. query where they stand on the particular moral foundation) – use parts of MFQ → DONE
- Find moral frames that appeal to all (or most) people. Fasten on some moral foundations that I think map best to each of the two issues → DONE
- Self-interest
 - Kinder is one of the doubters that self-interest matters all that much. Make sure I only cite him that way → DONE
 - Do Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes really say self-interest is the main driver of political opinion? – They don’t. Delete that reference → DONE
 - Political psychologists who talk about self-interest are definitely not rational choices. Don’t put everyone on this topic into the rat choice rat hole. Self-interest is not automatically part of rat choice → DONE
 - Move away from material self-interest. Material self-interest is not the same thing as self-interest. Don’t limit my study to that, since I’m biasing my findings against self-interest right out of the gate. This narrow understanding of self-interest is precisely why researchers have found little evidence of it in public opinion → DONE
 - Leave out perceived self-interest (i.e. not make it a major thing) → DONE
 - Define self-interest as related to personal autonomy, health/safety, wealth, and status (Weeden and Kurzban, evolutionary psychology). No need to include family well-being (that’s too far for my purposes). Example of “non-material” but obvious self-interest: Young guys who oppose hawkish Presidents because they don’t want to be drafted are acting in their self-interest. Women of child bearing age who want to be free from the possibility of an unwanted pregnancy may support abortion rights out of self-interest → DONE
 - Set up competing self-interests that people have (e.g. everyone wants low taxes, everybody wants to be healthy) → DONE
- Frames
 - Move away from the whole “move to the top of people’s minds” thing. That’s priming, not framing, and it doesn’t fit my theoretical setup. I’m doing strong and

weak frames, particularly whether moral or self-interest frames are more likely to compel people to change a specific attitude. The term “frame” comes from the idea of framing a picture. If you were to photograph a scene, you might choose to include some details and exclude others and, when you do so, that changes the way people will interpret the scene → DONE

- Move away from “more important in shaping political attitudes”. My chapter focuses on “what makes a strong frame”, with the assertion that “strong frames are moral frames”. A chapter focusing on “what is more important in people’s attitude formation, morals or self-interest?” is too general of a question and also has been looked at by others. Make sure it’s specifically about the juxtaposition of moral vs. self-interest in frames, not in general → DONE
- Engage more with Druckman and Chong (2007) since they differentiate weak from strong frames → Druckman and Chong (APSR, 2007) ask respondents in a pre-test what arguments they consider strong or weak for the issues they chose. Druckman and Chong then assert that frames containing arguments deemed strong are strong frames and frames containing arguments deemed weak are weak frames. They then use these strong and weak frames in their actual experiment. They let people decide pre-experiment what they consider strong, which doesn’t give any insights as to what actually makes a frame strong. We just know which are considered strong and weak, but not why → DONE
- 5 frames per issue → DONE
- Find one other issue. Ditch taxes for ... national security, infrastructure (something where self-interest and moral frames are each roughly equally strong). For healthcare: Healthcare costs and health insurance costs may be very different things (p. 83). I may love paying \$0 for insurance, but hate that my out-of-pocket expenses are enormous. Make sure I consistently stick to one and don’t mix them up → DONE
- My frames are not actually frames, since I’m describing different policies. To build stimuli appropriate for testing my theory, I need to keep the content (scene) the same across the various treatment groups but change what implications are emphasized, e.g. a low cost health care plan might save tax payer money or harm poor people. Set up a policy with some meat on it, something more substantial that is the same across treatment groups → DONE
- Make frames a bit longer in terms of sentences. Have them read articles, bigger things, longer, more, not just one sentence → DONE
- Send chapter to Liz
- **Waiting for feedback from Liz**
- **Miscellaneous**
 - Palin example needs to go – that’s providing new (mis)information, not a frame → DONE
 - Cite literature to back up content in the introduction → DONE
 - I say in the introduction that morals have supplanted self-interest over time and recently. It sounds like I’m asserting that, when I’m actually just referring to what scholars are saying. Be more explicit and back it up, e.g.: Scholars suggest that morals have supplanted self-interest over time. Frank (2004), Haidt (2012)

- and several others argue that morals are more important now → DONE
- Do a power analysis to be sure that I have a chance to detect typical framing effects. There is an R function for that, use that (`declareDesign?`). Also email Jeff a reminder that he sends me slides for the sample size calculation
 - Do multiple attention checks in different formats (apparently important for Lucid). From Ryan: [Qualtrics](#), [Wiley](#)
 - Top of p. 80: See Jim Gibson, and others, add stuff on procedures vs outcomes
 - 4.2, middle of p. 82: See Brooks and Manza here on public opinion and welfare state support (since I'll use healthcare, especially)
 - Expand discussion of the limitations and problems with using MTurk for social research a bit, use
`@huff_who_2015; @clifford_2015_samples; @stritch_2017_opportunities; @burnham_`
(all already downloaded)
 - Expand discussion of limitations and problems with using Lucid for social research a bit as well, use
`@coppock_2019_validating`

Pre-test

- To test designed frames
- 600 respondents, \$0.20 each

New IRB approval

- After pre-test, with final questionnaire

Pre-analysis plan and pre-registration (from RT2 training)

- After IRB approval is done
- Articles about invisible null fundings in research community: Franco et al. 2014, Rosenthal 1979
- Read Miguel et al. 2014 “Promoting transparency in social science research” (in the BITSS /readings folder)
- Just because you have a pre-analysis plan doesn't mean that's all you can do with your data (and it doesn't mean exploratory analysis is now forbidden). Just be careful why you're doing it. If it's to improve the p-value, obviously don't do it. If there is a good theoretical motivation that you can defend, then it might be a different story
- Pre-registration can help with publication bias and improve meta-analysis

Field experiment

- After pre-analysis and pre-registration are done
- Block on education as planned
- Before I launch anything:
 - What variables am I blocking on?
 - Be INCREDIBLY careful with any randomization of response options. Many things in the code use the corresponding number for respondents' response selections, not the actual words, so messing with the order is a very delicate thing
 - Anything I might have missed somewhere?

Analysis of the results

- Most straightforward is to use the method I use to block
- But I also have lots of good resources how to analyze ordinal variables as EVs, instead of turning them into intervals for a normal regression, including a Bayesian way
- Apply blocking and missing data to the data, i.e. do a blocking and missing data analysis on the framing data (since the framing data is no longer part of the blocking and missing data chapters)