

# Framing

July 28, 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

- Pre-poll #1
- Design gap-filling frames
- Pre-poll #2
- Design questionnaire
- New IRB approval
- Pre-analysis plan and pre-registration
- Field experiment
- Analysis of the results

## Pre-poll #1

- After paper II is done
- 300 respondents, \$0.20 each

## Design gap-filling frames

- After pre-poll #1 is done

## Pre-poll #2

- After gap-filling frames are designed
- 300 respondents, \$0.20 each

## **Design questionnaire**

- After pre-poll #2 is done
- Feedback from MPMC
  - The treatment is too weak, not powerful enough
    - \* You have to go big, hit them with a sledgehammer
    - \* Have them read newspaper articles, bigger things, longer, more; not just one sentence
  - Morality is in stories, pragmatism is in numbers – incorporate that into frames
- Feedback from Rune Slothuus, APSA, 9/2/2018
  - He says what I do is emphasis framing (other papers use different versions)
  - Emphasis framing: Communication that puts emphasis on a salient aspect of an issue
  - Leading opinion in a certain direction is different from providing an argument
  - Confounding framing and arguments could be troublesome (Slothuus wrote a paper on this)
  - Important step: What is my concept of framing? The opposing frame weren't really frames here, but arguments

## **New IRB approval**

- After questionnaire is designed

## **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
- Before I launch anything:
  - What variables am I blocking on?
  - Correct OPM education categories?
  - 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?
- Lucid will wait for my go-ahead to launch the actual project whenever I'm ready. Then we'll schedule a kick-off call and talk about project details/logistics

## 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)

## Rework theory

- 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)
    - 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

- Is there theorizing on “value frames” or “moral frames” (Stoker, Google Scholar)?
- 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
- Jamie’s article he sent me
- Chris Wolsko
- Willer and Feinberg (how they used MFT)
- **Set up section self-interest from the literature**
  - I need a description of ‘self-interest’
  - I need criteria along which I can construct the frames
- **Choose issues based on the literature**
  - Some big-hitter issues (gay marriage, abortion, climate change) and some smaller issues (TBD) where you can move the needle
- **Design issue frames built on the morality and self-interest definitions**
- When all that is done, send it to Liz