# VALUES, POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE, AND PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT GAY RIGHTS

## A FRAMING-BASED ACCOUNT

PAUL R. BREWER

**Abstract** This study examines how political knowledge has shaped the effects of two values—egalitarianism and traditional morality—on American public opinion about gay rights and whether media framing accounts for the role that knowledge has played. An analysis of mass media coverage during the peak years of the debate over gay rights (1990–97) showed that the implications of moral traditionalism were virtually undisputed in this debate, whereas both sides laid claim to egalitarianism. Analysis of American National Election Studies survey data demonstrated that in 1992 and 1996 the impact of moral traditionalism on public opinion grew stronger as political knowledge increased, whereas the impact of egalitarianism did not vary across levels of knowledge. Thus, the results suggest that the extent to which political knowledge moderates a value's effect on opinion can depend on whether public debate provides an undisputed frame or competing frames for that value. One could, in turn, frame the implications of this finding for democratic politics in more than one way.

A growing consensus has emerged among public opinion scholars that Americans use their core values to decide where they stand on political issues (Feldman 1988; McClosky and Zaller 1984; Rokeach 1973). Researchers have typically portrayed such value-based reasoning about policy matters as an important component of healthy democratic deliberation (Hurwitz and Peffley 1987; Kinder and Sanders 1996). If that is so, then political knowledge may contribute to the success of public deliberation about politics by encouraging this form of reasoning (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). In particular, knowledge obtained from exposure to mass media coverage of political debates may help citizens draw connections between values and issues.

PAUL R. BREWER is an assistant professor of political science at George Washington University. The author wishes to thank Linda Brewer for research assistance. He is also grateful for helpful comments from Marco Steenbergen, Pam Conover, John Brehm, George Rabinowitz, Stuart Macdonald, Lee Sigelman, Peter Miller, the anonymous reviewers, and numerous other colleagues. Address correspondence to the author at the Department of Political Science, George Washington University, 2201 G Street, NW, Suite 507, Washington, DC 20052; e-mail: pbrewer@gwu.edu.

Public Opinion Quarterly Volume 67:173–201  0033-362X/2003/6702-0001$10.00

Then again, perhaps the story is not so simple. In this study, I argue that the role of political knowledge in shaping the impact of a value on opinion about a political issue can depend upon whether public debate offers one undisputed interpretation or two competing interpretations of the value. In some instances, the information available to citizens will suggest that the implications of a value are one-sided within a specific issue context—that those who endorse a particular value should hold one issue stance, whereas those who reject the value should hold the opposing stance. When this is the case, the impact of the value should be greater among the politically knowledgeable than among the less knowledgeable. In contrast, when public debate provides citizens with competing interpretations—or frames—for a value, then one should not expect the impact of the value to vary across levels of political knowledge.

To provide evidence for these claims, I examine public opinion about gay rights, an issue that has occupied a prominent place on the American public agenda in recent years. What makes this a particularly attractive test case is the potential not only for value framing within the public debate over the issue but also for conflict over the meaning of values in that debate. The U.S. Supreme Court decision *Romer v. Evans* (1996) illustrates three value frames for gay rights that contestants in the debate presented. In the majority opinion, which struck down a Colorado initiative to ban gay rights laws, Justice Anthony Kennedy framed the Court's position in terms of equality. "Central both to the idea of the rule of law and our own Constitution's guarantee of equal protection," he wrote, "is the principle that government and each of its parts remain open on impartial terms to all who seek its assistance . . . [the initiative] classifies homosexuals not to further a proper legislative end but to make them unequal to everyone else." In a dissent, Justice Antonin Scalia framed opposition to gay rights in terms of morality, writing that the initiative was a "reasonable effort to preserve traditional American moral values." At the same time, Scalia also framed gay rights policies as *in*egalitarian measures. To him, the dispute was not over "equal rights" for gays and lesbians, but over "special treatment."

With these competing frames in mind, I analyze how political knowledge has shaped the effects of egalitarianism and moral traditionalism on mass attitudes toward gay rights policies. I show that, in 1992 and 1996, politically knowledgeable Americans were more likely than the less knowledgeable to base their opinions on their moral beliefs but no more likely to base their opinions on their beliefs about equality. This pattern of results could be taken as counterintuitive if one sees the relationship between political knowledge and value-based reasoning solely in terms of the greater political reasoning abilities that informed citizens may possess. Likewise, the results may seem surprising if one sees equality as a particularly complex value that politically knowledgeable citizens should be more likely to use in forming opinions than the less knowledgeable, or if one sees moral traditionalism as a particularly simple value that citizens at all levels of knowledge should be equally likely to use. The outcome

makes sense, however, if one takes into account the content of the frames available to citizens within mass media coverage at the time.

On one level, this study sheds new light on the politics of gay rights and the structure of public opinion about gay rights. On another level, it carries theoretical implications about the conditions under which values will shape mass opinion. On a third level, it speaks to concerns about framing and democratic theory. Do competing frames contained within media coverage of political issues help citizens develop value-based opinions "that resemble more closely the opinions that advocates of democracy hope for" (Kinder and Sanders 1996, p. 192)? Or do they discourage principled deliberation by rendering values less meaningful to citizens?

## Values, Political Knowledge, Frames, and Public Opinion

In forming issue opinions, citizens must typically choose between an array of potentially ambiguous or contradictory considerations. The prevailing view (e.g., Kinder and Sanders 1996; Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997) is that citizens use mental constructs—issue frames—to select standards of judgment within a given issue domain. These frames are central organizing ideas or story lines with which citizens define "what the controversy is about, the essence of each issue" (Gamson and Modigliani 1987, p. 143; see also Entman 1993; Gamson1992; Gamson and Modigliani 1989). I focus on one particular sort of story line: the value frame, which consists of an association between a value and an issue in a specific direction (e.g., pro– or anti–gay rights).

One might argue that citizens already possess the necessary raw materials to construct their own frames for political issues, including frames that link values to issues. Indeed, it could be that this task is so simple that all citizens can build such frames. Alternatively, it may be that politically knowledgeable citizens are better equipped than the less knowledgeable to draw their own connections between values and issues. Research on political cognition suggests that as one's store of political information increases, so too should one's capacity to draw new political inferences that link one's political beliefs to other targets of judgment (Lodge and Hamill 1986).

Among public opinion scholars, however, the dominant view is that citizens often rely on frames borrowed from public debate to draw connections between values and issues (e.g., Kinder and Sanders 1996; Koch 1998; Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997; Zaller 1992). Here, I should note the double duty that I am imposing upon the word "frame." In one sense, frames are linkages that exist in the minds of individual citizens. In another sense, frames exist within communicating texts—oral statements, newspaper articles, television news broadcasts, and other transmissions of information (Kinder and Sanders 1996, p. 164; see also Gamson and Modigliani 1987, 1989; Patterson 1993). The public debate

on an issue, in turn, can be thought of as the sum of the frames for the issue that flow from elites to the public, usually through the mass media.

Like the issue frames in citizens' minds, the issue frames in public debate consist of associations between issues and considerations that one might use to form opinions on them. These associations are typically introduced into public debate by political entrepreneurs in the hope that the media will disseminate them and that citizens will discover them, accept them, and use them to make judgments (Gamson and Modigliani 1987, 1989). According to Jacoby (2000, p. 751), the "ability to frame issues . . . is undoubtedly one of the most important 'tools' that political elites have at their disposal. Therefore, they do so in ways that shine the best possible light on their own preferred course of action." When competing sets of elites prefer opposing courses of action, they frequently introduce competing frames into public debate (Jacoby 2000; Kinder and Sanders 1996). Given the tendency of citizens to understand issues in terms of values, it is not surprising that those frames sometimes revolve around widely shared values.

Nor is it surprising that such frames influence how citizens think about issues. Recent experimental studies have shown that exposure to frames influences how citizens use values to form issue opinions (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997) and explain those opinions (Brewer 2002). Particularly important to the argument at hand is a survey experiment conducted by Kinder and Sanders (1996). The authors demonstrated that survey respondents exposed to one frame saw egalitarianism as a reason for supporting affirmative action, whereas respondents exposed to an alternative frame saw egalitarianism as a reason for opposing affirmative action. Put another way, each of these frames led citizens toward a different (and mutually contradictory) interpretation of equality's meaning within the context of a policy debate.

What might happen, then, if citizens could draw upon two competing frames for an issue, both invoking the same value and both appearing within the real-world public debate over the issue? Results obtained by Kinder and Sanders (1996) suggest that each frame might neutralize the impact of its rival. I rely on an inferential approach to test this possibility. Zaller (1992; see also Koch 1998) has demonstrated that, as knowledge about politics increases, so too may reception of messages—including frames—within public debate; accordingly, I posit that political knowledge may function as a proxy for such reception.[1] Of course, this will not be true under all circumstances. Some frames may not be prominent enough within public debate to reach even the most knowledgeable citizens. Other frames may be so prominent that they are available to all citizens, regardless of political knowledge. The latter case

1. Indeed, Zaller (1992, pp. 334–35) concludes that political knowledge is the best proxy for reception of media messages. According to him, standard measures of media consumption have "important weaknesses" as measures of reception: they suffer from "subjective differences in self-rating standards, and also social-desirability-induced exaggeration effects"; moreover, they are difficult to calibrate, making index construction problematic.

may be particularly likely when the issue is an "easy" one—that is, a symbolic issue that elicits gut responses from citizens (Carmines and Stimson 1980). It may also be particularly likely when the issue has been characterized for an extended period of time by public conflict and extensive media coverage. Research on the "knowledge gap" suggests that information about such an issue may eventually reach all parts of the public (Moore 1987; Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien 1970).

Oftentimes, however, frames will be prominent enough to reach some but not all citizens. When this is the case, politically knowledgeable citizens should be more likely than less knowledgeable citizens to receive frames. Thus they should be more likely to learn their contents (Graber 1994). Knowledgeable citizens should recall frames from memory more easily than the less knowledgeable, given that recency and frequency of exposure (Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Zaller 1992), and they should be particularly likely to see frames as important (Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997). In short, when the public debate is neither too "loud" nor too "quiet," politically knowledgeable citizens should be more likely than the less informed to rely on frames from that debate in drawing linkages between abstract principles and specific issues.

A framing-based account of knowledge and value-based reasoning leads to a novel expectation, namely, that the role of knowledge in conditioning the effect of a value on opinion may depend on whether public debate contains one undisputed frame or two competing frames for that value. In some cases, the debate over an issue may present only one frame for a particular value. When this is the case, politically knowledgeable citizens should be more likely than others to use that frame to form opinions. They should be more likely to have encountered it and learned its contents, better able to recall it from memory, and more likely to deem it important; moreover, they should not be any more likely to have encountered a competing interpretation of the value. Accordingly, the value's effect should move in the direction advocated by the undisputed frame as political knowledge increases. For example, if the public debate contains an undisputed anti–gay rights interpretation of traditional morality, then politically knowledgeable citizens should be more likely than others to draw a negative association between traditional morality and support for gay rights.

Another scenario is two-sided framing. Here, each side claims a value; thus public debate provides citizens with two competing ways to interpret its implications (e.g., "support for equality dictates support for gay rights" and "support for equality dictates opposition to gay rights"). Under this scenario, politically knowledgeable citizens should be more likely than the less informed to have encountered each frame. Accordingly, they should also be more likely to have encountered both frames.

Citizens who encounter two competing frames revolving around the same value could respond in a variety of ways. One possibility is that they will become confused and thereby fail to learn the contents of either frame. For

example, exposure to the two equality frames described above could induce uncertainty about the meaning of equality within the context of gay rights. Alternatively, such exposure might induce ambivalence about the meaning of the value if citizens were to learn and accept the contents of both frames.[2] Yet another possibility is that those who encounter two competing frames for a single value will reject both and conclude that the value has no meaning within the context of the issue at hand.

Although each of these possibilities may carry different implications for the quality of public deliberation, they all lead to the same expectation. When the public debate tells citizens that a value has two meanings within the context of an issue, knowledge of that debate may lead citizens into confusion, ambivalence, or resistance; it should not encourage them, however, to draw associations between the value and one side of that issue or the other. Put another way, a framing-based account of values, knowledge, and public opinion implies that the impact of a value on opinion should not vary across levels of knowledge when competing frames for the value appear within the debate.

## Value Frames for Gay Rights

To develop hypotheses about how political awareness might have shaped the effects of values on public opinion about gay rights, I first needed to establish which value frames were available to citizens. To date, only a few studies have systematically examined value framing in the mass media (Gamson and Lasch 1983; Gamson and Modigliani 1987, 1989; Kellstedt 2000), and even these say little about the potential for conflict over the meaning of values in public debate.

My data source was the ALLNWS (All News) file of the Lexis-Nexis database, which contains the full text of media reports (i.e., newspaper and magazine articles; television and radio transcripts) from over 2,300 sources. I chose this source because it provided a broad cross-section of items to which ordinary citizens might have been exposed—not only the leading newspapers and television programs but also news magazines, local newspapers, and so forth. It did not contain every item in the universe of media reports, but it provided the closest approximation of that population available.

I generated citations by searching for "gay rights" in the headlines of all items in the ALLNWS archive from 1990 to 1997. I chose this search term after ruling out alternatives that were either too vague (as was "homosexuality," which would have produced citations for a high proportion of articles that did not specifically discuss gay rights policies) or too uncommon (as were "gay and lesbian rights," "gay issues," "homosexual rights," and "gay agenda," which would have produced too few citations). I chose the 1990–97

2. See Alvarez and Brehm (1997) for evidence that ambivalence and confusion (i.e., uncertainty) are two distinct states.

interval because it encompassed what appeared to be the peak years in the public debate over gay rights. A count of the number of stories with "gay rights" in the headline printed by four of the most prominent and influential newspapers (the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *USA Today*) indicated that the debate rose in prominence during the early 1990s, peaked in 1993, and then declined on the agenda, particularly after 1996. These trends were presumably fueled by coverage of events such as the battles over several state ballot initiatives (including the aforementioned Colorado initiative, which voters passed in 1992), the "gays in the military" controversy of 1993, the *Romer v. Evans* decision of 1996, and the Congressional debates that same year over the Employment Non-discrimination Act and the Defense of Marriage Act.

Drawing upon an examination of party platforms, court opinions, and recent accounts of the politics of gay rights (e.g., Gallagher and Bull 1996; Sullivan 1995; Vaid 1995), I identified two values—equality and traditional morality—that I expected to be particularly prominent within the public debate over gay rights. Research has shown that both values are key elements of American political culture (McClosky and Zaller 1984) and important determinants of public opinion about gay rights (Wilcox and Wolpert 1996, 2000). Next, I selected a sample of items for preliminary examination; drawing upon this analysis, I developed codes for identifying frames that invoked these values. I used simple random sampling to select 400 items from the population of 4,237 for the actual analysis. I then hand-coded the 400 items in the sample. For each item (i.e., article or transcript), I counted a frame as being present if it appeared at least once in the entire text of the item; each individual item could contain one frame, multiple frames, or no frame at all. A secondary coder coded a subset of 100 items randomly selected from among the 400. Intercoder reliability coefficients indicated satisfactory to high levels of reliability in coding (see the appendix for further discussion of the content analysis procedure). The final coding scheme captured four frames.

The *anti–gay rights morality frame* cast opposition to gay rights in terms of support for traditional moral values, as in the following example:[3]

> [The U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Romer v. Evans*] makes you wonder, you know, what it takes for people of traditional values to get a Supreme Court justice to agree with them . . . the justices are clearly out of control and contemptuous of the moral heritage of America.

This frame was fairly common, appearing in 63, or 16 percent, of the 400 items analyzed. By contrast, the *pro–gay rights morality frame*—which rebutted any linkage between support for traditional morality and opposition to

3. The sources for the examples are as follows: (1) "Supreme Court Decision Won't End Debate on Gay Rights," *National Public Radio*, May 24, 1996; (2) "Cybill Shepherd to Lead Parade at Gay Rights March," *Orange County Register*, April 2, 1993; (3) "Tough Challenges in Court Stymie Gay Rights Backlash," *Washington Times*, December 20, 1993.

gay rights—was rare, occurring in only 8, or 2 percent, of the items. This imbalance indicates that there was little contest over the meaning of moral traditionalism in the public debate over gay rights.

The framing of the other value was more contentious. The *pro–gay rights equality frame* connected egalitarianism to support for gay rights through the language of "equal rights" and other invocations of equality. For example:

> The way I see it, I have as much stake in this—and so does every heterosexual person—as any other human being, because . . . it's about equal protection under the law.

This frame appeared in 94 items—almost a quarter of the items in the sample—but it did not go unchallenged. A rival equality frame revolved around the argument that gay rights policies are inegalitarian because they provide special rights, special privileges, or preferential treatment to gays and lesbians:

> Opponents of homosexual rights argue that homosexuals should not be equated with blacks and other oppressed minorities. By adding sexual orientation to such lists [of protected groups], homosexuals are given potential access to a host of "special rights" they don't deserve, foes say.

Although less prominent than the pro–gay rights equality frame, this *anti–gay rights equality frame* was also common, appearing in 64, or 16 percent, of the items.

It may be that a different approach would have produced somewhat different results. For example, a sample produced by searching for "gay rights" in the text, rather than the headlines, of items might have produced a sample containing smaller percentages of frames. Similarly, searches for different terms might have altered the frequencies of the frames (although there is a strong case for using "gay rights" as a search term, given that it appears to have been the dominant term within public debate for denoting this issue). Given these points, I make no strong claims about the exact percentages reported above. My conclusions are more modest, namely, that the anti–gay rights morality frame was effectively undisputed and that the pro–gay rights equality and anti–gay rights equality frames were both prominent features of the debate.

Recent evidence suggests that at least some citizens have learned the content of these frames and used them to think about gay rights. Brewer (2002) found that participants in an experimental study invoked all four frames described above when using their own words to describe their views on gay rights (although the presence of the pro–gay rights morality frame in their responses may be attributable to the unusually high level of support for gay rights and low level of moral traditionalism within the sample the author examined). He also found that participants exposed to a newspaper article containing the pro–gay rights equality frame were more likely to invoke equality in their responses than participants who did not read such an article; similarly, par-

ticipants exposed to the anti–gay rights morality frame were more likely to invoke morality than those who received no such exposure. Still, these results came from a small sample that was unrepresentative on a number of dimensions, including political knowledge. Thus they do not necessarily tell us how the frames might have influenced opinion among the broader public. Moreover, they cannot tell us what happened when that broader public was exposed to a debate that emphasized not only the anti–gay rights morality frame and the pro–gay rights equality frame but also the anti–gay rights equality frame.

## Hypotheses

Previous research on public opinion toward gay rights suggests that support for traditional morality produces opposition to gay rights and that support for equality produces support for gay rights (Wilcox and Wolpert 1996, 2000). The literature does not indicate, however, whether political knowledge conditions these relationships.

It may be that the greater cognitive resources associated with greater political knowledge facilitate the task of drawing connections between abstract principles and the issue of gay rights, regardless of the content of public debate. If so, then one might expect the negative relationship between moral traditionalism and support for gay rights to be stronger among the knowledgeable than among the less informed. By this logic, one would also expect the positive relationship between egalitarianism and support for gay rights to be stronger among the knowledgeable.

Alternatively, it may be that one value or the other is more difficult to apply in the context of gay rights. In particular, one could argue that equality, as one of the "most elusive and complex" values in American political culture (McClosky and Zaller 1984, p. 63), is harder for citizens to apply than other values, including moral traditionalism. If so, then one might expect political knowledge to play a greater role in conditioning the effect of egalitarianism on support for gay rights than in conditioning the effect of moral traditionalism.

A framing-based account leads to different expectations. Drawing upon the findings of my content analysis, one could derive three sets of predictions about the role of political knowledge in conditioning the effects of moral traditionalism and egalitarianism on public opinion about gay rights in 1992 and 1996. It may have been that the three value frames I found within public debate were not prominent enough to reach the most attentive citizens, let alone the uninformed ones. If so, then political knowledge should not have conditioned the effects of either value. Yet this scenario seems implausible in light of how prominent the issue was on the public agenda at the time and how common the frames were within the sample of news reports.

Indeed, if one sees gay rights as an "easy issue," then a second possibility is that reception of the frames did not vary across levels of political knowledge

because all citizens received them. Under this scenario, as in the previous one, political knowledge should have conditioned the effects of neither value. Yet this scenario is dependent upon the frames having been disseminated so widely that the considerable proportion of public that pays little attention to politics (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996) could have drawn upon them as easily as the most informed citizens. This, too, seems unlikely.

The third and most plausible scenario is that the frames reached some but not all citizens during the time period under study. Under this scenario, the magnitude of moral traditionalism's effect should have depended on one's level of political knowledge. There was little competition over the meaning of morality in the context of gay rights; the only frame that citizens could have drawn from the public debate told them that, "if you believe in traditional moral values, you should oppose gay rights." The more politically informed citizens were, the more likely they should have been to receive this undisputed frame and rely upon it in forming opinions about the issue. Consequently, as political knowledge increased, the negative relationship between moral traditionalism and support for gay rights should have grown stronger.

By contrast, one would not expect the impact of egalitarianism to vary across levels of political knowledge under this scenario. Recall that the implications of equality were disputed within public discourse: citizens who followed public debate could have encountered two competing frames for equality. As a result, politically informed citizens should have been more likely than their less knowledgeable peers to encounter the pro–gay rights equality frame, but they also should have been more likely to encounter its rival, the anti–gay rights equality frame. Exposure to these competing messages may have induced confusion or ambivalence among citizens about the implications of equality; alternatively, citizens who received both frames may have rejected both. None of these possibilities implies that political knowledge should have strengthened the relationship between support for equality and support for gay rights.[4]

4. I also considered two other possibilities. One was that the impact of egalitarianism would decrease with political knowledge because uninformed citizens would be less likely to receive conflicting frames for equality and thus less likely to become confused about the value's implications. In three of the four cases, the impact of egalitarianism decreased as knowledge increased—but not significantly so. Another possibility was that the relationships between the values and support for gay rights would be nonmonotonic—that they would be strongest among the moderately informed and weaker among the most and least informed. Recent research (e.g., Koch 1998; Zaller 1992) suggests that, in some cases, moderately informed respondents may be informed enough to receive messages but not informed enough to resist them, making them more susceptible to persuasion than the least informed (who may not receive the messages) or the most informed (who will receive them but also be able to resist them). Following Koch (1998), I tested this possibility by dividing respondents into three categories of approximately equal size (low knowledge, medium knowledge, and high knowledge) and reestimating the model with four value × knowledge interactions: moral traditionalism × medium knowledge, moral traditionalism × high knowledge, egalitarianism × medium knowledge, and egalitarianism × high knowledge. The results indicated that the relationships between moral traditionalism and opinion were strongest among the most informed, rather than the moderately informed. The strength of

**Table 1.** Responses to Gay Rights Policy Questions, 1996 and 2000 National Election Studies

| | "Do you think homosexuals should be allowed to serve in the United States Armed forces, or don't you think so?" | | "Do you favor or oppose laws to protect homosexuals against job discrimination?" | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1992 | 1996 | 1992 | 1996 |
| Favor, strongly | 32 | 44 | 33 | 40 |
| Favor, not strongly | 26 | 25 | 28 | 24 |
| Oppose, not strongly | 9 | 7 | 15 | 13 |
| Oppose, strongly | 32 | 25 | 25 | 23 |
| *N* | 2,127 | 1,480 | 2,129 | 1,436 |

NOTE.—Some percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

## Data and Methods

In the 1992 and 1996 American National Election Studies (ANES), respondents answered two questions about gay rights: "Do you favor or oppose laws to protect homosexuals against job discrimination?" and "Do you think homosexuals should be allowed to serve in the United States Armed forces, or don't you think so?"[5] Each question revolved around a policy controversy that occupied a central role in the debate over gay rights during the period under study (see Gallagher and Bull 1996). Follow-up questions assessed the strength of each response ("strongly or not strongly"). This branching format yielded four ordered response categories: strong opposition, opposition, support, and strong support.[6] Both policies drew majority support in each year (see table 1). I coded responses to each item to range from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating strong opposition, 1/3 indicating opposition, 2/3 indicating support, and 1 indicating strong support. The correlation between opinions on the two policies was .54 in 1992 and .44 in 1996.[7]

To capture the effects of moral traditionalism and egalitarianism on these responses, I included indices measuring the values in a model of support for

the relationships between egalitarianism and opinion varied little across the three levels of knowledge.

5. The response rates for the 1992, 1996, and 2000 (see below) American National Election Studies were 74 percent, 60 percent, and 61 percent, respectively.

6. The 1992 ANES also contained the following question: "Do you think gay and lesbian couples, in other words, homosexual couples, should be legally permitted to adopt children?" But this policy was not a focal point in the public debate over gay rights from 1990 to 1997: unlike "gays in the military" and protection from job discrimination, it was rarely mentioned in the articles from the content analysis that contained value frames. Accordingly, I did not include it in the following analyses.

7. Analyses of an index constructed from the two measures produced findings similar to the ones reported below.

gay rights. The 1992 and 1996 ANES surveys included sets of items tapping each value that I used to construct additive indices (see the appendix for further details). To provide a consistent scoring scheme, I transformed these indices so that they also ranged from zero to one, with zero indicating minimum support for the value and one indicating maximum support for the value. The mean for the egalitarianism scale was .64 in 1992 and .56 in 1996; the mean for the moral traditionalism scale was .59 in 1992 and .62 in 1996. I used scores on factual questions and interviewer ratings to construct an index of political knowledge for each year (transformed to range from zero to one, where 1 = maximum knowledge; see the appendix for further details). I included multiplicative interactions between moral traditionalism and political knowledge and between egalitarianism and political knowledge to test whether the effects of the values varied across levels of political knowledge.[8] I also included the political knowledge measure itself to capture any residual effects of political reasoning skills and exposure to pro– and anti–gay rights messages within public debate that did not invoke values.[9] Note that the value-knowledge interactions may capture not only framing effects but also effects stemming from cognitive sophistication and value complexity; accordingly, I consider each of these possibilities below.

Finally, I included a set of controls in the model to rule out the possibility that the relationships described below might be spurious. These controls measured other attitudinal and demographic variables that might have been related to the key variables in the model. The former category included measures of attitudes toward the military (a feeling thermometer, transformed so that coldest feelings = 0 and warmest feelings = 1), partisanship (the traditional 7-point scale, transformed to range from 0 to 1, where 1 = strong Democratic partisanship), and ideology (another 7-point scale transformed to range from 0 to 1, where 1 = extremely liberal). The latter category included sex (a dummy variable, where female = 1), race (another dummy variable, where nonwhite = 1), age (in years/100), education (measured on a seven-point scale), and income (in dollars/100,000). Alternative models, described below, included additional controls for Christian fundamentalism and feelings toward gays and lesbians.

8. I estimated a model that included an interaction between moral traditionalism and egalitarianism to test whether value conflict shaped the impact of the values on opinion. This interaction did not attain significance for any of the dependent variables. Nor did an additional triple interaction between moral traditionalism, egalitarianism, and knowledge, which tested whether the role of value conflict varied across levels of knowledge.

9. One possible interpretation of the positive coefficients for this variable is that there were other pro–gay rights messages in the public debate and that these outnumbered the other anti–gay rights messages in the debate.

**Table 2.** Influences on Support for Gay Rights Policies in 1992 and 1996, by Policy (National Election Studies)

| | Gays in the Military | | Job Discrimination Law | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1992 | 1996 | 1992 | 1996 |
| Moral traditionalism | −.99** | −.65 | −.80* | −1.19* |
| | (.34) | (.49) | (.33) | (.49) |
| Moral traditionalism × knowledge | −1.44* | −1.67* | −1.41** | −.59 |
| | (.58) | (.78) | (.56) | (.77) |
| Egalitarianism | .96** | .76 | 1.59** | 1.30** |
| | (.37) | (.50) | (.36) | (.49) |
| Egalitarianism × knowledge | −.24 | −.10 | −.34 | .39 |
| | (.63) | (.78) | (.61) | (.77) |
| Political knowledge | 1.19* | 1.56* | 1.58** | .61 |
| | (.59) | (.73) | (.57) | (.72) |
| Feeling thermometer—military | −.72** | −.16 | −.29* | .01 |
| | (.15) | (.18) | (.14) | (.18) |
| Democratic PID | .38** | .63** | .31** | .31** |
| | (.09) | (.11) | (.09) | (.11) |
| Liberal ideology | .51** | .25 | .47** | .56** |
| | (.16) | (.21) | (.15) | (.21) |
| Female | .65** | .54** | .36** | .33** |
| | (.06) | (.07) | (.06) | (.07) |
| Nonwhite | −.09 | −.06 | .06 | .15 |
| | (.08) | (.10) | (.08) | (.10) |
| Education | .30* | .09 | .17 | .20 |
| | (.13) | (.15) | (.13) | (.15) |
| Age/100 | −.19 | −.37 | .17 | .21 |
| | (.17) | (.20) | (.17) | (.20) |
| Income/100,000 | .02 | .44* | .16 | .21 |
| | (.12) | (.17) | (.12) | (.17) |
| Cut 1 | −.10 | −.36 | .61 | .25 |
| | (.36) | (.16) | (.35) | (.49) |
| Cut 2 | .21 | −.12 | 1.10 | .71 |
| | (.36) | (.16) | (.35) | (.49) |
| Cut 3 | 1.04 | .68 | 1.95 | 1.46 |
| | (.36) | (.16) | (.35) | (.49) |
| Number of observations | 1,832 | 1,324 | 1,826 | 1,295 |
| Log-likelihood | −2,067.78 | −1,444.83 | −2,184.95 | −1,505.24 |
| $\chi^2$ | 627.20** | 357.14** | 550.39** | 385.19** |

NOTE.—Table entries are ordered probit coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses. Cut 1, Cut 2, and Cut 3 are the three constants produced by the analysis.

* Significant at the .05 level (two-tailed test).

** Significant at the .01 level (two-tailed test).

## Results

Given that my measures of support for gay rights were ordinal, I used ordered probit to estimate the model for each of these dependent variables. Table 2 reports the results. As expected, moral traditionalism produced opposition to gay rights policies. In three of the four cases, the effect of moral traditionalism was statistically significant at the .05 level or better among even the least knowledgeable respondents. In the remaining case (support for "gays in the military" in 1992), the value's effect had the correct sign and approached statistical significance among the least knowledgeable respondents. Also note, however, that the impact of moral traditionalism varied across levels of political knowledge. The negative relationship grew stronger as knowledge increased: the interaction between moral traditionalism and knowledge was negative and significant in both 1992 and 1996 ($p < .05$ in each year). A similar pattern emerged in responses to the 1992 job discrimination item: the interaction between moral traditionalism and knowledge was negative and significant at the .01 level. Only for responses to the job discrimination law in 1996 did the effect of moral traditionalism fail to vary significantly across levels of levels of knowledge. Even in this case, the interaction had a negative sign.

To gain a clearer picture of how large these effects were, I calculated the probabilities of favoring or strongly favoring each policy at the maximum and minimum levels of moral traditionalism and political knowledge, while holding the other variables constant at their means (see King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000; Long 1997). As parts *A–D* of figure 1 illustrate, the weight of moral traditionalism's effect grew substantially as political knowledge increased. Consider, for example, moral traditionalism's effect on support for "gays in the military" in 1992. Among the least knowledgeable respondents, an increase from the minimum to the maximum on the moral traditionalism scale produced a 35 percent drop in support for this policy, but among the most knowledgeable respondents a similar increase in moral traditionalism produced a 75 percent drop in support. Thus the impact of moral traditionalism was more than twice as large among the most knowledgeable than among the least knowledgeable. The same was true of moral traditionalism's impact on support for an antidiscrimination law in 1992. In 1996, the impact of moral traditionalism on support for "gays in the military" was three times larger among the most knowledgeable than among the least knowledgeable. The results for the job discrimination law followed the general pattern, though more weakly.

Consistent with expectations, egalitarianism produced support for gay rights in three of the four cases ($p < .01$) and had a positive sign in the fourth (support for "gays in the military" in 1996). The interaction between egalitarianism and political knowledge, however, did not approach statistical significance in any of the four cases (see table 2). Nor did the magnitude of egalitarianism's effect vary substantively across levels of political knowledge in any of the four cases, as parts *A–D* of figure 2 show. Thus politically knowledgeable citizens were

no more likely to connect egalitarianism to support for gay rights than their less knowledgeable peers. Indeed, the results for this interaction stand in striking contrast to the results for the interaction between moral traditionalism and political knowledge.

Could these results be artifacts of model specification? I estimated a series of alternative models for each dependent variable.[10] Some included additional variables: a feeling thermometer score for gays and lesbians, a four-item measure of Christian fundamentalism, or a general measure of general ideological consistency and its interactions with the values.[11] Another specification omitted all variables except moral traditionalism, egalitarianism, political knowledge, its interactions with the values, and the demographic controls. A final specification omitted the demographic controls, as well. Each of these specifications reproduced the key findings presented earlier.[12]

## Interpreting the Role of Knowledge: Some Additional Evidence

The results show that two values—moral traditionalism and egalitarianism—shaped public opinion about gay rights, with the former producing opposition to gay rights policies and the latter producing support for them. In most cases, even relatively uninformed citizens drew linkages between their values and gay rights.[13] The results also indicate that, whereas politically knowledgeable citizens were especially likely to judge gay rights policies in terms of their moral beliefs, they were no more likely than their less knowledgeable peers to see egalitarianism as grounds for supporting gay rights. This casts into doubt several accounts of why and how political knowledge might have shaped the effects of values on public opinion about gay rights.

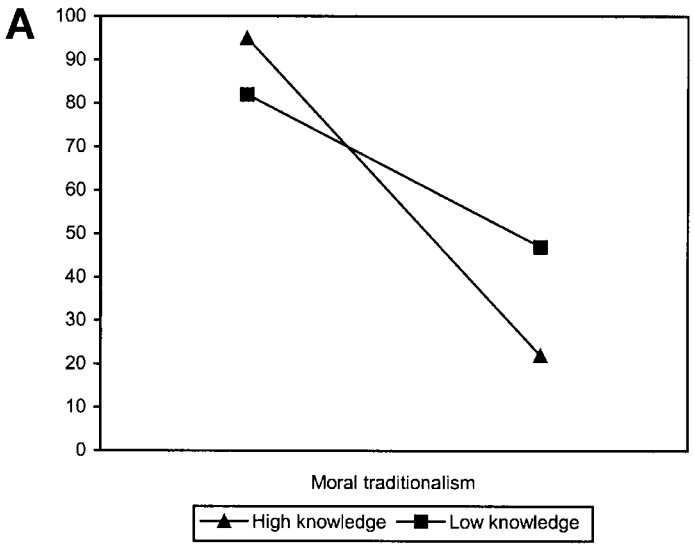
First, consider an account that explains the relationships among values, knowledge, and opinion strictly in terms of cognitive resources. By this ac-

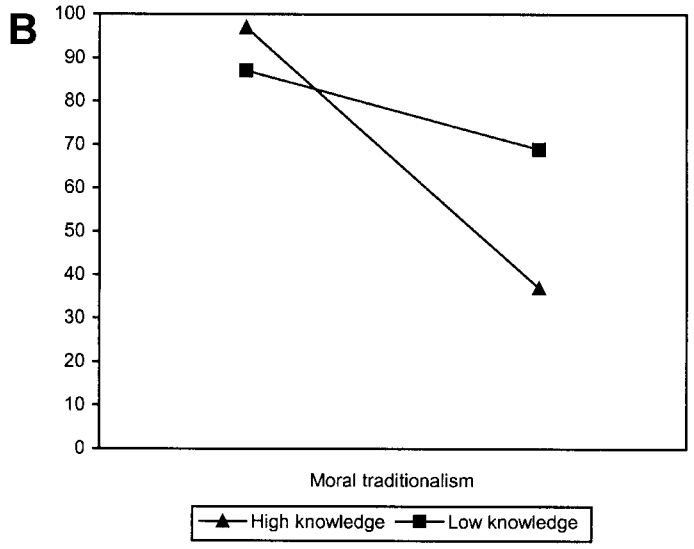
10. Additional analyses are available on request from the author.

11. This measure was constructed by summing the inconsistencies (i.e., differences) between the five attitudinal measures included as independent variables in the model (where consistency was defined by whether the measure was expected to have a positive or negative effect on support for gay rights, e.g., liberalism and egalitarianism were treated as consistent beliefs). I did so to control for the possibility that some citizens—"ideologues" (see Converse 1964)—would be more likely to link their values to the issue than other citizens. General ideological consistency increased with political knowledge; as the results indicate, however, knowledgeable citizens are not always more likely to link general principles to specific issues.

12. Nor does multicollinearity pose a serious threat to the conclusions drawn here, given that the correlations among the three key independent variables (moral traditionalism, egalitarianism, and political knowledge) ranged from moderate to negligible and that the findings reported for these variables did not depend on the inclusion or exclusion of other variables in the model (including the controls).

13. Note that the hypotheses say nothing about how large or small the main effects of the values should be. My account allows citizens to draw on their values in the absence of frames; I simply argue that reception of frames may alter the interactions between values and knowledge.



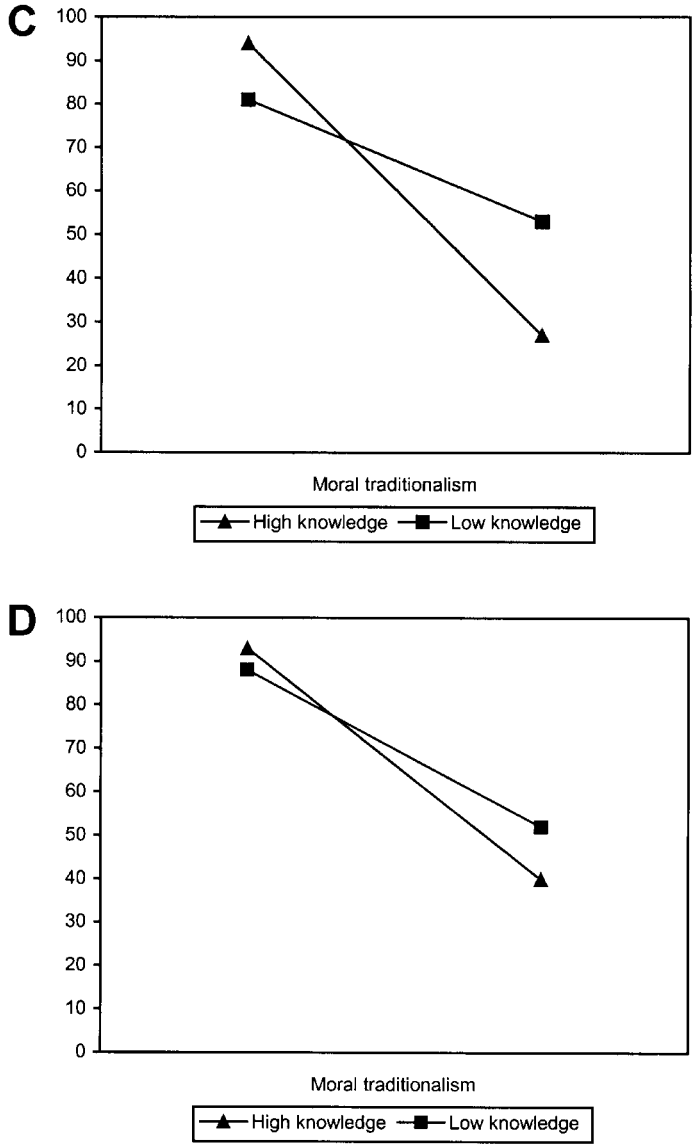
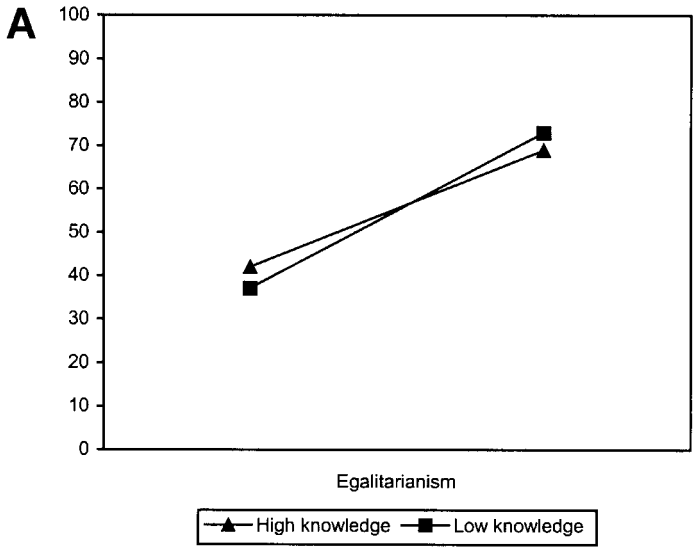
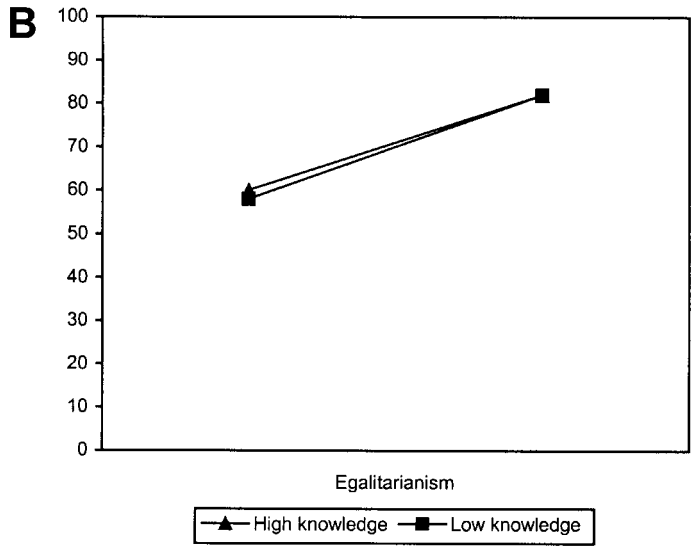



**Figure 1.** *A*, predicted probability of favoring or strongly favoring "gays in the military" in 1992, by moral traditionalism and political knowledge. *B*, predicted probability of favoring or strongly favoring "gays in the military" in 1996, by moral traditionalism and political knowledge. *C*, predicted probability of favoring or strongly favoring a job discrimination law in 1992, by moral traditionalism and political knowledge. *D*, predicted probability of favoring or strongly favoring a job discrimination law in 1996, by moral traditionalism and political knowledge.



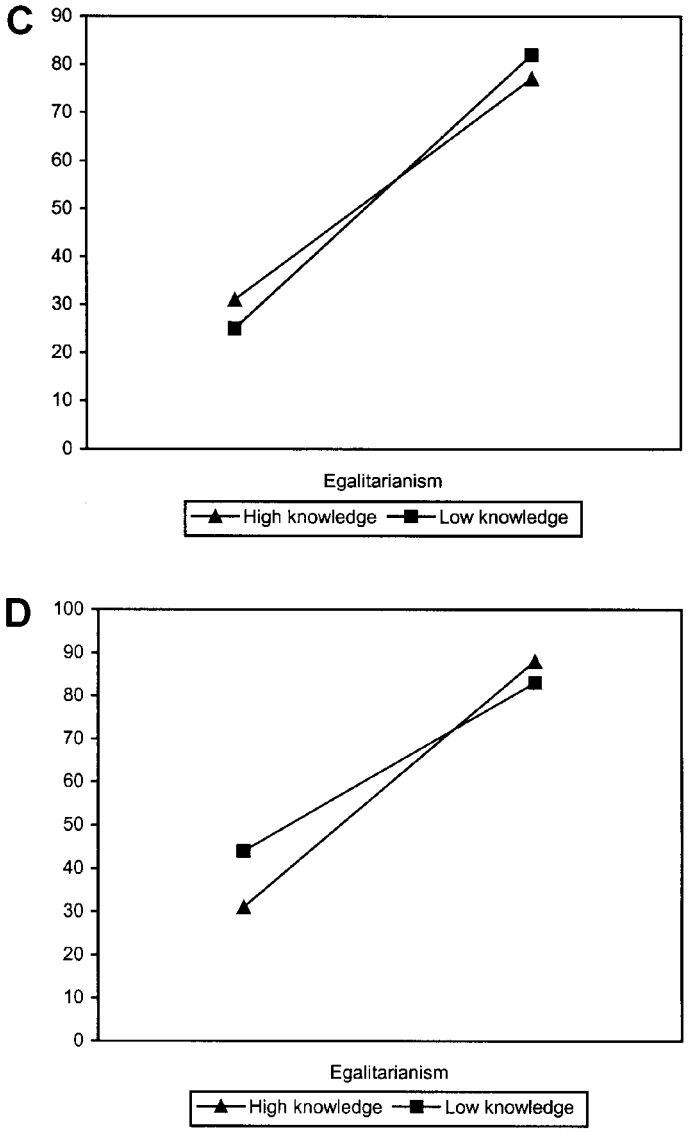



**Figure 2.** *A*, predicted probability of favoring or strongly favoring "gays in the military" in 1992, by egalitarianism and political knowledge. *B*, predicted probability of favoring or strongly favoring "gays in the military" in 1996, by egalitarianism and political knowledge. *C*, predicted probability of favoring or strongly favoring a job discrimination law in 1992, by egalitarianism and political knowledge. *D*, predicted probability of favoring or strongly favoring a job discrimination law in 1996, by egalitarianism and political knowledge.

count, citizens with greater political knowledge, and thus greater reasoning skills, would be better able than others to draw connections between values and opinion regardless of which frames, if any, appeared within public debate. Such an account could explain why knowledge conditioned the effects of moral traditionalism in 1992 and 1996, but it provides no explanation for why this was not also true for egalitarianism.

Next, consider an account in which one value may be inherently more complex and thus more difficult to apply than others. In the case at hand, perhaps egalitarianism was a "harder" value than moral traditionalism. Proceeding from this account, one might expect egalitarianism to have had a stronger effect on opinion among informed citizens than among their less informed peers; one might also expect the impact of moral traditionalism to have been relatively constant across levels of knowledge. However, in 1992 and 1996, the opposite pattern occurred.

Then consider two accounts that allow frames within public debate to shape how citizens connect values to issues. One such account would hold that the value frames within the public debate over gay rights were not prominent enough to reach anyone. Another such account would posit that the frames were so widely publicized that they were disseminated equally throughout the public—that no knowledge gap characterized their distribution. By either account, the impact of neither value should have varied across levels of knowledge. Once again, that is not what happened in 1992 or 1996.

Finally, consider an account that is consistent with the findings reported above. In this account, three frames from the public debate—an anti–gay rights morality frame, a pro–gay rights equality frame, and an anti–gay rights equality frame—reached informed citizens to a greater extent than they reached uninformed citizens. As a result, the knowledgeable were more likely than the less knowledgeable to receive the undisputed anti–gay rights morality frame and to use it in forming opinions about gay rights. They were also more likely to receive the two equality frames; because these frames were mutually contradictory, however, knowledgeable citizens were no more likely than anyone else to connect equality and support for gay rights.[14] In sum, the results point to an explanation that revolves around whether the public debate contained one disputed interpretation of the value—as was the case with moral traditionalism—or two competing interpretations for it—as was the case with egalitarianism.

The crucial inference underlying this account is that political knowledge

14. One could argue that the anti–gay rights morality frame and the anti–gay rights equality frame both undermined the impact pro–gay rights equality frame while the pro–gay rights equality frame undermined the impact of the anti–gay rights equality frame. Such an argument would be consistent with the absence of egalitarianism × knowledge interactions. By this logic, however, the pro–gay rights equality frame should have undermined the impact of the anti–gay rights morality frame as well. This does not appear to have happened; the impact of moral traditionalism grew stronger as political knowledge increased despite the presence of the pro–gay rights equality frame in public debate.

captured the effects of exposure to value frames in public discourse. Previous research provides support for that inference (Zaller 1992), and alternative explanations for the interactions among the values, knowledge, and opinion are not supported by the data. Evidence from recent experimental studies also bolsters this study's conclusions. Looking at the issue of affirmative action, Kinder and Sanders (1996) demonstrated that survey respondents' interpretations of a value such as equality could depend on whether they received one competing frame or another. Thus it stands to reason that citizens' interpretations of a value within the context of gay rights could have depended on whether they received two competing frames for the value or only one undisputed frame. Furthermore, Brewer (2002) demonstrated that at least some members of the public were familiar with the gay rights frames under study and that two of those frames—the anti–gay rights morality frame and the pro–gay rights equality frame—influenced how experimental participants thought about gay rights policies. Thus it stands to reason that not only these frames but also the anti–gay rights equality frame could have influenced the public in 1992 and 1996.

Still, the evidence for the framing-based explanation outlined above is circumstantial. To provide a further test for my argument that knowledge captured the effects of framing, I examined whether knowledge conditioned the effects of moral traditionalism and egalitarianism on support for gay rights in 2000. This year provides a useful contrast to 1992 and 1996. Whereas the public debate over gay rights received considerable media attention in each of those earlier years, it received relatively little attention in 2000. In 1992, 66 articles mentioning "gay rights" in the headline appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *USA Today*; in 1996, 45 did. In contrast, these newspapers printed only 23 such articles in 2000—half the total in 1996 and a third of the total in 1992.

As the coverage of the debate subsided, the flow of the value frames within that debate to politically knowledgeable citizens should have subsided as well; even a prominent frame in a "quiet" debate will have a harder time reaching its audience than a prominent frame in a "louder" debate. Thus, one might expect the role of political knowledge in conditioning the impact of moral traditionalism to have diminished by 2000. Given that the cognitive accessibility and subjective importance of a frame should decline as exposure to it becomes less recent and less frequent (Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997; Zaller 1992), the impact of moral traditionalism among knowledgeable citizens should have decreased along with media coverage of the anti–gay rights morality frame—thereby narrowing the contrast between its impact among these citizens and their less informed peers. On the other hand, the role of knowledge in conditioning the impact of egalitarianism on support for gay rights should have remained relatively constant—that is, nonexistent. The diminished volume of debate in 2000 should have reduced the likelihood that knowledgeable citizens would receive the pro–gay rights equality frame, but

it also should have diminished the likelihood that they would receive the anti–gay rights equality frame.

To test these expectations, I estimated the model presented above using 2000 National Elections Studies measures for the variables.[15] Table 3 presents the results. The findings regarding the egalitarianism and knowledge interaction followed the now familiar pattern: the impact of this value on support for "gays in the military" and a job discrimination law did not vary across knowledge in 2000. For the other value, however, the 2000 results presented a different picture. Although the coefficients for the moral traditionalism and knowledge interaction had negative signs, as they did in 1992 and 1996, they fell well short of statistical significance. Put another way, knowledge played no discernible role in conditioning the impact of this value on support for "gays in the military" and a job discrimination law in 2000.

This outcome further undermines an account based solely upon cognitive resources: why would such resources matter in shaping the impact of moral traditionalism in 1992 and 1996 but not in 2000, unless their use was contingent upon the information available to citizens? Similarly, the results for 2000 cast additional doubt upon an account that revolves around the differing complexity of values: why would the complexity of a value change over time, except in response to changes in the availability of interpretations for it? Again, the framing-based account that I have presented provides the most compelling explanation for the results. By this account, the role of knowledge in conditioning the effect of moral traditionalism should have faded as the prominence of media coverage about gay rights—and thus, presumably, the anti–gay rights morality frame—diminished. Meanwhile, the role of knowledge in conditioning the effect of egalitarianism—or, rather, the lack thereof—should have remained the same as the prominence of the two mutually contradictory frames diminished. In sum, political knowledge shaped the effects of values on opinion about gay rights when—and only when—the public debate offered a frame for the value that was both undisputed and sufficiently prominent within media coverage for citizens to receive.

## Conclusion

Scholars have long argued that reasoning based upon abstract principles is an important component of public deliberation (Hurwitz and Peffley 1987; Kinder and Sanders 1996). Thus we should ask whether competing value frames within public debate encourage or discourage such reasoning. According to

15. In 2000, 52 percent of respondents strongly favored the "gays in the military" policy, 25 percent favored it, 19 percent opposed it, and 5 percent strongly opposed it. For the job discrimination law, the percentages were 41 percent, 27 percent, 19 percent, and 14 percent, respectively. The correlation between the two items was .34. The means for moral traditionalism and egalitarianism were both .60. See the appendix for further details about the measures for egalitarianism, moral traditionalism, and political knowledge.

**Table 3.** Influences on Support for Gay Rights Policies in 2000, by Policy (National Election Studies)

| | Gays in the Military | Job Discrimination Law |
|---|---|---|
| Moral traditionalism | −.66 | −.51 |
| | (.39) | (.37) |
| Moral traditionalism × knowledge | −.75 | −1.04 |
| | (.76) | (.72) |
| Egalitarianism | .39 | 1.42** |
| | (.40) | (.38) |
| Egalitarianism × knowledge | −.05 | .29 |
| | (.77) | (.74) |
| Political knowledge | 1.00 | .65 |
| | (.76) | (.73) |
| Feeling thermometer—military | −.13 | .03 |
| | (.10) | (.09) |
| Democratic PID | .44** | .16 |
| | (.12) | (.12) |
| Liberal ideology | .55** | .11 |
| | (.16) | (.15) |
| Female | .59** | .33** |
| | (.07) | (.07) |
| Nonwhite | −.39** | −.10 |
| | (.10) | (.10) |
| Education | .30 | .05 |
| | (.16) | (.15) |
| Age/100 | −.84** | .25 |
| | (.23) | (.22) |
| Income/100,000 | .17 | .04 |
| | (.09) | (.09) |
| Cut 1 | −1.27 | −.11 |
| | (.40) | (.38) |
| Cut 2 | −.28 | .58 |
| | (.40) | (.38) |
| Cut 3 | .50 | 1.38 |
| | (.40) | (.38) |
| Number of observations | 1,139 | 1,151 |
| Log-likelihood | −1,173.08 | −1,393.40 |
| $\chi^2$ | 264.25** | 224.79** |

NOTE.—Table entries are ordered probit coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses. Cut 1, Cut 2, and Cut 3 are the three constants produced by the analysis.

* Significant at the .05 level (two-tailed test)

** Significant at the .01 level (two-tailed test)

classical liberal democratic theory, diversity and competition in public debate will lead to more rational and thoughtful deliberation on the part of the public. For example, Mill ([1859] 1947, p. 52) argues that it "is only by the collision of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied" in collective deliberation. By this logic, we should expect citizens with the highest degrees of exposure to competing frames within public debate to hold opinions that most closely resemble "the opinions that advocates of democracy hope for" (Kinder and Sanders 1996, p. 192). But is that so?

Perhaps the answer is no. One possible interpretation of the findings presented here is that public debate sometimes provides ambiguous or even dubious guidance to citizens in the form of conflicting frames that fail to encourage value-based deliberation. Just as such value words took on conflicting meanings in Orwell's (1946) *Animal Farm* ("All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others"), the argument might go, so do they take on mutually contradictory meanings in contemporary issue debates such as the dispute over gay rights. Given that the impact of beliefs about equality on opinion about gay rights was no greater among informed citizens than it was among uninformed citizens, perhaps citizens who followed this particular debate were simply confused by the "Orwellian" language regarding equality.

Yet confusion is not necessarily what took place. The results are just as consistent with ambivalent responses or even active thought on the part of citizens exposed to competing frames. Several recent studies of framing (e.g., Gamson 1992; Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997) suggest that the public may be a more critical audience for frames than generally has been supposed. In the case at hand, perhaps citizens responded uncritically to the undisputed anti–gay rights morality frame while responding critically to the equality frames. Armed with two competing interpretations of equality, they may have been able to resist the influence of each.[16] If this were the case, then perhaps the competing frames actually encouraged more active deliberation on the part of citizens. Thus the role of value framing in mass democracy can, like values themselves, be framed in more than one way.

## Appendix

### Content Analysis Procedure

To be included in the sample for the gay rights content analysis, an item had to contain at least one explicit mention of (1) a law, bill, ordinance, court ruling, constitutional

16. Yet another possibility is that citizens who received both frames may have selectively drawn upon them to reinforce the conclusions dictated by other values, particularly moral traditionalism. Thus, moral traditionalists could have drawn on the anti–gay rights equality frame to reconcile these two values, whereas moral relativists could have drawn on the pro–gay rights equality frame to do the same. The absence of moral traditionalism × egalitarianism × knowledge interactions suggests that this was not the case, however (see n. 7).

amendment, charter amendment, or referendum regarding gay rights, or (2) a policy regarding gay rights set by a government agency, institution, or office. I excluded items that did not contain enough information to allow for the coding procedure to be applied (i.e., items that were incomplete or missing because of errors in the database, abstracts, and items that contained only a brief announcement of a publication for sale or the time of an event). If these items had been included in the analysis, few would have been judged to contain any of the frames of interest. I also excluded citations that included multiple texts (e.g., multiple opinion pieces, multiple letters to the editor, or multiple unrelated "bullet" articles) to avoid the possibility of counting two items as one (which might have rendered the sample size misleading). Finally, given that the subsequent analysis focused on public opinion in the United States about public policy within the United States, I excluded items that focused on politics in another nation or at the international level and items from sources classified in the 1997 Lexis-Nexis Directory as "Non-U.S. Sources." Both the primary coder and the secondary coder used the following coding scheme—which lists summaries and exemplars—to identify value frames:

*Anti–gay rights morality frame.* Uses traditional notions of morality and "family values" to justify opposition to gay rights. Homosexuality is immoral; gay rights is a moral issue. One can have genuine moral objections to gay rights policies/homosexuality. Gay rights policies go against traditional morals or mores; moral beliefs, precedents, standards, or edicts; morality; traditional values; family values; and/or community values. Anti–gay rights policies protect/promote traditional morals or mores; moral beliefs, precedents, standards, or edicts; morality; traditional values; family values; and/or community values.

*Pro–gay rights morality frame.* Consists of an explicit rejection or rebuttal of the anti–gay rights morality frame. Homosexuality is not immoral; gay rights is not a moral issue. Moral objections to homosexuality cannot justify opposition to gay rights. Gay rights policies are not a threat to traditional morals or mores; moral beliefs, precedents, standards, or edicts; morality; traditional values; family values; and/or community values. Anti–gay rights policies do not protect/promote traditional morals or mores; moral beliefs, precedents, standards, or edicts; morality; traditional values; family values; and/or community values.

*Pro–gay rights equality frame.* Uses egalitarian principles to justify support for gay rights. Gay rights policies are about equal rights, equality, an equal voice, equal participation, equal protection, equal opportunity, and/or equal treatment for gays and lesbians. Gays and lesbians should have the same rights as/should be treated like all Americans/everybody else/people who are not gay or lesbian. Anti–gay rights policies deny gays and lesbians equal rights, equal treatment, or equal protection under the law; such policies make gays and lesbians unequal to everyone else. Gay rights policies are not about special rights, special privileges, special treatment, extra rights, preferential treatment, and/or preferred status for gays and lesbians. Such policies will not give gays and lesbians any rights or privileges that other people do not have.

*Anti–gay rights equality frame.* Uses egalitarian principles to justify opposition to gay rights. Gay rights policies are about special rights, special privileges, special treatment, extra rights, preferential treatment, and/or preferred status for gays and lesbians. Such policies give gays and lesbians rights or privileges that other people do not have. Gay rights policies are not about equal rights, equality, an equal voice, equal participation, equal protection, equal opportunity, and/or equal treatment for

gays and lesbians. Gays and lesbians should not have the same rights as all Americans/everybody else/people who are not gay or lesbian; they are not entitled to equal protection under the law. Opposition to gay rights is support for equal rights.

The Scott's pi intercoder reliability coefficient for the anti–gay rights morality frame was .79; for the pro–gay rights equality frame, it was .89; and for the anti–gay rights equality frame, it was .96. The fourth frame has a relatively low reliability score: when the coders judged the presence or absence of the pro–gay rights morality frame, the intercoder reliability score dropped to .48. However, this was not a grave concern: the frame was noteworthy only for its rarity, and both coders agreed that it was absent from 94 of the 100 items. In the analysis, I assumed that this frame played little role in the public debate. I also searched for gay rights frames constructed around the values of limited government, individualism, and compassion, but I found almost none.

## Measurement of Values

The wordings for the ANES value indicators are presented below. All indicators are Likert items. An asterisk indicates a reverse-coded item. Variable numbers are in parentheses. The reliability coefficient for the egalitarianism index was .72 in 1992, .71 in 1996, and .68 in 2000. The reliability coefficient for the moral traditionalism index was .65 in 1992, .63 in 1996, and .64 in 2000.

Egalitarianism

1. Our society should do whatever is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed (v926024, v961229, v001521).
2. We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country (v926025, v961230, v001522).*
3. This country would be better off if we worried less about how equal people are (v926026, v961232, v001524).*
4. It is not really that big a problem if some people have more of a chance in life than others (v926027, v961233, v001525).*
5. If people were treated more equally in this country, we would have many fewer problems (v926028, v961234, v001526).
6. One of the big problems in this country is that we don't give everyone an equal chance (v926029, v961231, v001523).

Moral traditionalism

1. The newer lifestyles are contributing to the breakdown of society (v926118, v961247, v001530).
2. The world is changing, and we should adjust our view of moral behavior to those changes (v926115, v961248, v001531).*
3. We should be more tolerant of people who choose to live according to their own moral standards, even if they are very different from our own (v926116, v961250, v001533).*
4. This country would have fewer problems if there were more emphasis on traditional family ties (v926117, v961249, v001532).

### Measurement of Political Knowledge

The 1992 measure (reliability = .78) was built from six items tapping factual knowledge about politics and one interviewer rating of respondent knowledge. The 1996 measure (reliability = .72) was built from four items tapping factual knowledge and an interviewer rating. The 2000 measure (reliability = .80) was built from eight items tapping factual knowledge and one interviewer rating. The question wordings for the indicators are as follows (variable numbers are in parentheses):

1992 Indicators

1. Now we have a set of questions concerning various public figures. We want to see how much information about them gets out to the public from television, newspapers, and the like. The first name is Dan Quayle. What job or political office does he now hold? (v925916)
2. William Rehnquist? (v925917)
3. Boris Yeltsin? (v925918)
4. Tom Foley? (v925919)
5. Who has the final responsibility to decide if a law is constitutional or not . . . is it the president, the Congress, the Supreme Court, or don't you know? (v925920)
6. And whose responsibility is it to nominate judges to the Federal Courts . . . the president, the Congress, the Supreme Court, or don't you know? (v925921)
7. [Interviewer rating] Respondent's general level of information about politics and public affairs seemed: very high/fairly high/average/fairly low/very low. (924205)

1996 Indicators

1. Now we have a set of questions concerning various public figures. We want to see how much information about them gets out to the public from television, newspapers, and the like. The first name is Al Gore. What job or political office does he now hold? (961189)
2. William Rehnquist? (961190)
3. Boris Yeltsin? (961191)
4. Newt Gingrich? (961192)
5. [Interviewer rating] Respondent's general level of information about politics and public affairs seemed: very high/fairly high/average/fairly low/very low. (960070)

2000 Indicators

1. Now we have a set of questions concerning various public figures. We want to see how much information about them gets out to the public from television, newspapers, and the like. The first name is Trent Lott. What job or political office does he now hold? (v001447)
2. William Rehnquist? (v001450)
3. Tony Blair? (v001453)
4. Janet Reno? (v001456)
5. What U.S. state does George W. Bush live in now? (v001458)
6. What U.S. state is Al Gore from originally? (v001460)

7. What U.S. state does Dick Cheney live in now? (v001466)
8. What U.S. state does Joseph Lieberman live in now? (v001470)
9. [Interviewer rating] Respondent's general level of information about politics and public affairs seemed: very high/fairly high/average/fairly low/very low. (v001745)

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