Abstract: Previous research has established that framing issues with respect to alternative, competing values can significantly affect public opinion. In the present research, we investigate rival frames that draw upon the same values to advocate opposing policy positions. We also investigate whether frames can emphasize or deemphasize emotional responses to the issue. Results show that frames can succeed in using the same values to guide opinion in opposite directions on the same issue. Furthermore, emphasizing versus deemphasizing emotional responses has an additional effect on opinion. We discuss these results with respect to framing theory, and the presumed competition between passion and principle.
Framing Effects on Values, Emotions, and Attitudes

Introduction

Every day, in many ways, communicators try to influence public opinion by guiding the impressions that citizens form of the day’s pressing issues, as well as how they understand the menu of policy options from which they might choose. This is framing. Frames can be conceived as patterns of interpretation that are used to classify information sensibly and process it efficiently. Framing stresses certain aspects of reality and pushes others into the background; it has a selective function. In this way, certain attributes, judgments and decisions are suggested (Entman 1993; Scheufele 2000).

Framing’s effects on opinion are manifold and complex. The range of scholarly investigations of framing has expanded to fill more and more niches of this multifaceted phenomenon. Empirical work has examined several consequences of framing -- not just its ultimate impact on political attitudes and behaviors, but on the intermediate steps that convey its influence. These targets include attributions, beliefs, belief importance, cognitive accessibility, values, and now affect. Just as there is no single and specific phenomenon that we can call “a frame”, nor is there an exclusive, signature impact of framing.

As a step towards a more comprehensive picture of framing, the experiment reported in this paper examines the influence of issue frames on values and affect. There are good reasons to examine each of these framing targets alone, and even better reason to examine them jointly. Although it is clear that both values and emotions can be affected by framing, we still have at best an incomplete picture of these phenomena. Furthermore, these two opinion elements have historically been depicted as opposing forces, with emotion usually seen as a corrupter of principle-driven political choice. Political communicators, from cerebral philosophers to scribblers of letter-to-the-editor, frequently exhort us to put aside emotion in favor of reasoned, rational decision-making. This sort of advice fits the definition of framing like a glove; it therefore makes perfect sense to examine experimentally how framing addresses the balance between values and emotions.
After a brief review of general framing theory, we concentrate on framing with respect to values and emotions. While extant research is suggestive, we are only beginning to understand how these two elements of popular political psychology respond to framing. We then consider frames that target both of these elements, playing off the perceived contradiction between them.

**Framing Effects Theory**

Framing studies typically employ either equivalency or emphasis frames (Druckman 2001a). Equivalency frames refer to logically alike content, which is presented or phrased differently (Chong and Druckman 2007a; Kahneman and Tversky 1984). Emphasis frames are closer to “real” journalistic news coverage and present alternative perspectives that stress different aspects of a complex phenomenon. Research has, moreover, worked with two alternative operationalizations of frames in the news, namely issue-specific and generic frames (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000). Issue-specific frames pertain to a specific topic, while generic news frames are applicable to a wide range of topics.

Issue frames are typically valenced. This valence alludes to one of the most fundamental characteristics of political discourse, namely that elites attempt to affect support for or rejection of an issue by emphasizing the positive or negative aspects of it. According to de Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003), valenced emphasis frames have the capacity to affect opinion on and support for an issue, while neutral emphasis frames are more likely to affect issue interpretation (Bizer and Petty 2005).

One of the main goals of current framing research is to describe the psychological processes that underlie framing effects (Lecheler S., De Vreese C., and Slothuus R. 2009; Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997a; Price, Tewksbury, and Powers 1997). Initially, studies conceived these processes as accessibility effects (Iyengar 1991). Accessibility effects function by making considerations in the individual’s mind more salient and therefore more likely to be used when forming an opinion (Nabi 2003). However, subsequent research suggests that mediating processes of framing—or the “black box” between exposure and effect—might be more complex. For instance, Chong and Druckman (2007b) delineate framing effects to be mediated via three consecutive steps. First, a consideration must be available to the individual,
that is, stored in memory for use. Second, this consideration must be accessible, its’ knowledge must also be “ready for use”. Third, depending on the context and motivation, a consideration may be consciously weighed against other considerations as a person decides about the applicability of their (accessible) interpretations. Thus far, extant research has widely examined and supported this “belief importance change” model of framing effects (Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997a; Scheufele 2004).

Another important aspect in framing research is the study of moderators, that is, of variables that can enhance, limit or even obliterate a framing effect. By exploring moderators, framing studies take into consideration the fact that the magnitude (as well as process) of framing must depend on individual as well as circumstantial characteristics of the respective framing scenario. So far, research has identified a number of individual-level moderator variables such as political knowledge (Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson 1997) or values (Shen and Edwards 2005) as well as contextual moderators, attempting to bring the study of framing closer to “real life”, such as source characteristics (Druckman 2001b), issue characteristics (Lecheler S., De Vreese C., and Slothuus R. 2009), interpersonal communication, or competitive framing (Chong and Druckman 2007c; Sniderman and Theriault 2004). Among these, political knowledge emerges as one of the most prominent moderating variables. However, the empirical evidence remains very much divided: One group of scholars thinks that less knowledgeable individuals are more susceptible to framing effects (Kinder and Sanders 1990)(Schuck and de Vreese 2006). A second group, however, suggests the opposite (Krosnick and Brannon 1993; Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson 1997). These results notwithstanding, the differing impact of political knowledge on the magnitude of framing effects could hinge on a number of factors, such as the type of effect or dependent variable at stake (Lecheler, De Vreese, and Slothuus 2009).

**Framing and Values**

Values are widely-admired social ideals such as *equality, freedom, and humanitarianism.* Few people actively disapprove of these notions, but individuals vary in how highly they prioritize them. Values serve as abstract standards or criteria that are used to evaluate specific
objects, individuals, and policies in the political world. A person who strongly values individualism, for example, might very well disapprove of social welfare programs because he or she believes they undermine the work ethic. Conversely, a citizen who values humanitarianism would likely approve of the same policies, because he or she sees them as a way of providing for the needy and underprivileged (Feldman and Steenbergen 2001).

It is well-established that frames which target values can influence thought and opinion about the associated issue (Brewer and Gross 2005; Nelson, Wittmer, and Shortle 2009). This is true both for neutral, descriptive journalistic frames and for deliberately persuasive valenced frames. A study by Shen and Edwards (2005) exemplifies the paradigm. In their experiment, welfare reform was characterized as a conflict between humanitarian and individualist values. One frame emphasized the importance of humanitarianism by stressing the human costs of welfare cuts, while the later emphasized individualism by stressing how unlimited welfare payments undermine the work ethic. Support for more stringent welfare requirements was significantly affected by the frame, with greater support for requirements in the “individualism” frame (Nelson and Oxley 1999).

Welfare reform, like so many issues, embodies a conflict between important sociopolitical values. Humanitarianism clashes with individualism, freedom clashes with security, and so on (Feldman and Zaller 1992). If we understand framing as selectively emphasizing part of a complex issue, then value framing can work by stressing one of the two competing values, thereby tipping opinion in the direction of the position favored by that value.

Two important generalizations can be made about extant research on values framing. First, most studies have examined overtly politicized values like egalitarianism (Brewer 2003), humanitarianism (Shen and Edwards 2005), individualism (Barker 2005), and authoritarianism (Schemer, Wirth, and Matthes 2012). All of these values have well-known partisan and ideological associations, with egalitarianism and humanitarianism typically associated with the left, and individualism and authoritarianism typically associated with the right (Goren, Federico, and Kittilson 2009). Second, frame effects were especially evident when the frame matched the individual’s value orientation. In Shen and Edwards’s study, the humanitarian frame was especially effective among participants who placed high priority on humanitarianism, as
measured in a general values inventory. Likewise, the individualism frame was especially effective among participants who expressed individualistic values. This matching phenomenon is typical (Seo and Nelson; etc.), and is sometimes referred to as "frame resonance" (Schemer, Wirth, and Matthes 2012). The suggestion is that frames are especially likely to "work" among those predisposed to accept their message because they already admire the value targeted by the frame. Value orientations can thus be thought of as yet another individual moderator of framing effects.

Several key implications about political competition arise from the findings about value framing and frame resonance. In a political struggle, where interest groups compete for public support, groups tailor their message for maximum appeal among their natural allies. “Allies” can be defined in various ways – by party, religious orientation, occupation, race, and so on. Value orientations can also define allies, as values represent stable aspects of an individual’s political identity (Goren, Federico, and Kittilson 2009; Nelson and Garst 2005). The persuader therefore will try to tailor messages so as to appeal to natural allies as defined by value-based political identities. Communicators will stress the values that activate these groups, based on value priorities, while ignoring or downplaying values that appeal to competing groups. Supporters of stricter requirements for welfare recipients (time limits, etc.) might therefore try to appeal to their natural allies by emphasizing how such a policy change reflects and promotes individualistic values.

One of the earliest studies of value framing provided results that fit with this general description (Shah, Domke, and Wackman 1996). In a simulated election, experimental subjects received information about candidates’ stances on health care that framed the issue with respect to either moral or material values. Two subject populations were examined: Evangelical Christians, and college undergraduates. The results revealed an interaction between participant values and the values expressed in the issue frame. Evangelical Christians were especially responsive to the moral values frame, and subsequently used a non-compensatory decision-making strategy, reflecting, in the view of the authors, the dominance of moral considerations. College undergraduates were especially responsive to the material frame, and subsequently made a candidate choice that reflected a compensatory decision strategy.
The aforementioned research suggests that persuasive frames that appeal selectively to values-based political identities can be successful. This is not the only way strategically to frame a message around values, however. Another strategy is to stress consensus values – those with universal, rather than partisan appeal. Furthermore, the persuader might not be willing to ignore or “give up” on values that have been stressed by his or her competitors. In that case, the persuader must fight fire with fire, and to make a play for the very same value that the competing group is attempting to exploit.

Framing an issue with regard to consensus values has the obvious advantage that, since almost no one by definition dislikes the value, the strategy can do little harm, even if it fails to arouse greater support. This advantage is naturally unlikely to go unnoticed by one’s opponents, which leads to a competition over the same prized value.

What makes competition over the same value possible is the inherent abstractness and ambiguity of values. Our typical conception of a given value is so broad that it might apply to any number of concrete conditions. Moral and political philosophers have struggled for centuries to come up with consensus definitions of such elementary values as equality, fairness, and justice.

In her classic book Policy Paradox (2002), Deborah Stone considers a hypothetical situation in which she tries to distribute a chocolate cake to her students equitably. She is besieged with all kinds if pleas and suggestions for what an equitable distribution might actually look like. The seemingly obvious solution – an equal-sized slice for every student in class – runs into a number of objections and counter-proposals. What about students who didn’t come to class that day, or students in other classes who, through no fault of their own, had the misfortune of signing up for a class that did not offer chocolate cake? What is so magical about equal portions, anyway? Some people don’t like cake, or are allergic to chocolate, so their slices should be correspondingly smaller. Why go to the trouble of slicing the cake, anyway? Why not just give each student a fork and let them attack the cake, and the most deserving will end up with the biggest slices? In the end, why should Stone herself arbitrarily impose a decision rule on the students, however well-intentioned? Why not let the students come up with their own solution – democratically chosen, of course?
The ambiguity and abstractness of values suggest that, when political interests compete over ownership of the same consensus value, they must spend a good deal of effort framing the value as well as the issue. The issue and the prospective value must be brought into conformity with each other, so that the applicability of the value and its importance will be self-evident. The political landscape is replete with issues in which the competing sides battle over the right to claim ownership of the same consensus value. Both supporters and opponents of affirmative action and gay rights, for example, will frame their positions as expressions of equality (Brewer 2003). The United States periodically becomes embroiled in controversy over whether the burning of the American flag should be made illegal. Both supporters and opponents of these flag burning prohibitions cloak themselves in the mantle of patriotic pride. These various debates are characterized both framing of both the issue and the value. Opponents of affirmative action, for example, will define equality as “colorblindness”, meaning that the same standards and criteria should be applied to all applicants, regardless of skin color. Proponents of affirmative action will define equality as a “level playing field”, meaning that groups who have historically been denied resources and opportunities should receive special consideration.

Most value framing studies interpret changes in attitudes as implicit evidence that the frames succeeded in creating the perception that certain values are especially relevant and important for the issue. Frames are not generally thought to rearrange the participants’ long term value priorities, but rather the way they use values to evaluate the issue in question. It is only a minority of studies, however, that show direct evidence of these frame induced effects on the perceived relevance and importance of values (Nelson and Oxley 1999). To support our argument about how frames change perceptions of the relevance and importance of consensus values, we included a procedure that directly measured these perceptions.

Tolerance for extreme speech is a compelling and oft-used subject for framing investigations. Many of these prior investigations have framed these controversies as conflicts among bedrock political values such as free expression, racial equality, and social order (Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997b). Times have changed, however. Whereas prior investigations examined tolerance for bigoted speech against racial minorities, we updated the paradigm by examining tolerance for extreme anti-immigrant speech. This sort of speech has become a
headache for leaders in Western Europe and United States, as their countries have witnessed rising levels of immigration from culturally dissimilar regions to their south (North Africa in the case of Europe; Mexico and Central America in the case of the US).

Naturally, many of the same values are engaged by this controversy, including free expression, humanitarianism, and social order. The rise of strident anti-immigrant speech, however, has inspired reflection on the meaning and depth of a nation's commitment to democratic values in an increasingly interconnected world. Consider the case of Geert Wilders, member of the Dutch parliament and head of the nationalistic PVV party. Like some other nationalistic parties in Europe, the PVV has risen to power in the Netherlands largely thanks to its stridently anti-Islam, anti-immigrant rhetoric. Wilders has produced videos that depict Islam as an inherently violent religion devoted to eternal jihad against infidels (Christians). He has compared the Koran to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, and has advocated a ban on the Muslim holy book. Wilders’s inflammatory speech landed him in court. He was prosecuted for violating Dutch law against hate speech. In June, 2011, the court ruled that, although his speech was offensive, it did not directly incite violence, and so he was acquitted.

Free-speech advocates generally agreed with the decision, although they were careful to distance themselves from the substance of Wilders’s remarks. Wilders himself declared a victory for the principle of free expression. More than one commentator has found it ironic, to say the least, for Wilders to champion free expression values while simultaneously advocating a ban on the Koran and the burqa. Wilders’s acquittal, in the eyes of many, rested on his walking a very fine line between criticizing Muslim religion and criticizing Muslims as a class. Although he managed to stay within the letter of the law, many human rights and immigration advocates predicted that his "vindication" would empower more extreme anti-Muslim speech and action. This would have a chilling long-run effect on the political engagement and activity of Muslims, and immigrants more generally -- very much the opposite of a victory for democracy.

US courts have proved extremely reluctant to limit free expression, particularly within the realm of "public discourse" (Post 1990). The prevailing paradigm in American jurisprudence is that of the open marketplace of ideas. The flourishing of our democratic system depends on an unrestricted flow and exchange of ideas. Our legal and government institutions must remain
neutral with respect to political ideas; favoritism towards, or bias against, certain ideas will
impovertish political discussion and ultimately threatn the republic.

A minority view in legal and political scholarship holds that unbridled speech actually
*undermines* democratic values. There are several versions of the argument, but the basic idea
goes something like this: In order for public discourse to contribute to democratic flourishing,
there must be agreement on some basic principles, one of which is mutual respect. One should
not devalue the particular cultural, religious, or linguistic practices of one's opponents, because
they contribute to his or her inherent worth. Denigrating those qualities amounts to a lack of
respect for one's opponent as an equal partner in the democratic process. Ergo, democracy is
undermined. Post refers to this as the "paradox of free expression" – by tolerating all manner of
hateful speech, we undermine the very democratic values that free expression is thought to
sustain.

In summary, past investigations of value framing have focused on situations of value
conflict, in which one frame references one of the competing values, and the opposing frame
references the other. Framing effects in such situations are typically moderated by the
participants’ long-term general value priorities. Our experiment investigates how competing
frames recruit the same value consensus value. They do so by manipulating not only the
portrayal of the issue but the definition of the value, and the participants understanding of how
the value is strengthened or weakened by different policy options. In particular, we investigate
alternative frames for a hate speech controversy. Our frames manipulate perceptions of whether
*allowing or forbidding* the speech is seen as beneficial for democratic values.

**Emotion versus Values**

After decades of relative silence, social science, including political science, finally
discovered affect in the 1980’s. Recent emotions scholarship has gone beyond simply adding
affect to the public opinion ingredients list; it has provided rich theory that explains how affect
differs from the other ingredients, such as beliefs, group cues, and values (Marcus, Neuman, and
MacKuen 2000). Far from a bit player, affect is now viewed by many as the star of the show; the
main mover and shaker of individual political life. Affect is considered a form of intelligence –
it's a force that helps regulate the attention and action of the citizen, steering her along beneficial paths, and pulling her out of danger.

Framing research has also begun to explore how emotions are implicated in this type of communication. By and large, these studies have added emotions measures to the assessment of the effects of frames that have already been investigated for their effects on judgments and opinion. Druckman and McDermott (2008), for example, drew on affective intelligence theory to develop measures of emotional moderators of the classic “Asian disease” gain/loss framing effect. Kimberly Gross (Gross and D'Ambrosio 2004; Gross 2008) has investigated emotional response to frames that targeted attributions (causes) for events and conditions, such as the 1992 Los Angeles riots. In both cases, therefore, emotions were added to the palette of reactions to frames that were not themselves explicitly emotional.

We believe, for reasons we develop below, that we should also investigate frames that deliberately target emotions. Frames, in other words, do not just incidentally affect emotions, but on occasion take direct aim at emotions, just as they do the cognitive elements of political opinion and action.

Why investigate framing effects on values and emotions? This choice does not represent a simple random pairing among all possible frame targets. Historically, these two opinion elements have been perceived as rivals, with emotion often depicted as a threat to principle-driven, sober, sensible political choice. If we take seriously the definition of framing as selectively attending to and emphasizing one aspect of a complex issue, then it is reasonable to propose that some frames will stress the relevance and importance of one of these rival elements, while simultaneously deemphasizing the other.

When they defend political pariahs like Wilders, free-speech advocates are always careful to distance themselves from the substance of the offending comments. They are quick to acknowledge that hate speech is offensive, hurtful, rude, and so on. Even though he found in favor of Wilders, Judge Marcel van Oosten described Wilders's remarks as "gross", "crude", and "denigrating" (Charter 2011). Clearly, this kind of strong anti-immigrant speech elicits powerful negative emotional responses, no doubt just as intended. To the free-speech advocate, however, such emotional responses are irrelevant. Time and time again, courts in the US and elsewhere
have ruled that a painful emotional response to offensive speech is not a legitimate reason for banning that speech. Emotional response is subservient to the democratic values that free speech both embodies and helps promote.

Even further, emotional response is viewed as a potential threat to effective legal and political reasoning. Another recent free speech controversy centered on the antics of Terry Jones, pastor of the World Dove Outreach Center in Gainesville, Florida. Jones publicly burned a copy of the Koran on March 20, 2011, touching off a retaliatory attack against a UN compound in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, that left 12 dead. Once again, free speech fundamentalists reacted by deploring Jones’s actions, but defending his right to carry them out. This was the conclusion of columnist Roger Cohen, after he wrestled with his feelings (Cohen 2011):

Jones … lives in a nation where the law defends even his folly. I’m a free-speech absolutist and so I support that. But he must examine his conscience: How is it consistent with religious faith to stir hatred and killing? And how can the Islamophobes, spreading poison, justify their grotesque caricature of Islam in the thinly veiled pursuit of political gain?

This column is full of anger, I know. It has no heroes. I’m full of disgust, writing after a weekend when religious violence returned to Northern Ireland with the murder of a 25-year-old Catholic policeman, Ronan Kerr, by dissident republican terrorists. Religion has much to answer for, in Gainesville and Mazar and Omagh.

Cohen stopped short of calling his anger and disgust irrational, but still he did not allow them to budge him from his absolute endorsement of free speech rights. This is the view of emotion as a potential inhibitor of sensible, consistent, principle-driven political decision-making. The murderous mob in Mazar-i-Sharif shows the potential for disaster when we allow emotions to distract us from respect for basic liberties. Certainly Jones had insulted Muslims around the world, exactly as he intended. Bruised feelings are not enough, however, to restrict a demonstration of a political point. Just as the Dutch court ruled in the Wilders case, Cohen argued that Islam should not be above criticism, and its followers should be ready to receive such criticism without violent retaliation.

This is classic framing: acknowledging the complexity of a problem, and delineating which aspects of the problem should – an should not – influence our opinions. Some types of frames operate on a purely attentional channel -- steering our thoughts in the direction of one
consideration, while hoping to bring no attention to any rival considerations. In the case of free speech apologists like Cohen, there is no ignoring the powerful emotions stirred by these episodes of hate speech. Instead, framing takes the form of deliberate arguments about why these feelings, powerful as they might be, should not affect our judgments.

The particular contrast between values and emotions has a venerable cultural and political history. The two have been seen frequently as antagonists, with emotion decried as a corrupter of principle, inhibiting the proper application of core democratic and moral values to public issues. Aristotle, for example, asserted that virtue lies in the avoidance of emotional extreme:

First, then, let us consider this, that it is the nature of such things to be destroyed by defect and excess, as we see in the case of strength and of health (for to gain light on things imperceptible we must use the evidence of sensible things); both excessive and defective exercise destroys the strength, and similarly drink or food which is above or below a certain amount destroys the health, while that which is proportionate both produces and increases and preserves it. So too is it, then, in the case of temperance and courage and the other virtues. For the man who flies from and fears everything and does not stand his ground against anything becomes a coward, and the man who fears nothing at all but goes to meet every danger becomes rash; and similarly the man who indulges in every pleasure and abstains from none becomes self-indulgent, while the man who shuns every pleasure, as boors do, becomes in a way insensible; temperance and courage, then, are destroyed by excess and defect, and preserved by the mean (Nichomachean Ethics, Book II, part 2).

Nowhere is the suspicious view of emotion more evident than in the early literature on tolerance. Irrational fear of political deviants -- white supremacists, Communists, and so on -- was thought to undermine the proper, i.e., universal, application of political values like free speech and the right to vote. Similarly, hatred was thought to limit the expansion of political equality to racial and ethnic minorities and homosexuals, among others (Marcus et al. 2005).

Even when emotional responses are understandable and expected, free-expression advocates consider them an insufficient justification for limiting speech. Another all-American free-speech controversy centers around the activities of the Hillsboro Baptist Church. Church members protest at the funerals of American military service personnel killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, waving signs that celebrate the deaths as God’s punishment of America for tolerating homosexuality. Although comically absurd, the demonstrations can be very painful for grieving families. Sympathy with the families, and respect for the soldiers’ sacrifice, has led
many to support restrictions on the protests. State and local officials in Topeka Kansas, the church’s headquarters, have tried to shut down this embarrassment:

“They believe free speech tops everything,” said Mayor William W. Bunten, sitting at his desk in City Hall last week. “We do with some exceptions, and one of them would be taking signs and standing outside a funeral home and associating someone’s death with God’s hate for homosexuality. I believe it should be banned. I see it as bullying.”

Gov. Mark Parkinson, a Democrat, said, “As hard as it is for me to call for a restriction on free speech, this behavior in my mind is so unacceptable that something must be done” (Sulzberger 2010)

The emotional pain caused by this group’s activities is not only seen by some as just cause for restricting their stunts, but also for seeking compensation. One father who endured the group’s protests at his son’s funeral sued for “emotional distress.” His $5 million award was eventually overturned by the US Supreme Court, who decreed that hurtfulness is not a legitimate basis for restricting speech. To ban such speech, even for the purpose of preventing distress, runs the risk that we might “stifle public debate”, in the words of Chief Justice Roberts:

Speech is powerful. It can stir people to action, move them to tears of both joy and sorrow, and — as it did here — inflict great pain. On the facts before us, we cannot react to that pain by punishing the speaker (U.S. Supreme Court 2011)

The lone dissenter, Justice Alito, countered that the group’s actions were not so much speech as “vicious verbal assaults.” Many ordinary Americans seem to agree. They viewed the extreme emotional distressed caused by the demonstrations as a perfectly legitimate reason for restricting them. In letters to the editor, readers used terms like “bullying,” “harassment,” “immense psychological toll,” “distress,” “humiliation,” and “overwhelming pain” to describe how these particular circumstances justified placing limits on this particular mode of expression (2010).

Outside of the domain of free expression, emotion is likewise viewed with some suspicion. Even today, journalists sometimes dismiss political movements like the nuclear freeze that they perceive as based in emotion, not a sober analysis of the situation (Entman, projections of power). An “emotional reaction” to a situation is considered an understandable, but politically
primitive response. For instance, in its editorial against a statewide proposal to require all businesses to offer sick leave, the Salem (Ohio) News wrote (2008):

Voters have to think about this one. The slick campaign that will surely come this fall once signatures to put the act on the ballot will feature tug-at-the-heartstrings images, tales of families that fell apart because the head of the household had to choose between work or caring for a sick child or parent.

Emotion is not, however, an economic staple.

Jobs and employment are.

Philosophers and editorialists might wish for us to separate emotion from reason, but is this a realistic expectation? The fundamental psychological operations that govern emotion are qualitatively different than those that govern higher order cognitive functions like judgment, inference, and decision-making. This can be explained by emotions unique function for the maintenance of the organism. This function entails several important qualities of emotional process, including speed and autonomy from executive control (Zajonc 1980). Put crudely, emotion functions as a sort of early warning system that directs the organism away from threats, and towards the maintenance of beneficial behaviors. For the proverbial early human eking out an existence on the African savanna, emotion provides near-instantaneous alerts about threats to survival, while viscerally gratifying those behaviors that keep the individual alive and ticking.

Naturally, there are drawbacks to the system. The autonomy of the emotional system means that feelings stubbornly refuse to be controlled by rational deliberation. Emotional disorders such as phobias and depression reveal how difficult it can be to make one’s feelings listen to reason. One of the most widely-used nonreactive tests of emotional association, the Implicit Attitudes Test, depends for its success on the limitations in our ability to exercise conscious control over emotional response. Telling people to ignore or discount their emotions might be no more successful than the proverbial command to stop thinking about a white elephant.
Experiment

Overview

We conducted a randomized experiment that examined the framing of an anti-immigrant speech event with respect to the values and emotions entailed by the issue. Our primary interest were in the following questions: (1) Is it possible to frame the issue such that the same values could be used to justify opposite positions?; (2) Is it possible to frame the issues so as to emphasize or de-emphasize the emotional responses? Formally, we investigated the following hypotheses:

1. The very same event could be framed as promoting or inhibiting the values of free expression and democracy. In the former case, opinion would become more favorable; in the latter case, opinion would become less favorable.

2. The emotional response to the group planning the event could be framed as a legitimate or illegitimate consideration for overall opinion about the event. When framed as legitimate, opinion would become less favorable versus when framed as illegitimate.

Methods

179 undergraduate students took part in the experiment during the Spring of 2011. They were offered extra course credit as an incentive. The experiment was described as a study of "how well people learn about news and current affairs from online and traditional news sources." They were told they would view a story that had recently appeared on the website of the Ohio News Network (ONN). They were asked to read the story carefully and answer subsequent questions about the article and the issue it covered.

We carefully copied a web page from ONN and substituted our mock article for the actual article. We left all other aspects of the web page unchanged, including advertisements, banners, images, and so on. Links to other stories and content were disabled.

Participants first filled out a pre-test questionnaire with several standardized scales. Among these were the need for cognition and need for affect scales. Need for cognition is a standing predisposition or motivation to think carefully and deliberately in response to mental
challenges. It has been found to be a strong individual level moderator of the impact of persuasive messages (Cacioppo and Petty 1982). In particular, subjects high in the need for cognition typically respond more readily to persuasive messages provided that the arguments are strong, high-quality claims. Need for affect (Maio and Esses 2001) measures a standing predisposition to seek out emotional experiences, and to feel emotions more strongly.

Participants then viewed the story. The story concerned a proposed march and rally by the anti-immigrant organization "HomeFirst" in a small northern Ohio town. The group was deliberately portrayed as holding extreme, xenophobic, and ethnically bigoted attitudes. The article reported that

The group blames illegal AND legal immigrants from Mexico and Central America for rising crime and growing demands for social services. What really angers the group, however, is the effect that "inferior" Mexican culture is having on American life. They say that American culture is becoming "mongrelized" by the influx of Spanish-speaking immigrants who refuse to assimilate to the American way of life.

The intent of this extreme portrayal was to make the group seem offensive even to subjects who hold conservative views on immigration. We could therefore manipulate the framing of these emotions as (in)appropriate to opinion about tolerating the group's activity. The article went on to explain that the mayor was contemplating whether to deny a permit to the group and thereby prevent the rally from taking place, or to allow the speech to go forward. The article further mentioned that community opinion was divided on the issue. Some citizens expressed concern that the rally would “lead to harassment and intimidation of Latinos. Even legal immigrants will be afraid to express their views on this sensitive topic.”

This material remained constant for all participants. The remainder of the article was manipulated to create four different conditions. Subjects were randomly assigned to conditions according to a 2 (value frame: the event would uphold free expression and democracy vs. the event would undermine free expression and democracy) x 2 (emotional legitimacy: emotions are legitimate vs. illegitimate considerations) between-subjects design. The text constituting the four treatment conditions is reproduced in Table 1. Participants were given as much time to read the article as they wished, but the program prevented subjects from moving away from the article for at least 30 seconds.
After the article, subjects went on to a computerized questionnaire, which covered many reactions to the stimulus. First, participants were asked their opinion about the controversy, using two questions. The first asked the extent to which they supported or opposed allowing the march and rally, using a seven point scale. The second asked them to rate whether allowing the march and rally was a "good idea or a bad idea", again using a seven point scale. Second, they were asked how much they liked or disliked the group HomeFirst, using a 1 to 9 scale anchored by "dislike extremely" and "like extremely".

To measure perceptions of how the proposed rally would impact values, participants completed a value promotions matrix. This exercise, modeled on consumer product ratings surveys, asked the respondents to consider two possible policy outcomes (HomeFirst is allowed to hold a march and rally; HomeFirst is not allowed to hold a march and rally) with respect to four values (free expression, democracy, national pride, and safety), resulting in 8 total judgments. Respondents were asked to rate “how well each of these two outcomes would promote or uphold important beliefs, values, and principles. Give higher marks if you think a particular outcome does a good job of promoting a value; give lower marks if you think a particular way of teaching does a poor job of promoting that value.”

Results

Effects on opinion

In the initial analysis, the two measures of opinion toward the rally were analyzed according to a 2 (values: uphold vs. undermine democratic values) x 2 (emotion: legitimate vs. illegitimate) between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA). We predicted that support for the rally would be significantly lower in the "undermine values" condition, and in the "legitimate emotions" condition.

We were half right. Opinion about the rally was strongly affected by the value framing manipulation (support: $F_{1,148} = 12.58, p = .001$; good idea: $F_{1,145} = 8.14, p = .005$). The trend for the legitimacy manipulation was in the predicted direction, but nonsignificant. Thus, there was strong confirmation of our prediction that the very same values could be used to justify opposition support or opposition for an issue, and that these manipulations would affect issue
opinion. We could not confirm, however, that framing emotional response would have a similar effect.

To follow up on the (lack of) effect for emotional legitimacy, we checked to see whether emotional response toward the group was indeed negative. The hypothesized effect of the legitimacy manipulation would only be possible if the group were generally despised, even by conservatives on the immigration issue. As it turns out, HomeFirst, our fictional anti-immigrant group, was liked by very few, and disliked by a great many. Participants rated the group on a 1 to 9, fully labeled scale, running from “1=dislike extremely” to “9=like extremely”. The median response was 3 (“dislike moderately”), while the modal response was 2 (“dislike very much”). Nearly a quarter of the sample (23.7%) gave the group the lowest possible rating. While 21% of the sample reported indifference towards the group (“neither like nor dislike”), less than 10% were at all favorably disposed, and nearly all of those reported only the most tepid positive feelings (“like slightly”). Thus, while not universally despised, HomeFirst left, on balance, a very unfavorable impression on our participants. Most importantly, dislike for the group was not substantially greater in the anti-speech condition ($M = 2.96$) than in the pro-speech condition ($M = 3.32$, $t = 1.19$, n.s.), nor was it greater in the legitimate condition ($M = 3.17$) than in the illegitimate condition ($M = 3.11$). These findings are crucial for providing clean tests of our hypotheses about the effects of the emotional legitimacy manipulation on tolerance for the anti-immigrant speech. The legitimacy manipulation should only make a difference in the impact of negative feelings on tolerance for the group; it should not affect the extremity of dislike for the group.

None of this matters, of course, if the emotional legitimacy manipulation had no net effect on opinion. To see whether the tepid effects of the manipulation concealed a more substantial effect for certain groups of subjects, we split the sample according to two individual-level motivational measures: need for affect and need for cognition. The ANOVA was rerun two times, using the approval dependent measure, and the motivational measures as nonmanipulated between subjects blocking factors.

The analysis using need for cognition as a moderator showed main effects for value framing and emotional legitimacy, and a further 3-way interaction involving these two
manipulated variables and need for cognition. The first main effect simply replicates the effect of value framing: Participants express far greater support for the rally when it has been framed as beneficial for democracy. The second main effect is the hypothesized effect for legitimacy: overall, participants were more opposed to the rally when their feelings had been framed as legitimate rather than illegitimate ($F_{1,142} = 3.77, p = .05$). This finding suggests that the legitimacy manipulation succeeded in making the dislike for HomeFirst more or less influential, as intended. This effect is qualified, however, by a three way interaction involving the two manipulated factors and need for cognition ($F_{1,142} = 5.80, p = .02$). Figure 1 shows the pattern of means. Emotional legitimacy had the effect of enhancing the impact of the value framing manipulation participants high in need for cognition. In other words, among high need for cognition participants, opinion in the positive value framing condition was that much more favorable, while opinion in the negative value framing condition was that much more unfavorable, when emotional reactions were framed as legitimate. To our surprise, this pattern reversed somewhat among low need for cognition subjects, with stronger value framing effects in the illegitimate condition. Need for affect had a similar moderating impact, but was weaker than need for cognition.

**Effects on values judgments**

The effects of our values framing manipulations on opinions about the rally is only half the story. We argue that values framing affects perceptions about whether permitting the rally advances or inhibits the consensus values of free expression and democracy. To test this hypothesis, we examined the 8 judgments in the values promotions matrix.

Recall that the participants were asked to judge two policies (permitting the rally, forbidding the rally) with respect to their impact on four values (free expression, democracy, safety, and national pride). We expected the two former values to be strongly affected by the values framing manipulations. When permitting the speech and rally was framed as good for democratic values, subjects should be more likely to see these values advanced by allowing the rally to go forward as planned. When the rally was framed as bad for these values, then forbidding the rally should be judged as doing more to uphold these values.
We analyzed each pair of judgments (e.g., allowing the rally advances free expression, forbidding the rally advances free expression) with a two (value framing: upholds values versus undermines values) by two (emotions are legitimate versus illegitimate) by two (allow versus forbid the rally) mixed model ANOVA, with forbid versus allow treated as a within subjects (repeated) measure.

Emotional legitimacy had little effect on these judgments, either alone or in combination with other factors, and so will not be discussed further. Judgments of free expression and democracy were comparable. Overall, allowing the speech and rally to move forward was seen as doing more to advance these values than forbidding the speech and rally (free expression: $F_{1,99} = 144.37, p < .001$; democracy: $F_{1,115} = 98.78, p < .001$). Figure 2 displays the means, and clearly shows this main effect for allowing versus forbidding the rally. The figure also clearly shows, however, that framing the rally as undermining democratic values significantly narrows the gap between judgments of allowing versus forbidding the rally to move forward. This reduction in the gap is reflected in a interaction between forbid versus allow and value framing (free expression: $F_{1,99} = 14.62, p < .001$; democracy: $F_{1,115} = 17.62, p < .001$). In other words, the democratic advantage attributed to allowing the rally to take place is substantially smaller when the rally is framed as an antidemocratic event.

What of the other two values judgments? Because the stories emphasized the potential for harassment and intimidation of immigrants and their supporters, we expected that participants would judge banning the rally as the safer option. This indeed was the case ($F_{1,123} = 36.93, p < .001$). The “undermine values” framing condition stressed these negative consequences in building the democratic case for limiting anti-immigrant speech. This rhetoric did slightly magnify the safety gap, as revealed in Figure 3. The interaction between forbid/allow judgments and value framing is nonsignificant, however ($F_{1,123} = 2.70, p > .10$), and far smaller than the comparable interactions involving democratic values. This is reassuring, because we had hypothesized that the values frames would principally affect judgments of how the rally would impact democratic values, and not judgments of the potential for violence or intimidation.

We included judgments of national pride in an exploratory spirit. It is a judgment that freely mixes a value (nationalism) with emotion (pride). The pattern of effects closely tracks that
of the values of free expression and democracy. In general, allowing the speech and rally is thought to do more for national pride then forbidding it \((F_{1, 119} = 5.33, p = .02)\), but the interaction involving value framing is also significant \((F_{1,119} = 4.08, p = .05)\). Indeed, in the "undermine values" framing condition, the gap in national pride between allowing and forbidding the rally shrinks virtually to zero.

Perhaps because this judgment includes a healthy dose of emotion, it is the only one that was affected by the emotional legitimacy manipulation. There was a four way interaction involving value framing, emotional legitimacy, forbid/allow, and need for cognition \((F_{1,120} = 5.42, p = .02)\). Trying to make sense of a four way interaction is daunting, but a glance at Figure 4 shows that judgments of national pride closely track our opinion measures. Judgments of national pride for subjects high in need for cognition were responsive to the framing treatment when emotions were legitimized. This makes sense to us: if feelings of national pride were stirred by the events depicted in the story, this should be especially evident when emotions are framed as important and legitimate. Subjects low in need for cognition showed comparable judgments when emotions were delegitimized. We remain puzzled by this reversal.

**Conclusion**

Past research shows that when to important values conflict, frames that selectively emphasizing one or the other can push opinion in the corresponding direction. These effects tend to be concentrated among those who already prioritize the value referenced by the frame. Our experiment shows that rival frames can also influence opinion when they recruit the same value. This result opens up a whole new avenue for framing research. It is clear that it is not just issues that can be framed, but the values themselves.

Such results are only possible because of the flexibility that characterizes our conception of values, and how values are implicated in the concrete details of everyday political life. Values are powerful determinants of our political thought and action, and yet we tend to talk about (and measure) values as abstract entities, stripped of their political context. The slippage between abstract conceptions of values and their concrete instantiations leaves considerable room for political communicators to operate. While there are many instances in which an activists might
be forced to concede a value to the opponent, there are surely also many instances in which the
communicator will try to claim as many values as possible, including those pursued by the
opponent.

Do political communicators have complete flexibility to evoke any and all helpful values
in pursuit of their policy goals? Perhaps not, but the lengths to which politicians will go to evoke
consensus values in service of their narrow cause has occasioned some ironic comment, as in this
column by Gail Collins (2011):

This week, the House of Representatives … approved a bill requiring states with strict gun
regulations to honor concealed weapon carry permits issued in states where the gun rules are
slightly more lax than the restrictions on who can dispense ice cream cones from a truck.

"This bill is about freedom," said Representative Chris Gibson, a Republican from upstate New
York. In this Congress, it's hard to find anything that isn't. Cutting Social Security is about
freedom. Killing funds for Planned Parenthood is about freedom. Once again, we are reminded
that, as Janis Joplin used to sing, freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose.

Our results tell us a couple of things. First, they suggest that even if values are important
aspects of our political selves, there is flexibility in the way we reason about values in relation to
particular issues. Values certainly help us to evaluate the never-ending stream of issues that the
political world presents to us, but the same issue does not automatically evoke the same values
among all observers. Nor are the implications of those values (favorable or otherwise) for the
issue self-evident. These critical aspects of the evaluation process are, like everything else in
politics, subject to discussion, debate, and persuasive influence.

Even if there is no value conflict endemic to an issue, a value might conflict with other
elements of political evaluation, specifically, emotion. We see little point in simply compiling an
ever-longer list of potential mediators of framing effects. The consequences of framing should be
linked to theoretically meaningful and politically relevant qualities of framing content. We
believe that the independent and interactive effects of frames on values and emotions provide
just such a case. Historically, emotion and values have been seen as antagonists. Social scientists
today hold a much more sanguine view of emotion’s regulatory function, but popular discourse
surrounding emotion still depicts it as a threat to good political judgment. A second goal of our
experiment, therefore, was to investigate the consequences of framing emotion as (in)appropriate for a political judgment.

In the end, there seemed to be two somewhat separable effects of our emotional legitimacy manipulation. Overall, support for the rally was significantly lower when emotional responses were framed as legitimate sources of evaluation. This effect conforms to our predictions. We expected participants to dislike our fictional anti-immigrant group and, by and large, they did. When those feelings were legitimized as an appropriate consideration for opinion about the tolerance question, they drove down support for allowing the group to hold its proposed rally.

The second effect of the emotional legitimacy manipulation was to magnify or enhance the effect of our values frames, at least among subjects with a strong cognitive motivation. Support for the rally was stronger in the “good for democracy” condition, and opposition was greater in the “bad for democracy” condition when emotional responses were legitimized. In retrospect, this makes sense, as high need for cognition subjects are more likely, all things equal, to attend to instructions carefully and respond thoughtfully to the provided information. In particular, they might be a step especially adept at introspect think about their own opinions, and adjusting accordingly for ideas that are considered relevant and irrelevant. That these trends were not simply absent, but reversed, among low need for cognition subjects is far more puzzling.

In retrospect, there are several things we can do better in subsequent studies. First, we can do a better job of creating a despicable group. Although HomeFirst was generally disliked, a significant minority of the subjects held neutral views toward the group. More importantly, our emotional legitimacy manipulation was not as precise as it should have been. The manipulation legitimizes or delegitimizes emotions as a whole, not any particular emotional response. While we set up our problem as a contrast between the principles of free expression and dislike for HomeFirst, it is not obvious from the instructions which emotions should count, or not count, for subjects’ opinions. Judgments of how national pride is affected by the rally seem to bear this out. These judgments, as it turns out, closely tracked the values and legitimacy manipulations, suggesting that, at least for some subjects, dislike for the group conflicted with other emotions,
such as pride. Future experiments will be more precise about which emotions should be (dis)counted.
### Table 1: Experimental Treatments

<table>
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<th>Values</th>
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<td><strong>Rally promotes free speech and democracy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rally undermines free speech and democracy</strong></td>
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<td>Mayor Williams says he has not made up his mind, but he is leaning towards allowing the march and rally to take place. &quot;Like anyone, HomeFirst has a right to freely express their point of view.&quot; He continued: &quot;This country has always been about protecting the right to free expression for all people, and we should fight to uphold this principle. We honor and uphold the great tradition of free speech in this country any time we allow a group to speak, no matter what their views are. If everyone believes that they have the freedom to contribute, we can reach a democratic solution to the immigration question.&quot;</td>
<td>Mayor Williams says he has not made up his mind, but he is leaning towards denying the group’s request for a permit. &quot;Freedom of expression is not to be used as a shield by hate groups so they can harass and intimidate others.&quot; He continued: &quot;This country has always been about protecting the right to free expression for all people and we should fight to uphold this principle. We dishonor and undermine the great tradition of free speech in this country when we allow HomeFirst and other anti-democratic groups to frighten others into silence. If everyone believes that they have the freedom to contribute, we can reach a democratic solution to the immigration question.&quot;</td>
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<td>John Alvarez is a lawyer with IntegrateNow, a Washington, D.C.-based organization that works on immigration issues. He supports HomeFirst's planned event. &quot;Freedom of expression goes both ways, and everybody should feel free to speak their mind. We have found that events like this can lead to useful dialogue with people who hold different opinions about the issue of immigration.&quot;</td>
<td>John Alvarez is a lawyer with IntegrateNow, a Washington, D.C.-based organization that works on immigration issues. He opposes HomeFirst's planned event. &quot;Freedom of expression goes both ways, and everybody should feel free to speak their mind. We have found that events like this silence the pro-immigrant community, which cannot lead to useful dialogue on this issue.&quot;</td>
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<th>Emotions</th>
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<td><strong>Emotions are not legitimate</strong></td>
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<td>Mayor Williams also talked about the strong feelings that this issue has provoked. &quot;I haven't seen people so emotional about something happening in this town for a long time. In a democracy, however, we have to put aside our feelings and make rational decisions. What matters is not how we feel about what's happening, but to follow reason and common sense.&quot;</td>
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Figure 1: Opinion toward Rally by Value Frame, Emotional Legitimacy, and Need for Cognition
Figure 2: Judgments of How Allowing or Banning Rally Promotes Free Expression and Democracy, by Framing Condition
Figure 3: Safety and National Pride Judgments by Values Framing Condition
Figure 4: National Pride Judgments by Value Frame, Emotional Legitimacy, and Need for Cognition
References


