



## What are Frames?

### Ideas are Physical

*Concepts physically grow in our brains. The more a concept is used, the stronger it gets. The stronger it gets, the more likely it is to be used again –and the more resistant it is to change.*  
-Antonia Scatton

**Brains are literally wired and rewired through experience.** As we experience the world we make associations. If the associations are repeated, the neural pathways between them get stronger (and competing or disused pathways grow weaker). New information is processed through the filter of these existing “frames”. In the world of ideas, families, education, churches and political ideologies forge strong frames that can be almost impossible to dislodge.

**Frames depend on who you are.** Everyone's experiences are different, so their frames are different. Just because something is crystal clear to you doesn't mean it will be understood in the same way by others.

**Frames are remarkably resistant to change:** In fact, the brain is hardwired to resist change (imagine Eric Clapton trying to *unlearn* how to play guitar!). Resistance to change can often be so strong that if a fact does not fit the frame the fact loses. Though people *can* reason, the evidence shows they most often don't. (And that means you and me too!)

**What is Framing?** The process of creating a message that evokes our core values and our worldview and strengthens these in our listener's brains.

**So... what's a message?** A message is simply what you say. There are good messages and bad ones. An effective message strengthens neural connections to *our* values. However if what you say is not framed well, it will be ineffective, distract from the issue at hand or even reinforce your opponent's argument!

## Worldviews: Who are we, Who are they?

All politics is moral. Moral frames are the primary determiner of how we think and feel about issues. It should be no surprise that the right and left have different, often competing *sets* of values that help them navigate the political landscape. In both cases, the worldviews are internally consistent -the values reinforce each other in a coherent and systematic way. Though some people hew closely to one or the other worldview, *most* people apply a mixture of both -they are **bi-conceptual**.

In American politics the *idealized* family is a useful metaphor for our dueling worldviews. Ideal families, like political ideologies, are governed by moral principles.

## Conservative -The Traditional (or Strict Father) Family

The dominant model for most of history where the world changed very slowly and there was no science to explain the world, Conservatism is characterized by self reliance and hard work, in-group loyalty, resistance to change, and a desire for order and certainty.



### Traditional Family applied to politics:

With self discipline anyone can pull themselves up by their own bootstraps.

There are no social causes of personal failure.

Helping those who fail can be considered wrong because theirs is a moral failure and deprives them of a valuable lesson (and makes them dependent on government).

The free market is inherently moral because it creates wealth and rewards individual discipline. Interference in this by government is therefore immoral.

Wealth is proof of self reliance and hard work therefore morally good -those who don't have (or desire) wealth have not chosen to do those things -i.e. *lazy freeloaders*.

The wealthy deserve authority because they are, by definition, morally better.

***In short: "Every man for himself"***



## Progressive -The Modern (or “Nurturant”) Family

Liberalism has empathy for the well being of family, community, nation and world, an acceptance of uncertainty and an openness to change. In a rapidly changing world, liberals see the ability to change one’s mind in the face of rapid change as an asset, not a weakness.



### Modern Family applied to politics:

It is moral to work for the common good -immoral to work against it.

As citizens we have have the right, through our government, to protect and empower ourselves in ways we see fit. For example, we can provide free quality public education for all children, build roads to move goods, empower courts to decide contracts, build national parks and ensure seniors can age in dignity and health.

Expansion of freedom and opportunity to everyone is morally good. Liberals seek to broaden the number of citizens who have the right to vote, protect rights in the workplace, provide education, health, civil rights and dignity for all, etc. Interference with those rights is immoral.

We have the right to elect our representatives to do our work, question their decisions and authority and replace them if they cease to adequately represent us.

An unregulated free market is not inherently benevolent; Because people can be greedy, we have the right to regulate the destructive power of greed in the market.

**In short:** *We all do better when we all do better.*



**The pages above should be read before you come to the workshop!**

Visit the [Connections Lab Website](#) before and after the Workshop for more information and resources. Though not necessary for the workshop, you might like to delve deeper with these short pieces before you attend:

*George Lakoff*  
[Framing 101](#) The basics!

*Jonathan Haidt*  
[Ted Talk: The Moral Roots of Liberals and Conservatives](#)

## Your Presenters

### **Julie Ethan**

Julie serves candidates, campaigns and social impact causes looking to improve their message, including content writing for websites, literature and social media promotion. She also helps groups repair and restore themselves to optimal functioning with a clear and strategic mission, and a map to achieve their goals and objectives. We're all dealing with a divisive climate in public discourse and that's why it's critical to frame our message to the public in a way that finds common values and wide appeal. Julie has a BA in Organizational Leadership and an MA in Peace and Justice Studies from the Univ. of San Diego class of 2013.

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### **George Greene**

With a background in teaching and graduate work in experimental psychology George has long been a proponent of strategic messaging through psychology. Active in many campaigns he's also served on his state party executive and state central committee's and been a Congressional District Chair. A long time board member of Business Democrats, he also co-founded Small Business Minnesota. George has a BS in Education from U-Wisconsin Whitewater and did his graduate work at U-Nevada Reno teaching sign language to chimpanzees. George was a pioneer in interactive educational media production, and worked for decades in television and broadcast systems design. He currently digitizes image and document collections that require special handling for institutional clients at his company [The Archive Factory](#). You can find George's work on framing and organizing at [The Pocket Progressive](#).

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