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Value Poaching: Framing the Same Values for Competing Political Ends

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Previous research has established that rival issue frames that target competing values can lead public opinion in different directions. This article examines rival frames that target the same values but for competing political ends. We report on an experiment (*N* = 503) that examines the framing of a controversy over extreme anti-immigrant speech. Both supporters and opponents of the speech framed their positions around free expression and democracy. Such framing influenced judgments about how these values were upheld by permitting versus banning hate speech. These judgments, in turn, affected tolerance for such speech. We conclude that the impact of values on political attitudes depends not just on the framing of the issue but also on the framing of the values themselves.

Keywords: framing, values, political attitudes, survey experiment

Political competition unfolds on multiple levels. At the objective level, rival pundits, policy analysts, and interest groups offer contrasting factual claims about the problems that face us. Atop this objective layer lies an interpretive stratum that puts these facts in context by bringing sociopolitical values to bear on the evaluation of possible solutions. These alternative portrayals are *frames*. Frames are patterns of interpretation that are used to classify information sensibly and process it efficiently. Framing has a selective function; it stresses certain aspects of reality while pushing others into the background. In this way, particular attributions, judgments, and decisions are suggested (Entman, 1993; Scheufele,

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2000). Framing is an integral part of objective news media coverage, but it also features in the way competing political interests articulate their issue positions (Lewicki, Gray, & Elliott, 2003).

Most research in this area focuses on alternative issue frames, or what Gray (2003) refers to as "whole story frames." These are rival depictions of what the issue is all about: its essence. Furthermore, framing studies typically examine issues that embody a conflict between values. Welfare, for example, embodies a conflict between humanitarianism and the work ethic, while tolerance for hate speech often embodies a conflict between free expression and racial equality (Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse, & Wood, 1995; Matsuda, 1993). Judgments about the relevance, applicability, and importance of competing values are matters of perception and interpretation—precisely the sort of responses targeted by framing.

A study by Shen and Edwards (2005) exemplifies this approach. 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, whereas the other emphasized individualism by stressing how unlimited welfare payments undermine the work ethic. Support for more stringent welfare requirements was greater in the individualism frame.

We report here on an investigation of a different kind of framing contest—one in which rivals target the same value rather than competing values. We argue that, in some circumstances, the communicator benefits more by *poaching* a rival's value than by conceding it (Brewer, 2003; Brewer & Gross, 2005; Hoffman & Slater, 2007; Kurz, Augoustinos, & Crabb, 2010). If we understand framing as the introduction of alternative interpretive schemes, it seems clear that frames can target not only the whole issue but also the concepts that constitute the issue. This uncouples the concept of framing from that of values, showing that not all frames have one inherent value judgment but that among the concepts that are ripe for framing are values themselves.

Values are widely admired social ideals such as *equality*, *freedom*, and *humanitarianism* (Schwartz, 1996). Values serve as criteria for the evaluation of specific objects, individuals, and policies in the political world (Feather, 1995; McGraw, 1998). A person who strongly values individualism, for example, might disapprove of social welfare programs because he or she believes they undermine this value. Conversely, a citizen who values humanitarianism would likely approve of the same policies because he or she sees them as upholding and promoting this value (Feldman & Steenbergen, 2001).

Issue framing is important because most controversies can be regarded in multiple, competing ways. The constituent features of an issue are also subject to framing, however. In the current study, we investigate how the same values can be framed to promote different policy outcomes. From a strategic point of view, a communicator might deem it too costly to concede a value to his or her opponent, leading to competition over the same value. Instead of contending that his or her value is more important than the rival's, each communicator will instead argue that his or her issue position does more to advance a treasured value than the alternative issue position. Finally, we test a novel psychological mediator that helps explain the effect.

Framing, Values, and Tolerance

The use of one value in two different frames is possible because of the inherent abstractness and ambiguity of values themselves. Our typical conception of a particular value is so broad that it could apply to any number of specific conditions. *Justice*, for instance, can be defined with reference to welfare, freedom, or virtue (Sandel, 2009). In her classic book *Policy Paradox* (2002), Deborah Stone offers at least a half dozen specific exemplars of *equity*: everything from strictly equal shares to a winner-takes-all competition.

The present research examines whether framing values will affect tolerance for extreme anti-immigrant speech. Prior research has established a number of important sources of tolerance for extremist groups, including liking for the group, perceptions of threat from the group, and of course, democratic values such as support for free expression (Marcus et al., 1995). Tolerance for extreme speech is a favorite topic for framing research, as it provides an exceptionally stark contrast to competing values like free expression, equality, and public order (Chong & Druckman, 2007a; Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997).

Perhaps there is more to hate speech controversies, however, than framing them as "free speech" or "public order" issues. In the United States, opinions about hate speech are dominated by free-expression considerations (Gross & Kinder, 1998). U.S. courts have proved extremely reluctant to limit speech, particularly within the realm of "public discourse" (Post, 1990). To preserve the free exchange of ideas, it is argued, even repellent speech must be tolerated (Cohen, 2011). Thus, the purported competition between free expression and other values usually turns into a rout for free expression.

Because of the potency of free expression, those who oppose hate speech are not always willing to concede this value to their opponents. Indeed, a minority view in legal and political scholarship holds that unbridled hate speech undermines democratic values, *even free expression* (Heyman, 2012; Matsuda, 1993). Post (1990) calls this the "paradox of free expression"—by tolerating all manner of hateful speech, we threaten the very democratic values that free expression is thought to sustain. Consider, for example, the comments of Australia's Race Discrimination Commissioner:

> Racism hurts its victims in real ways. … It is something that diminishes people's freedom and their ability to participate in society. … As for intimidation, consider the scenario of someone being deterred from participating in public debate, out of fear of being subjected to verbal racial harassment. (Soutphommasane, 2014, para. 5–13)

Our experiment exploits this paradox to develop competing frames for *free expression* and *democracy* as they pertain to the regulation of hate speech. Our experiment updates the familiar hate-speech paradigm by examining tolerance for extreme anti-immigrant speech. These new hate-speech controversies engage many of the same values, including free expression, humanitarianism, and social order. The rise of strident anti-immigrant speech has also inspired reflection on the meaning and depth of a nation's commitment to democratic values as citizens struggle to find appropriate limits to hate speech (e.g., Sengupta, 2012; Walton, 2010). Our experiment contrasted two frames that both made reference to free expression and democracy. However, one claimed that these values were consistent with allowing

extreme anti-immigrant speech, whereas the other claimed that these same values were consistent with banning this speech.

The Psychological Impact of Value Framing

An important goal of current framing research is to describe the psychological processes that account for (mediate) the effects of framing on political opinions (Slothuus, 2008). Initially, studies conceived of these processes as accessibility effects; 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) suggest that framing effects are mediated in 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 salient and "ready for use." Third, a consideration might be consciously weighed against other considerations as a person decides about the applicability or importance of accessible values and beliefs (Nelson et al., 1997).

While these mechanisms help to explain issue framing effects, we argue that they will *not* account adequately for the value-framing effects investigated here. This is because *both* frames assert the importance of free speech and democracy but make contrasting claims about whether these values are consistent or inconsistent with tolerance for hate speech. Considerations of democracy and free expression should therefore be equally available, accessible, and important to recipients of both frames.

We propose a different psychological mechanism to explain value-framing effects: judgments about how values are promoted or undermined by the issue in question. Recipients of the two frames could both judge that the value of free expression is highly relevant and important, for example, but one might judge that free expression is better upheld by *allowing* the speech to go forward while the other might judge that free expression is better served by *banning* the speech.

In summary, past investigations of issue frames have focused on situations of value conflict, in which one frame stresses one of the competing values, and the opposing frame stresses another. Here we report on an experiment that investigated how competing frames address the *same* values. In particular, we investigated alternative frames for free expression and democracy as they relate to hate speech. We argue that value framing affects opinions by changing judgments about whether a value is promoted or undermined by a specific policy position. We therefore hope to produce the first experimental confirmation of the impact of value poaching not only on issue attitudes but also on perceptions about the values at stake in the issue.

Formally, we investigated the following hypotheses:

H1: *Value framing will affect opinions about permitting extreme anti-immigrant speech. Framing free speech and democracy as* consistent *with a speech in a rally by an extreme anti-immigrant group will lead to more favorable opinions toward the speech and rally compared to a condition in which these values are framed as* inconsistent *with the speech and rally. Opinions toward the rally serve as the ultimate dependent variable in our mediational analysis.*

H2: *Value framing will also affect judgments of how free speech and democracy are promoted or undermined by the event. When free speech and democracy are framed as consistent with the event, participants will judge that* allowing *the event better promotes free speech and democracy compared to when the these values are framed as inconsistent with the speech and rally. When free speech and democracy are framed as inconsistent with the speech and rally, participants will judge that* banning *the event better promotes free expression and democracy.*

H3: *Judgments of how free expression and democracy values are promoted or undermined by the event will* mediate *the impact of value framing on opinions about whether the event should be permitted. The mediational effect will persist even when controlling for other possible mediators.*

Method

Participants read about a speech and rally planned by an extreme anti-immigrant organization. For some subjects, the values of free expression and democracy were framed as consistent with the event; for others, the values were framed as inconsistent with the event (or, equivalently, as consistent with banning the event). Respondents expressed their opinions about whether the rally should be permitted. Respondents also judged how well allowing versus forbidding the event would promote three key values: *free expression*, *democracy*, and *safety*. Respondents also judged the *importance* of these values and stated their beliefs about the extent of violence and intimidation precipitated by the event. Finally, respondents indicated their degree of liking toward the extremist group.

Sample

Data were collected in two rounds by means of an online survey experiment. In the first round, during the spring of 2011, 179 undergraduate students took part. They were offered extra course credit as an incentive. Just over a year later, during the summer of 2012, 349 nonstudents participated in the second round. They were recruited from a standing commercial panel (Qualtrics.com) and were offered standard incentives by the company. As detailed below, only minor changes were made to the stimulus materials in the second round, so for all practical purposes, the two rounds constitute a single experiment.

The experiment was described as a study of "how well people learn about news and current affairs from online and traditional news sources." Participants were asked to view a story that had purportedly appeared on the website of a statewide news network. They were asked to read the story carefully and answer subsequent questions about the article and the issue it covered.

Experimental Stimuli

We carefully copied a Web page from the actual online news network and substituted our own text for the original article. We left all other aspects of the Web page unchanged, including advertisements, banners, images, and so on, which helped our stimulus achieve a respectable verisimilitude.

The story concerned a proposed march and rally by the anti-immigrant organization "HomeFirst." HomeFirst was described as holding extremely hostile, ethnocentric views about Latino culture. We aimed to make the group's views so extreme that they would offend even participants who hold conservative views on immigration. The group was described as believing, for example, that American culture is becoming "mongrelized" by "inferior" Mexican culture.[2]

While information about the group and proposed rally remained constant across conditions, the rest of the article was manipulated to create different experimental treatments. Subjects were randomly assigned to read two different versions. One framed democracy and free speech as consistent with this rally; the other framed democracy and free speech as inconsistent with the rally (or, to put it another way, as consistent with forbidding the rally). The consistent frame stressed two points: First, that all groups have the right to free expression, and second, that hearing all points of view facilitates a democratic solution to the immigration question. The inconsistent frame made precisely the opposite points: Pro-immigration voices would be silenced by the rally, thus weakening free expression and impeding a democratic solution to the immigration question. This frame carried the clear implication that free speech and democracy would be better served by banning the event. The complete treatment texts appear in Appendix I. 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 two minutes.

Measures

Dependent variable. After reading the article, subjects went on to the questionnaire. Participants were asked for their *opinions* about the controversy, using two questions. The first asked the extent to which they *supported the march and rally*, using a 7-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 7-point scale. The measures were strongly correlated ($r = .66$, $p < .001$).

Value-promotion judgments. We hypothesized that value framing would affect the extent to which subjects judged that the speech and rally would promote or undermine free speech and democracy. To measure such judgments, we designed a *value promotions matrix.* This procedure, modeled on multiattribute judgment tasks (e.g., Keeney & Raiffa, 1976), asked the respondents to judge 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 how well they promote three values (*free expression*, *democracy*, and *safety*). For each of the six judgments, participants rated

> 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

[2] The text was altered slightly in round two in order to make the group even more extreme. The group was explicitly described as "hateful," and the leader of the group was quoted as saying, "Mexican culture is based on lies and deceit."

job of promoting a value; give lower marks if you think a particular outcome does a poor job of promoting that value.

Participants used a 1 to 5 five scale to make the ratings. So, each respondent rated how well allowing the rally would promote the value of free expression; how well not allowing the rally would promote free expression; how well allowing the rally would promote democracy; and so on. Hypothesis 3 predicts that judgments about how the rally promotes democracy and free expression would provide the key mediation for the effect of the treatment on opinions toward the rally. We hypothesized a lesser mediational role for judgments of how the event promotes safety.

Other mediators. We also measured several possible alternative mediators of the effects of value framing on attitudes toward the speech and rally. Previous research has demonstrated that framing effects can be mediated by belief content or belief importance (Slothuus, 2008). Belief content refers to objective expectations about the outcome of alternative policies. For example, participants might have expressed greater opposition to the rally in the inconsistent condition because they judged that HomeFirst posed a greater threat, compared to subjects in the consistent condition (Marcus et al., 1995). We tried to hold such expectations constant across the two conditions. All participants, for example, read that critics feared that "the event will lead to harassment and intimidation of Latinos. Even legal immigrants and pro-immigrant citizens will be afraid to express their views." Nevertheless, since the inconsistent frame stressed the militancy and aggressiveness of HomeFirst, it is possible that participants would judge that the group posed a greater threat, compared to participants in the consistent framing condition. To address this possibility, we asked participants three belief-content questions regarding the outcome of the proposed rally. Using a 1–7 disagree–agree Likert scale, we asked participants to indicate their agreement with these statements: If HomeFirst goes ahead with their plans, there will be *harassment of immigrants*; If HomeFirst goes ahead with their plans, people will be *afraid to express pro-immigration views*; and If HomeFirst goes ahead with their plans, it will be more *difficult to reach a democratic solution* to the immigration question.

Belief importance refers to the perceived importance or relevance of values such as free expression. Using a 7-point scale, anchored by "not at all important" and "extremely important," participants indicated the *importance* of three considerations for their own opinions about the issue: the *right to free expression*; the *right to be safe from harassment and intimidation;* and *preserving orderly democratic discussion*.

Finally, to investigate whether a simple affective association mechanism might be responsible for framing effects (Cialdini, 2001), we asked subjects to indicate how much they *liked or disliked* the group HomeFirst, using a 1–9 scale anchored by "dislike extremely" and "like extremely."

Results

Effects on Opinion (H1)

To test H1, that value framing affects tolerance toward the anti-immigrant group, the two measures of opinion toward the rally were each analyzed according to an independent-samples *t*-test, with framing as the independent variable.

Opinions about the rally were significantly affected by the value-framing manipulation. Table 1 presents the relevant means. When free speech and democracy were framed as inconsistent with the rally, respondents tended toward greater opposition compared to when free speech and democracy were framed as consistent with the rally. The effects are not only statistically significant but also substantively meaningful. The proportion of respondents opposed to the rally nearly doubled, from 19.6% to 37.1%, in the inconsistent frame. Thus, there was strong confirmation of our prediction that the same values could be framed to inspire support for *and* opposition to the rally. This happened even though all subjects were exposed to identical objective information about the rally and its likely consequences.

Table 1. Effects of Framing on Opinion and Alternative Mediators.

	Measure	*Free Speech and Democracy Consistent with Rally*	*Free Speech and Democracy Inconsistent with Rally*	*p value*
Opinion	Support for rally	4.86 (1.80)	4.04 (1.96)	<.001
	Good idea or bad idea	4.33 (1.70)	3.72 (1.84)	<.001
Affect	Like or dislike HomeFirst	4.00 (2.26)	3.81 (2.30)	.35
Value importance	Importance of right to free expression	6.00 (1.13)	5.76 (1.31)	.03
	Importance of safety from harassment	5.84 (1.24)	5.72 (1.31)	.32
	Importance of preserving democratic discussion	5.58 (1.36)	5.63 (1.13)	.63
Belief content	Harassment of immigrants	4.48 (1.47)	4.66 (1.54)	.20

	Measure	*Free Speech and Democracy Consistent with Rally*	*Free Speech and Democracy Inconsistent with Rally*	*p value*
	Afraid to express pro-immigration views	3.44 (1.70)	3.97 (1.69)	.001
	Difficult to reach a democratic solution	3.58 (1.67)	3.99 (1.70)	.008
Value promotion	Allowing rally promotes free speech	4.21 (1.07)	3.86 (1.14)	.001
	Banning rally promotes free speech	1.94 (1.15)	2.40 (1.24)	<.001
	Allowing rally promotes democracy	3.96 (1.14)	3.47 (1.25)	<.001
	Banning rally promotes democracy	2.12 (1.17)	2.70 (1.21)	<.001
	Allowing rally promotes safety	2.94 (1.19)	2.67 (1.17)	.01
	Banning rally promotes safety	3.09 (1.17)	3.40 (1.17)	.004
	n	244	247	

Effects on Value Judgments (H2)

The effects of our values-framing manipulations on tolerance for the rally is only half the story. We argue that framing affects perceptions about whether the rally upholds or undermines the values of free expression and democracy. To test this hypothesis (H2), we examined judgments in the values promotions matrix.

Participants judged how two different outcomes (allowing the rally versus *not* allowing the rally) would promote three separate values (free expression, democracy, and safety). We predicted that value framing would affect judgments of the first two values (free expression and democracy). When free expression and democracy were framed as consistent with the rally, participants should be more likely to see these values upheld and promoted by allowing the rally to go forward as planned, compared to when these values are framed as inconsistent with the rally.

The relevant means appear in Table 1; for ease of interpretation, they are also presented graphically in Figure 1. Most participants in both conditions judged that allowing the rally would better uphold democracy and free expression than banning the rally. This difference no doubt reflects the

standing advantage for unfettered speech in the public mind (Gross & Kinder, 1998). Nevertheless, the gap between allowing and banning the rally shrinks substantially in the inconsistent condition. In other words, as predicted, participants in the inconsistent condition tended to judge that banning the event would uphold democracy and free expression to a greater degree than their counterparts in the consistent condition. Conversely, participants in the inconsistent condition tended to judge that permitting the rally would promote free expression and democracy to a lesser extent than their counterparts in the consistent condition. Finally, safety also responded to the treatment, with participants in the inconsistent condition generally perceiving a clear gap in the extent to which allowing versus banning the rally would promote the value of safety. No such gap appears in the consistent condition.

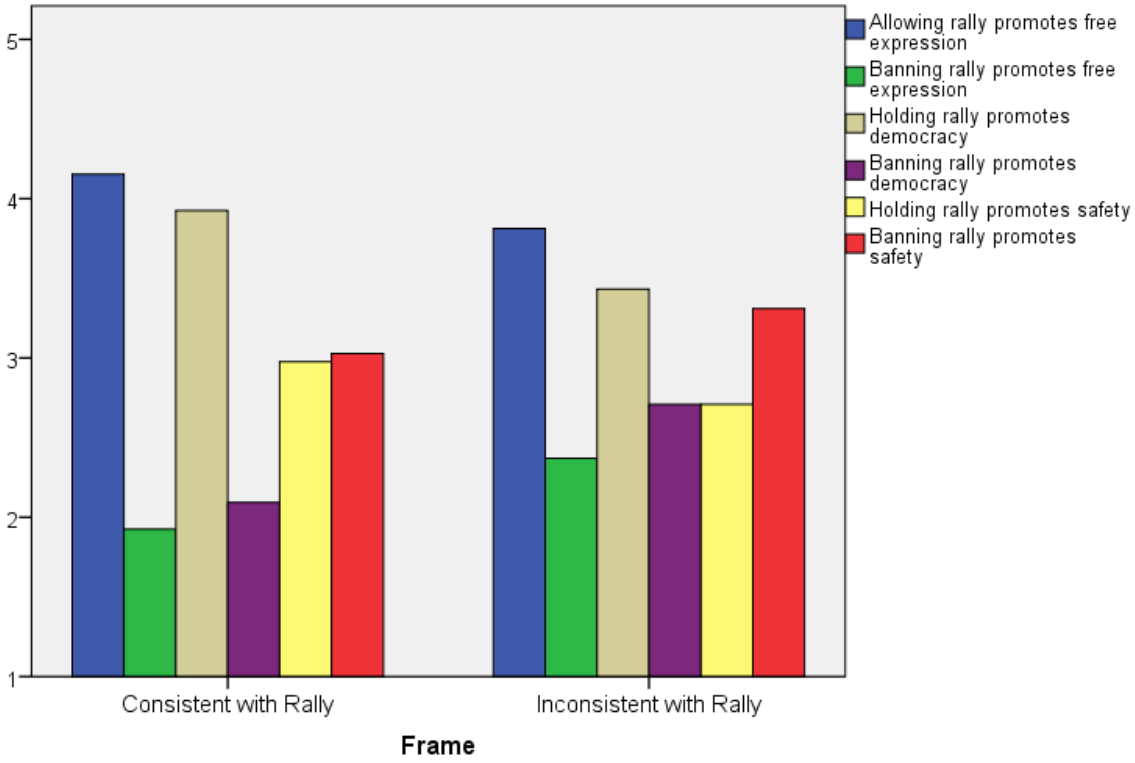

Figure 1. Judgments of how allowing or banning rally promotes free expression, democracy, and safety values, by framing condition.

To establish the statistical significance of these patterns, we analyzed each pair of value judgments (allowing versus not allowing the rally promotes free expression; allowing versus not allowing the rally promotes democracy; allowing versus not allowing the rally promotes safety) with a 2 (Value framing: consistent versus inconsistent) by 2 (Policy: allow versus ban rally) mixed-model ANOVA, with policy treated as a within subjects (repeated) measure.

Effects on judgments of free expression and democracy were comparable. There were very strong main effects for policy on both values dimensions, confirming that allowing the rally was perceived as doing more to advance these values than banning the rally (free expression: $F_{1,439} = 277.74$, $p < .001$; democracy: $F_{1,\ 455} = 147.36$, $p < .001$). Nevertheless, this effect is qualified by a highly significant interaction between policy and value framing for both dimensions (free expression: $F_{1,\ 439} = 21.41$ $p < .001$; democracy: $F_{1,\ 455} = 27.19$ $p < .001$). This result confirms that the shrinkage in the gap between allowing and banning the rally with respect to how well the two key values are promoted is meaningful. To put it yet another way, participants in the inconsistent condition are significantly more likely to accept the claim that banning hate speech actually upholds free speech and democracy, while they express greater doubt that allowing the rally would promote these values.

What about judgments of safety? Because both 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 ($F_{1,468} = 31.35$, $p < .001$). As Figure 1 indicates, this gap is due almost entirely to the inconsistent values-framing condition. The interaction between policy and value framing is indeed significant ($F_{1,468} = 6.40$, $p = .01$). The size of this interaction effect is a fraction of the comparable interactions for free expression and democracy, however. This is reassuring, because we had hypothesized that the values frames would principally affect judgments of how the rally would promote free expression and democracy, not safety. Nevertheless, this interaction necessitates a fine-grained analysis of the mediation of the value-framing effect on tolerance for the speech and rally.

The results so far support Hypotheses 1 and 2. Value framing affected tolerance for the rally, as predicted, but also judgments about how crucial democratic values are promoted or undermined by the rally. Hypothesis 3 predicts that judgments about the impact of the rally on values will *mediate* the effects of value framing on tolerance for the rally. Furthermore, this mediation effect should persist even when controlling for other possible mediators of the value-framing effect.

Table 1 presents the relevant means for these alternative mediators across the two value-framing conditions. There is mixed evidence concerning their potential importance. Liking for HomeFirst did not significantly differ between the two value framing conditions, nor did two of the three value importance measures. Free speech considerations were judged to be more important in the consistent condition.

Statistically speaking, the alternative mediators that varied the most in response to framing are the content of participants' beliefs: the threats they perceive from the rally on immigrants themselves (afraid to express pro-immigrant views), and on the prospects for a democratic solution to the immigration question (difficult to reach a democratic solution). Both of these measures revealed more serious concern about the damaging consequences of the rally in the inconsistent condition. It will be important to control for these differences in our mediational analysis.

Mediational Analysis (H3)

The final step in testing our theoretical model is to conduct a causal analysis that relates opinions about the rally to the direct effect of value framing and to its indirect effect as mediated by judgments of value promotions and other potential mediators (H3).

Figure 2 shows a structural model with unstandardized effect coefficients. In the model, value framing is an exogenous factor that directly affects opinion about the rally, which is modeled as a latent factor with two observed indicators: approval of the rally and whether the rally is a good or bad idea. Value framing also indirectly influences opinion by affecting judgments of how democratic values (treated as a single latent factor with two observed indicators: democracy and free expression) and safety are promoted by allowing versus banning the rally. For purposes of this model, *difference scores* were computed by subtracting judgments of how banning the rally promotes values from judgments of how allowing the rally promotes the same values. Higher numbers indicate that the respondents judged that allowing the rally would do more to promote the value than banning the rally.

The model includes four additional mediators that might also account for the framing effect on tolerance for the rally. *Free speech importance* is a single observed indicator that represents the importance participants attributed to protecting free speech with respect to this issue. *Threat* is a latent variable with two observed indicators: It represents the objective beliefs that people will be afraid to express pro-immigration views and that it will be difficult to reach a democratic solution to the immigration issue. Because these variables were strongly correlated (r = .66), they were treated as two indicators of an underlying construct of beliefs in the potential negative consequences of the rally. *Safety* represents the degree to which permitting the rally is judged to uphold safety relative to forbidding the rally. Finally, *group affect* represents the amount of liking expressed toward HomeFirst.

AMOS 21 software with maximum likelihood estimation was used to calculate path coefficients. In the figure, all path effects are significant at the .001 level, with these exceptions: the effect of framing on importance of free speech (p = .03), the effect of framing on safety (p = .003), the effect of framing on group affect (p=.35), and the direct effect of framing on opinion (p = .36). The nonsignificance of this direct effect is consistent with the claim that the causal impact of framing on opinion is indirect—mediated by the impact of framing on value judgments, value importance, and belief content (Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

While the indirect effects involving threat, value importance, and safety are all statistically significant, they clearly do not eliminate the indirect effect of value framing via judgments of whether the really promotes or undermines democratic values. In fact, the indirect effect of framing via democratic values (.32) is equal to the other four mediators *combined* (threat = .16; speech importance = .05; safety = .07; group affect = .04). We can safely say, therefore, that the bulk of the effect of value framing on tolerance can be attributed to the effects of value framing on perceptions of how values are promoted or undermined by this event. The evidence is strong, therefore, that value frames affected judgments of how democratic values are implicated in this free-speech controversy and that those judgments in turn

influenced opinions about whether the rally should go forward, independent of any effects on belief content, belief importance, group affect, or safety concerns.

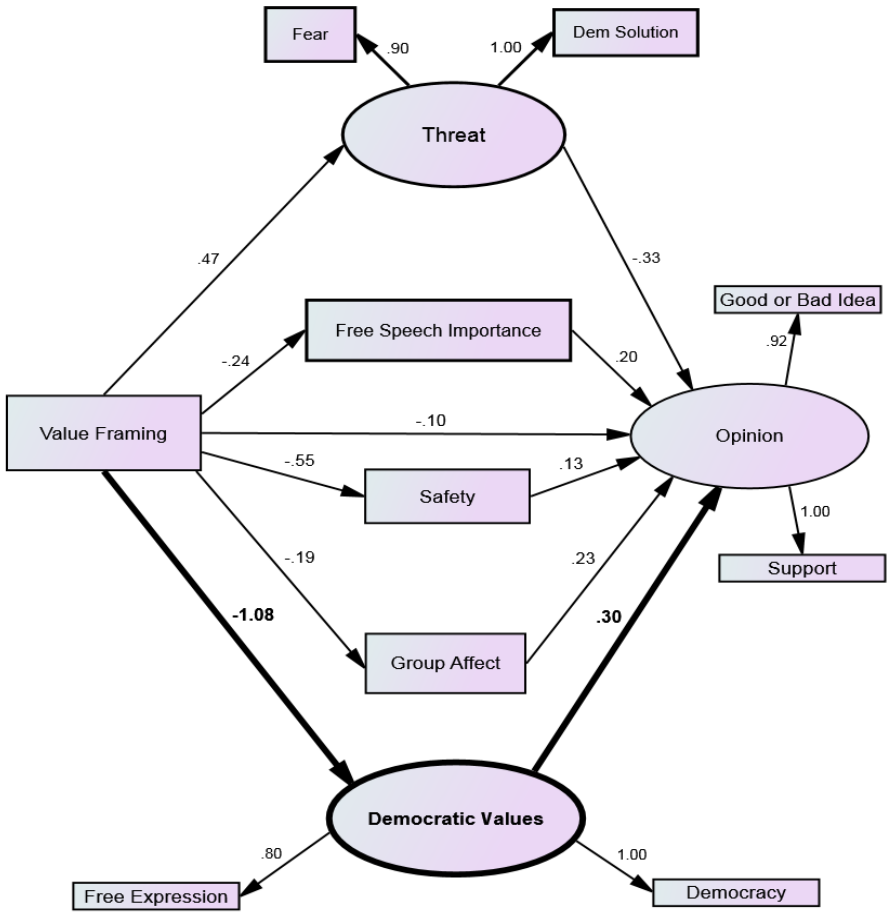

Figure 2. Causal analysis. Note: Entries are unstandardized coefficients. All paths are significant at p ≤ .01 except for the direct path from value framing to opinion, which is not significant. Coefficients for residual effects are not displayed.

Comparability of Student and Nonstudent Data

Our two samples gave us the luxury of exploring the comparability of student and nonstudent data—an issue that continues to vex experimental researchers (Druckman & Kam, 2011; Mintz, Redd, & Vedlitz, 2006). As it turns out, there were important differences between the groups, but these concerned the level of tolerance, not the relationship between tolerance and other variables, including framing. Students expressed significantly greater approval of the rally than the nonstudents, regardless of experimental treatment. This finding comes from a 2 (value framing: promotes versus undermines values) by 2 (sample: students versus nonstudents) ANOVA, with approval of the rally as the dependent variable. The sample main effect was quite strong ($F_{1,492}$ = 31.61, p = .003), with average student approval of 4.82 versus 4.29 for nonstudents. This result agrees with the common finding that the better educated tend to be more tolerant than the less educated (van Doorn, 2014). We did not, unfortunately, measure education level in our nonstudent sample. We did, however, measure political knowledge with a 6-item index modeled on Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996). The students (M = 4.32, SD = 2.16) scored significantly higher than the nonstudents (M = 3.11, SD = 1.93) in the average number of items answered correctly (t_{520} = 6.47, p < .001). Moreover, there was a significant correlation between political knowledge and tolerance for the rally (Pearson's r = .25, p < .001). It seems, therefore, that differences in political sophistication could help explain the difference between the two samples in tolerance.

Interestingly, there was no difference between students and nonstudents on our second measure of opinion: whether the rally was a good idea or a bad idea. From these results we may infer that students were more likely to separate their personal feelings about the event from their opinions about whether it should be prohibited. Apparently, students tended toward greater willingness to allow the rally to go on *despite* their uneasiness with the group and their message.

There was *no* difference between students and nonstudents where it mattered most: in responsiveness to the framing manipulation. On both measures, students and nonstudents expressed significantly less tolerance when free speech and democracy were framed as inconsistent with the speech and rally. In statistical language, there was no value-framing x sample interaction (approval: $F_{1,492}$ = .77, p= .38; good idea: $F_{1,489}$ = 0). In other words, although students expressed greater support for the rally overall, they were just as sensitive to value framing as nonstudents. This pattern should reassure those who rely on convenience samples to test experimental hypotheses. Although it is clearly inappropriate to use such samples to provide point estimates of general population parameters, it is appropriate to use such samples to investigate experimental treatment effects.

Conclusion

Our study shows that political competitors can use framing to make convincing claims on the same values without making different objective arguments about the good and bad consequences that would flow from alternative policy outcomes. In other words, the alternative value frames made the same objective claims about what might happen under different scenarios, but they made fundamentally different arguments about the implications of these outcomes for cherished principles. The very same set of circumstances was alternatively depicted as a triumph or tragedy for free speech and democracy. These

claims had a substantial, highly significant influence on participants' opinions about whether to prohibit or allow the rally.

In the present study, the central controversy revolved around a speech and rally by a militantly anti-immigrant group. Like hate speech controversies of yore, this issue could be understood as situated at the nexus of competing values—free speech and public order, for example. Current framing theory would predict that framing the two positions on this issue (allowing versus banning the speech) with respect to these competing values would significantly influence opinion on the issue. We took a different approach in this study. We framed the same values as consistent with either permitting or forbidding hate speech. Our results showed that rival frames affected judgments of how these two values would be advanced or impeded by different resolutions of the controversy. Such judgments in turn made a substantial difference in whether subjects thought the speech and rally should be allowed to go forward or should be scuttled. It is therefore clear that hate-speech controversies go beyond framing the issue around competing values such as free speech versus a rival value such as public order (Nelson et al., 1997). We now have evidence that these controversies can also be characterized as contests over the proper framing of the prized values of free expression and democracy.

Other investigators have pointed out that political rivals sometimes compete over the same value (Brewer, 2003; Hoffman & Slater, 2007; Kurz et al., 2010; Siegel, 2008). To our knowledge, there has only been one experimental investigation of value poaching in the framing literature. Brewer and Gross (2005) conducted an experiment in which they presented pro– and anti–school voucher messages that both drew on the value of equality. They found that respondents were more likely to invoke equality in open-ended responses to these frames. They did not, however, find that the alternative frames resulted in significantly different attitudes about school vouchers. We believe, therefore, that ours is the first experimental demonstration that value poaching succeeds in affecting issue attitudes. Moreover, our investigation presents and tests a novel mechanism for the effect (value promotion judgments) and finds that it helps explain the effect, even when taking into account other potential mediators.

Such framing effects are only possible because of the flexibility that characterizes our conception of values and because of how values become drawn into the concrete details of everyday political life. Values are powerful determinants of our political thought and action, yet both scholars and laypeople tend to talk about (and measure) values as abstract concepts stripped of their social and political context. The slippage between idealized values and their concrete instantiations leaves considerable room for political communicators to operate (Pollock, Lilie, & Vittes, 1993; Prothro & Grigg, 1960). Indeed, both frames in our experiment employed many of the same catchphrases in an effort to capture the same values. Both pro- and anti-speech frames argued, "This country has always been about protecting the right to free expression for all people, and we should fight to uphold this principle." Furthermore, both claimed, "If everyone believes that they have the freedom to contribute, we can reach a democratic solution to the immigration question." Finally, both stated, "Freedom of expression goes both ways, and everybody should feel free to speak their mind." The difference, of course, was in the decision that these noble sentiments entailed. For free-speech absolutists, these ideals entail tolerance for any political speech, no matter how offensive. For hate-speech opponents, the same ideals entail protecting the targets of hate speech from being silenced.

Do political communicators have complete flexibility to invoke any and all values in pursuit of their policy goals? Perhaps not, but the lengths to which politicians will go to invoke universal values in service of their narrow causes has occasioned some ironic comment, as in this column by Gail Collins (2011, para. 4) concerning a concealed weapons bill before the U.S. Congress:

> "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.

One of our experiment's treatments also made an audacious claim: that *restricting* some types of hateful speech *promotes* the value of free expression. While this argument might strike some as incredible, if not illogical, it is precisely what many advocates of hate-speech regulation argue (Matsuda, 1993). This perspective has always traveled better outside the United States than inside. In testament to the cultural embeddedness of American attitudes toward free expression (Gross & Kinder, 1998), permitting the speech was judged by most participants in both conditions as upholding free-expression values to a greater extent than forbidding it. Nevertheless, the inconsistent values frame convinced a substantial proportion of respondents that limiting some forms of hate speech is, paradoxically, good for free expression, while no-holds-barred speech can poison the democratic well.

Our study contains a number of limitations. Our mediational analysis comes with the obligatory caveat that structural equations models cannot *prove* causal mediation. We can have high confidence in the following conclusions: (a) our manipulation of value frames affected opinions about allowing an anti-immigrant rally, (b) our manipulation of value frames affected participants' judgments about how values are enhanced and undermined by the rally, and (c) evaluations of the rally and judgments of how the rally affects values are strongly related to each other. We cannot enjoy the same confidence in our claim that the effect of value framing on attitudes toward the rally is causally mediated by its effect on value-promotion judgments (Bullock, Green, & Ha, 2010).

To strengthen the causal claim, we must go beyond the structural model results and triangulate with theory, logic, and further evidence. First, the pattern of results handsomely conforms to predictions derived a priori from our theoretical model. Alternative explanations seem less plausible. If framing directly affected opinions, for example, and only indirectly affected the putative moderators, then why did it disproportionately affect value-promotion judgments? If participants were merely responding to the evaluative thrust of frames and only considered values as an afterthought, we might have expected a different pattern of corollary findings. We would expect, for example, that liking for the group would also respond to the framing manipulation, yet it did not. Still, it remains true that we must be cautious in making causal inferences from the present study. Further confirmation of the causal model must await the results of experiments that simultaneously manipulate both exogenous *and* mediating factors.

Although our treatment effects were strong, it is still the case that the opinions of many participants were unaffected. We assume that this frame resistance is connected to both the issue we used in our study and our use of values as the target of framing. Framing research has shown that effects on highly salient issues tend to be smaller, because citizens have had plenty of opportunity to form strong opinions and evaluations of these issues and because personal involvement in these issues tends to be high (Lecheler, De Vreese, & Slothuus, 2009). The use of values further suggests increased resistance, as values are powerful heuristics that encourage retaining existing opinions (Blankenship & Wegener, 2008). As we have seen, values such as free speech strongly condition the views of the general public on issues such as the regulation of hate speech. This line of reasoning also suggests that the effects of value framing will likely be larger when new or less salient political issues or values are concerned (Baden & Lecheler, 2012; Lecheler et al., 2009).

To keep the design of this study manageable, we examined the effects of value poaching only for one issue. Clearly, further studies are needed to verify that our findings can also be translated into other contexts. Beyond that, we cannot show how long the effects we find last. Previous research suggests that framing effects can be persistent but that their influence is limited by subsequent competitive frame exposure (Chong & Druckman, 2010). We show that our effects are consequential for opinion formation, but future studies must show how long lasting value framing really is.

Edelman wrote,

> Practically every political act that is controversial or regarded as really important is bound to serve in part as a condensation symbol . . . Because the meaning of the act in these cases depends only partly or not at all upon its objective consequences, which the mass public cannot know, the meaning can only come from the psychological needs of the respondents. (1985, p. 7)

As we read this, the bulk of an issue's "meaning" amounts to what it represents for people. Edelman stressed the emotions associated with these representations. We believe that issues also symbolically represent values. In much of the public's thinking, a hate-speech controversy is associated with free speech and democracy. The precise form of this representation is susceptible to framing, however. Whether an episode of hate speech is seen as furthering or impairing these values depends on, to some degree, the way these values are framed vis-à-vis the issue.

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Appendix I: Experimental Treatments

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Common Paragraph</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">NORWALK—A new anti-immigrant group called HomeFirst has announced plans to hold a march down Main Street in this small Ohio town, followed by a rally and speeches in favor of the group's tough anti-immigrant agenda. HomeFirst is extreme even in the emotional climate of immigration politics. 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.
Other citizen groups have asked Norwalk mayor Gary Williams to deny the group's request for a permit to hold the march and rally. They say that the event will lead to harassment and intimidation of Latinos. Even legal immigrants and pro-immigrant citizens will be afraid to express their views on this sensitive topic.
The proposed event has been the subject of heated meetings of the Norwalk town council. During the most recent meeting, three citizens spoke emotionally in favor of the group's proposal, while three other citizens spoke out strongly against the group.</td></tr>
<tr><th>Rally promotes free speech and democracy</th><th>Rally undermines free speech and democracy</th></tr>
<tr><td>Mayor Williams says he has not made up his mind, but he is leaning towards allowing the march and rally to take place. "Like anyone, HomeFirst has a right to freely express their point of view." He continued: "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."
John Alvarez is a lawyer with IntegrateNow, a Washington, D.C.-based organization that works on immigration issues. He supports HomeFirst's planned event. "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."</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. "Freedom of expression is not to be used as a shield by hate groups so they can harass and intimidate others." He continued: "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."
John Alvarez is a lawyer with IntegrateNow, a Washington, D.C.-based organization that works on immigration issues. He opposes HomeFirst's planned event. "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."</td></tr>
</table>