

Oregon Advocate's College 4
Portland, Oregon – October 8, 2013

Session 1 – Framing to Build Public Will

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www.publicworks.org



Public Works is dedicated to building public will for the common good. We seek to create a public that is able to move beyond cynicism and distrust toward government and become motivated to build a public sector that works for all.



The Work of Public Works

Research

- Government
- The Economy
- Budgets & Taxes

In the Field

- Policy Shops
- Advocates
- Coalitions
- Electeds & Managers
- Unions

What We are Trying to Understand

Polling:
Looking for Visible
Attitudes



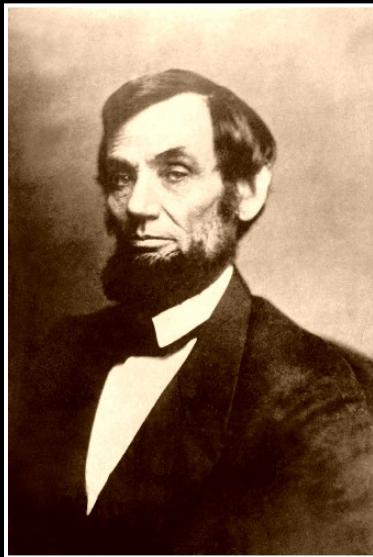
Our Research:
Looking for Hidden
Reasoning





America is at a cross-roads: Public Challenges and Public Will

We Need to Build Public Will



"Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed. Consequently, he who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes and decisions *possible* or *impossible* to be executed."

- Abraham Lincoln

Lessons from Social Movements

Framing – as a tool in social movements – refers to “the conscious, strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action.”

- McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996

Lessons from the Civil Rights Movements



Frames

- Christian Values
- Democratic Ideals
- Charity, redemption & Non-Violence
- Compelling Messengers & Diverse supporters
- Tactical Innovations
- Public (shared) solutions



Outcomes

- Influenced media coverage
- Tapped into bedrock American Values
- Raised broad awareness and support
- Defused the opposition
- Called government to action for the common good

Frames and Social Movements



"I am about to sign into law the Civil Rights Act of 1964. I want to take this occasion to talk to you about **what that law means to every American**. Not black people. Not Southerners. Not even our nation. Every American. . .

. . . should we defeat every enemy, and should we double our wealth and conquer the stars, and still be unequal to this issue, then we will have failed as a people and as a nation . . .

Their cause must be our cause, too. **Because it is not just Negroes, but really it's all of us who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice.**"

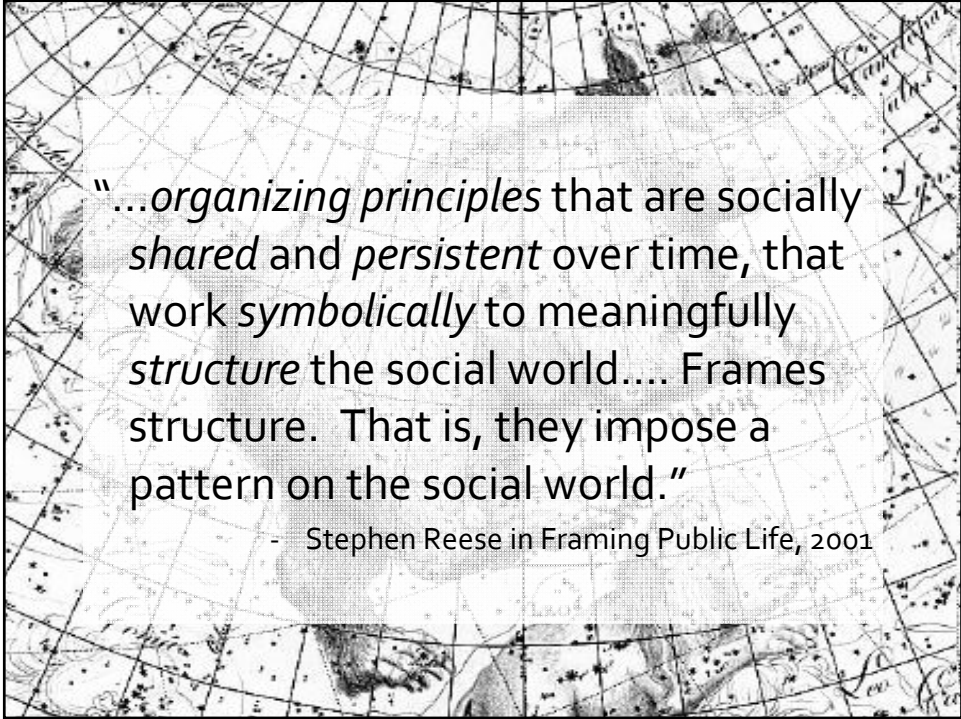
"Party in Search of a Notion," by Michael Tomasky, American Prospect, May 2006.

Our Goals

- To learn how to frame and reframe our issues to create better public understanding of - and support for - the policy changes we seek.
- This is "strategic" communications

Today's Session

- What is “framing”
- How do dominant stories, frames & perceptions shape understanding
- What are the tools of good framing practice
- What are framing missteps to avoid



“...*organizing principles* that are socially *shared* and *persistent* over time, that work *symbolically* to meaningfully *structure* the social world.... Frames structure. That is, they impose a pattern on the social world.”

- Stephen Reese in *Framing Public Life*, 2001

Different Goals

- **Agenda-setting:** Influencing **which issues** people think are important for government to address.
- **Framing:** Influencing **how people think** about and interpret ideas and issues, particularly how they think about solutions to problems.

Framing vs. Spin

- Frames are always present
- Framing for Understanding vs. Spinning to Deceive
- Reveal vs. Obscure
- Perspective not Manipulation.

Framing

Framing research examines **how thinking, communication, and culture interact**, and understanding those interactions can help advocates determine how to communicate more effectively.

- Larry Wallack

Communicating to Build Public Will

Questions that we need to answer:

- What is the problem?
- Why does it matter?
- Who is responsible?
- What should be done?



Spanking Makes You Stupid

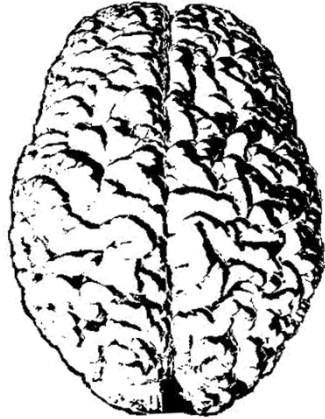
Development, not IQ

Early experiences affect the architecture of the maturing brain and establish either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for all of the development and behavior that follows.

When a young child experiences excessive stress, chemicals are released in the brain that damage its developing architecture. These stress chemicals make it harder for brain cells to grow and connect to each other.



Framing Happens



- Frames are used by our brains to make sense of incoming information
- It happens fast
- Frames fill in the blanks
- They direct thinking

POVEDTY



$$p(x) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f(x) e^{-px} dx$$

$$q(x) = \sum_{i=1}^{\infty} q_i(x) e^{-px}$$

$$\sigma = \frac{1}{x \sigma \sqrt{2\pi}}$$

$$E = \mu + k^2 \sigma^2 / 2$$

$$\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} x f(x) dx$$

$$\sigma^2 = \ln \left(\frac{\text{Var}(X)}{(E(X))^2} + 1 \right)$$

$$F(x) = \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} \text{erf} \left[\frac{\ln(x) - \mu}{\sigma \sqrt{2}} \right]$$

$$\mu = \ln(E(x)) - \frac{1}{2} \ln \left(1 + \frac{\text{Var}}{(E)} \right)$$

$$g(k) = \exp(\mu + \sigma^2 / 2) \frac{1}{\sigma} \left(\frac{-\ln(k) + \mu + \sigma^2}{\sigma} \right)$$

$$F(x) = \frac{1}{0.5} \left(e^{-2e^{-x}} + 2e^{-3e^{-x}} + 3e^{-6e^{-x}} \right)$$

$$\text{Entropy} = \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} \ln(2\pi\sigma^2) + \mu$$

patterns of association
 cultural models
 media
 frames
 E knowledge
 stories
 experience
 stereotypes
 myths

We are not blank slates

Frames are mental structures that help people understand the world, based on particular **cues from outside** themselves that **activate assumptions** and values they hold within themselves.

Berkeley Media Studies Group

Sam is a Snake

- Would lend money to Sam?
- Would you let him housesit?
- Would you like him to date your friend?
- Would you trust him to keep a secret?

Framing is Always Happening

If we do not pay attention to how we frame our issues people will default to the “pictures in their heads”



Essential Steps for the Future of America's Wetlands



Why Wetlands Matter

Wetlands **benefit us all**. Wetlands **act as a filter** for the waters of our lakes, rivers and streams. Wetlands improve the water we drink, and the air we breathe. **Wetlands act like giant sponges** They soak up rain and snowmelt as they occur, serving as temporary storage basins, thus reducing erosion, and limiting the destruction caused by severe floods . . .

CITY

I confess to a prejudice. I believe that Cities are the most important single unit of human society. **They are to human beings what beehives are to bees.** Human beings are fundamentally community beings . . . No other level of government has to face so directly the reality of how well we or poorly we work as a human community. **We are bound together.** The municipal leader knows it, and sees it.

Pragmatism, Prophecy, and Prayer - The Rev. B. P. Campbell, Virginia Municipal League, Prayer Breakfast, 24 October 2005

Some beliefs to question

- ✓ The facts will set you free.
- ✓ The data speak for themselves.
- ✓ We need to educate everyone.
- ✓ We just need a catchier message/slogan.
- ✓ I understand it so everyone else should.
- ✓ Those who don't support us don't make sense.

Facts do not Trump Frames

Understanding means finding a story you already know and saying, "Oh yeah, that one." **Even just one piece of affirming information about a stereotype is sufficient to confirm the entire stereotype**, whereas presentation of even several disconfirming cues has little effect on disconfirming the stereotype.

- (Schank, 1998 & Gurwitz and Dodge, 1977)

It Depends on How You Ask

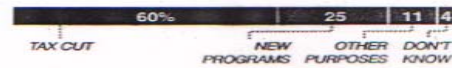
The public's desire for tax cuts can be hard to measure. Pollsters asking what should be done with the nation's budget surplus got different results depending on the specifics of the question.

THE QUESTION

President Clinton has proposed setting aside approximately two-thirds of an expected budget surplus to fix the Social Security system. What do you think the leaders in Washington should do with the remainder of the surplus? ...

Variation 1

... Should the money be used for a tax cut, or should it be used to fund new government programs?



Variation 2

... Should the money be used for a tax cut, or should it be spent on programs for education, the environment, health care, crime-fighting and military defense?



Source: Pew Research Center

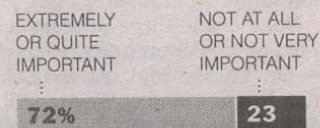
The New York Times

SHIFTS AND SHIMMIES

Similar Questions, Different Answers

In polling about health care issues, the phrasing of questions is crucial. Below are two questions from a Wall Street Journal/NBC News Poll. While the questions differ only slightly, they generated vastly different responses.

In any health care proposal, how important do you feel it is to give people a choice of both a public plan administered by the federal government, and a private plan for their health insurance?



Would you favor or oppose creating a public health care plan administered by the federal government that would compete directly with private health insurance companies?



The Limits of “Facts”

Facts do not penetrate the world where our beliefs abide; facts did not give birth to our beliefs, and they do not destroy them. Facts can contradict beliefs constantly without weakening them in the least...

- Proust

Frames vs. Facts . . . your experiences?



Assessing Frames: What is There, What is Missing?



Golden Voice: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cl_fMxQCTw&feature=related

Frames Influence Decisions

“Every frame defines the issue, explains who is responsible, and suggests potential solutions. All of this is conveyed by images, stereotypes, or anecdotes.”

- Charlotte Ryan, Prime Time Activism, 1991



Dominant Frames

- Self-determination/Self discipline
- Rugged individualism
- Benefits based solely on effort
- Limited obligation to collective good
- Neutrality of major social institutions
- Voluntary and moral nature of behavior
- Limited government intervention

The Rockridge Institute

Social Justice Frames

- Shared responsibility
- Strong obligation to collective good
- Unequal starting positions require remedy
- Focus on social conditions
- Basic benefits should be assured
- Community well-being supersedes individual well-being
- Government involvement necessary

The Rockridge Institute

The Triumphant Individual



"Self-Made Man" – Irene Ritter

Independence

The Benevolent Community



Dave Kolpack / AP

Interdependence

Individual Problem

Collective Problem



Personal Solutions

Structural Solutions

Core Beliefs about Poverty

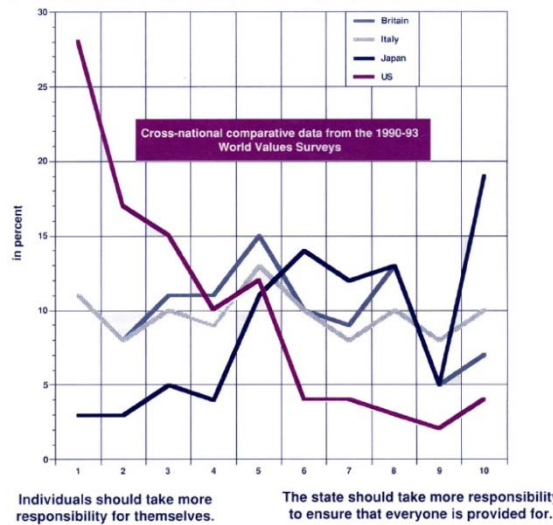


- Each individual is responsible for his or her own success or failure;
- With hard work comes reward;
- The goal is equal opportunity, not equal outcome; and
- Anyone can achieve the "American Dream".

Source: Meg Bostrom, *For an Economy that Works for All*

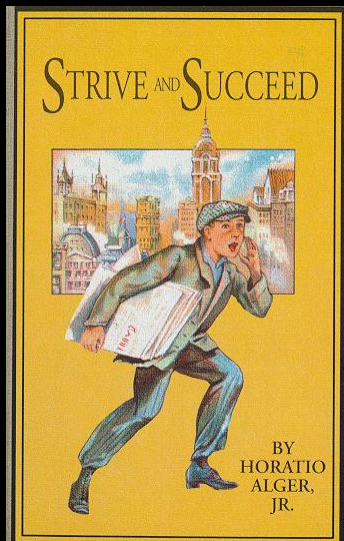
Affirmative Action, Welfare, and the Individual Backdrop: The Distinctiveness of American Values on "Individualism," ...

Question: ...How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left, 10 means you agree completely with the statement on the right, or you can choose any number in-between.



Source for pp. 24-25: World Values Survey, 1990-1993, done by the World Values Study Group. The samples consist of adults age 18 and over, in 45 countries.

Narratives We're up Against



Poverty is....

- a result of poor choices or bad morals
- not as bad as it used to be or as it is elsewhere
- a temporary state because of America's unique economic mobility
- not solvable and attempting to solve it will be expensive and will cause dependence

Dominant Frames are Constantly Reinforced

There comes a time when **compassion can cause disaster**. If you **open your home to scores of homeless folks**, you will not have a home for long. There is a **capacity problem for every noble intent**.

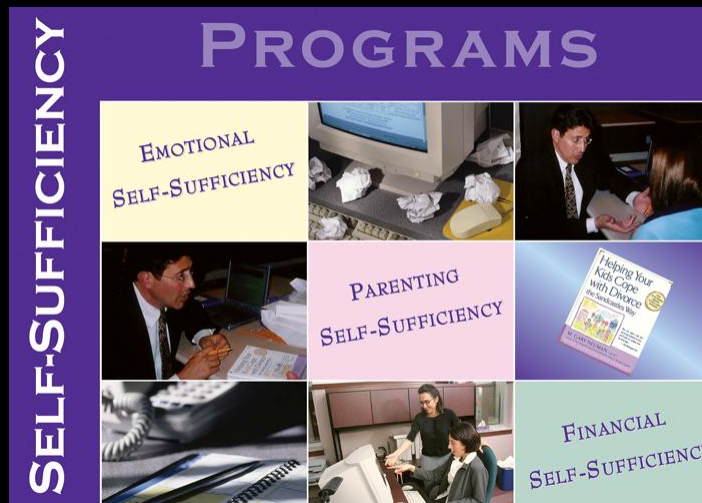
America remains **the land of opportunity, but you have to work for it**. The unemployment rate for college graduates is 5%. For high school drop-outs, it is 16%. **Personal responsibility is usually the driving force behind success**. But there are millions of **Americans who are not responsible, and the cold truth is that the rest of us cannot afford to support them**.

Every fair-minded person should support government **safety nets for people who need assistance through no fault of their own**. But guys like McDermott don't make distinctions like that. For them, the baby Jesus wants us to **"provide,"** no matter what the circumstance. But being a Christian, I know that while Jesus promoted charity at the highest level, he was not self-destructive.

The Lord helps those who help themselves. Does he not?

- Bill O'Reilly, December 9, 2010

Which story are we reinforcing?



instilling hope *creating opportunity* *generating prosperity*



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Reducing Poverty, Building Prosperity

Burst for Prosperity seeks to reduce poverty in Washington State by researching and testing innovative models informed by the community that transform systems to help people achieve financial independence. The goal is for individuals affected by poverty in Washington State to become self-sufficient and financially independent members of the community.

Burst is an initiative of
 CHILDREN'S HOME SOCIETY
of Washington



Erika Shultz / The Seattle Times

ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE INITIATIVE
Refugees find a new chance through farming
 The Refugee Farming Project has helped a group of Burundian refugees find hope through their stewardship of a hidden piece of land amid the industrial warehouses in the Kent Valley. Community leader Serges Hakizimana reflects on their experience.

★ [More about this story](#)

★ [Read about the Economic Independence initiative](#)

Burst for Prosperity seeks to **build thriving, resilient communities** in Washington State. **We believe communities rise and fall as one.** When we allow one part of the community to weaken, it weighs us all down. We strive to strengthen and transform communities by **putting in place strong public systems** (like subsidized child care and job training and education) **that help all families attain the stability and security that come with good jobs.**

Some Public Beliefs work for us . . .

- Hard work should be valued and rewarded
- Working people are struggling
- The country needs to act to impact the economy
- People tend to judge the economy based on their perceptions of *how they and people like them are doing*.
- We can all work together to find solutions

Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

The importance of framing

“If they can get you asking the wrong questions, they don't have to worry about answers.”

- Thomas Pynchon,
Gravity's Rainbow

Discussion :

How are the issues you work on “framed” in the public mind?

Are there unique Oregon “frames” that impact your work?

What about “Independence vs. Interdependence”



Speaking to Values Directs Thinking

Values Matter

- We reason first from deeply held values.
- Values help answer: “Why does this matter to me/us?”
- We need to start with **Values**, not with the policy and program details

Levels of Thinking

- **Level One** – Big ideas:
protection, justice, family well-being
equality, opportunity, prosperity
- **Level Two** – Issues:
housing, the environment children's
issues workforce development
- **Level Three** – Policies:
pay equity, bycatch SCHIP presumptive
eligibility EITC

Why does this matter?

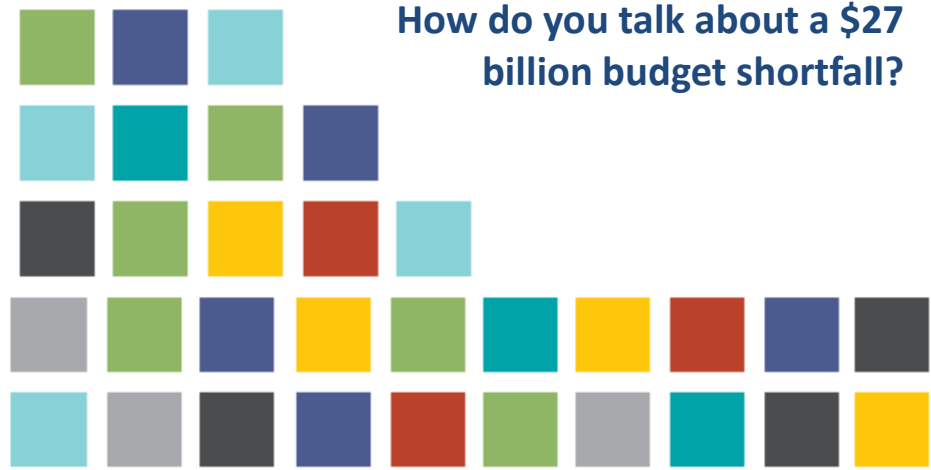
“Every child should have access to immunizations but too many families in our community are not bringing their children in to our clinics. This is why we are proposing a new agency rule requiring more clinic hours . . .”

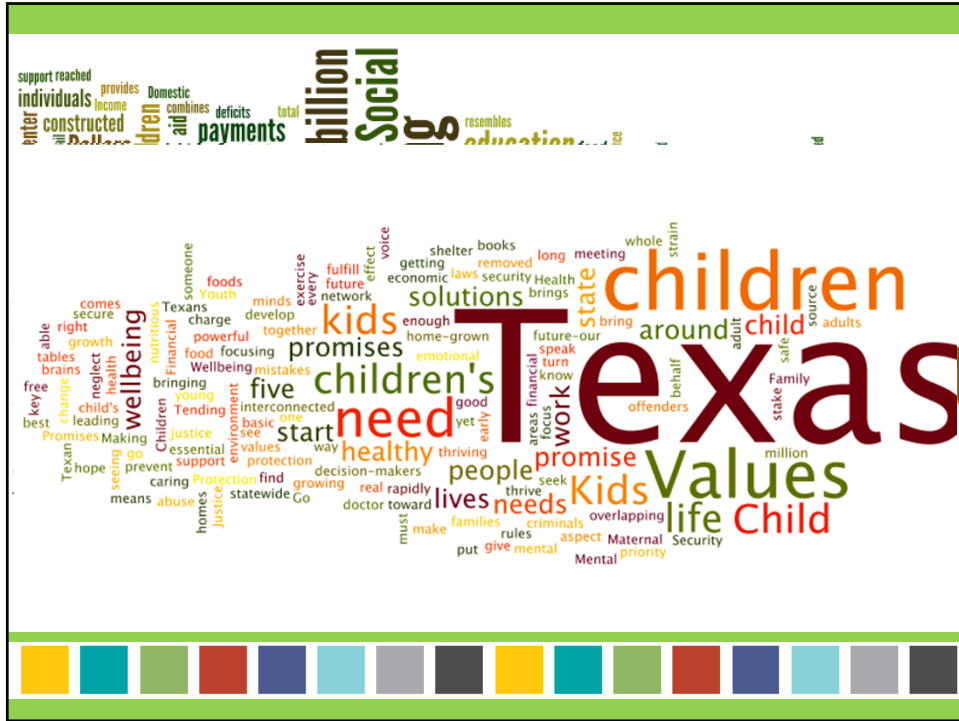
Speak to Values First

“The health of the whole community is **protected** when we ensure that our children are immunized. One of the ways we do this is through **our public health agencies** that provide free and low cost **immunizations for all children**. We need extended clinic hours to keep up with growing demands.”



How do you talk about a \$27 billion budget shortfall?





Our Vision

A Story about
Texas and what is
at stake

Values Matter

Level One: Values	<i>Fairness, Opportunity</i>	Level One: Values	<i>Protection, Responsibility</i>
Level Two: Issue Area	Civil Rights	Level Two: Issue Area	Consumer Safety
Level Three: Policy	<i>Affirmative Action</i>	Level Three: Policy	<i>Seat belt laws</i>

- What are the overarching **values that underpin** your issue areas?
- Can you trace your policy recommendations back to a level one value?



George Lakoff: *Don't Think of an Elephant!*

By raising the precise frames we are intending to counter, *even if only to refute them*, we are creating hurdles we now must jump over.

Moreover, we may be suggesting these arguments to those who had not yet considered them.

Reinforcing the Opposing Frame

"The governor is not talking about taking away people's French fries. He just wants to offer them the choice of having carrots."

Oregon's governor wants healthier state work force, but vendors say don't take the Snickers (The Oregonian, 10/6/10)

"Hookah lounges promote a social norm that smoking is cool and safe..."

Hookah smokers say doctors are too huffy (The Hillsboro Argus, 11/16/10)

Reinforcing a Counter Frame

"It seems like a naïve goal. Poverty has been around forever, and the homeless, no matter how prosperous a nation or a county might be, seem to be omnipresent. But in 2008, Fairfax County... committed itself to preventing and ending homelessness in 10 years."

*Dedicated to ending homelessness by 2018
The Washington Post, 8/18/11*

"The stereotype of homeless people as single, middle-aged adults doesn't really apply in Washington County."

*Helping Homeless Families in Washington County
OPB Radio, 5/22/08*

Reinforcing the Opposing Frame

"People assume that women in TANF are stupid, lazy, inarticulate and passive—and that couldn't be further from the truth."

*Will Pennsylvania Rip Another Hole in the Safety Net?
(The Nation, 4/13/12)*

"Adrienne Todman, executive director of the District of Columbia Housing Authority, says the stereotypes just aren't fair. "It's not welfare queens," she says. "Our residents are children, seniors, veterans, people who are working and paying rent." In fact, all public housing tenants pay at least some rent."

*Selling the Public on Public Housing
(The Atlantic, 5/23/13)*

Potential Elephant Indicators

- **Not**
 “This is not about....”
 “We are not...”
- **Don’t / Won’t**
 “We don’t intend to _____, rather....”
- **But**
 “This can be an issue of _____, but....”
 “It is expensive, but...”
- **Nevertheless, etc.**

Before & After from AFSCME Council 8

About us **About the union** **About the service** **Shared value**

BEFORE **AFTER**

The “But” rule

Keep the Public In Charge
Keep Public Employees Operating Akron's Sewer System
 Giving college scholarships to students graduating from Akron high schools is a good idea. **But** selling the city sewer system out from under the members of Local 1360 to pay for it is a bad idea.
 The members of Local 1360 have the skills and knowledge to operate the city sewer system that will take a private owner years to gain. This will be bad for Akron and bad for city workers.
 Our sewer system, along with sanitation, water

Keep the Public In Charge
Keep Akron's Sewer System Accountable
 For generations Akron has built and maintained a public sewer system that has served our community well by protecting the public's health, the environment, and our quality of life. Public ownership is necessary to provide the long range commitment that protects us from skyrocketing sewer rates.
 Giving up control of this vital public service will have a lasting impact not only on Akron's future, but all of Summit County. In private hands, corporate heads will control our sewer and water rates, just like they control oil and gas prices.
 There's no way around it — operating the sewer system at a

Discussion

- How does the “elephant” problem show up in your efforts
- The challenge of “myth/fact” efforts

tone matters



Tone is a Frame Signal


- Highly rhetorical and angry tone can unnecessarily polarize and partisan-ize
- Tends to set up a defensive or “fight back” response
- Raises suspicion of motivation
- Using pragmatic and reasonable tone can keep “listening and learning” open

“Greedy developers have their sights set on a 50 acre parcel of land in the middle of Westwood. Unless government steps in, all we’ll get there is more expensive housing and big box stores that exclude the poor and powerless in our community.”

“Our communities are strongest when economic development works for everyone. We need to use our public systems and structures to ensure that new development in Westwood benefits the entire community. It is time for an inclusive planning process to . . .”

telling stories with numbers





Numbers don't tell stories by themselves

"Social Math" can make numbers more vivid and understandable

The Numbing Use of Numbers

According to the [TPEP] fact sheet, 5,246 adults in Crook County regularly smoke cigarettes in one year. Regarding serious illness caused by tobacco use, 1,270 people suffer in the county per year. An average of 65 people dies from tobacco-use each year, and \$10 million is spent on medical care for tobacco-related deaths. In 2009, 27 percent of adults were smokers, compared to 19 percent statewide and 15 percent of males used smokeless tobacco, compared to 6 percent statewide. There were 13 percent of eighth graders that used cigarettes in Crook County, compared to nine percent statewide, and 22 percent of 11th graders, compared to 17 percent statewide. 12 percent of 8th grade males used smokeless tobacco in Crook County, and 19 percent of 11th grade males.

Local cigarette use exceeding state average , *Central Oregonian*, 8/26/10

Social Math

Making large numbers comprehensible and compelling by placing them in a **social context** that provides **meaning**.

- Pioneered by the Advocacy Institute and Berkeley Media Studies Group

Constructing Social Math

Convert large numbers into images to which people can relate.

- Break down numbers by time
- Break down numbers by place
- Provide comparisons with familiar things
- Provide ironic comparisons
- Personalize numbers

"Framing with Numbers"

Social math can help set a new frame by :

- (1) connecting two or more things together;
- (2) comparing the size of things; or
- (3) functioning as a metaphor.

- The FrameWorks Institute

Connect to the Familiar

One less coal plant is like cutting 40 percent of Washington's vehicle emissions.

That amounts to all the cars and trucks in Seattle, Tacoma, and Spokane *plus* the 25 next largest cities in the state, *combined*.

37g of Fat



+



+



=

Social Math Results

The story was an immediate sensation, featured on CBS, NBC, ABC, CNN, the front pages of USA Today, the Los Angeles Times, and The Washington Post's Style section.

Headlines: "Popcorn Gets an 'R' Rating," "Lights, Action, Cholesterol!" "Theater Popcorn is Double Feature of Fat."

Moviegoers were repulsed. Sales plunged.

Soon after, most of the nation's biggest theater chains — including United Artists, AMC, and Loews-announced that they would stop using coconut oil

- From "Made to Stick"

Connect “this to that” for Context

In San Francisco, there is one police officer for every 18 young people and only one school counselor for every 500 kids.

For the cost of incarcerating one prisoner for one year, California could send two students to the University of California, three students to a California state university or seven students to a community college.

Connect to the Familiar

Community residents near a gasoline refinery noted that the plant emits 6 tons of pollutants per day – that’s 25 balloons full of toxic pollution for each school child in the town.

Social Math

“Volunteers spent more than 2,376 hours on the phone [doing GOTV calls]. That’s like starting a conversation with a voter on Halloween, and not hanging up until Valentines day.”



Scale and Size

“If the fishing industry were a country, it would rank with the Netherlands as the world’s 18th-largest oil consumer, a team of fisheries scientists is reporting. Boats often carry so much fuel ‘they leave the dock lower in the water than when they return with a hold full of fish,’ Dr. Tyedmers said.

“Fishing Industry’s Fuel Efficiency Gets Worse as Ocean Stocks Get Thinner,” Cornelia Dean, The New York Times, December 20, 2005

Social Math Examples

- College students drink enough alcohol to fill 3500 Olympic-sized swimming pools per year.
- As many students will eventually die of alcohol-related causes as will get their masters and doctoral degrees.

Harper's Index *Font of Social Math*

Number of candy-bar wrappers needed to win a basketball as part of Cadbury's new anti-obesity campaign: **90**

Number of hours an 85-pound child would need to play basketball in order to burn off the calories in that many candy bars: **100**

- Harper's Index, August 2003

Some Hints

- Avoid additional “nifty” statistics; be sure to convert existing data into readily identifiable, easily intelligible equivalents.
- Equivalents should be intuitive and readily digestible; avoid complexity.
- Watch for logical “gaps” in the associations you make. Be sure to close each or your audience will fall in!
- Change to commonly-experienced “units” rather than comparing with less widely-familiar things .
- Thinking both “visual” and “visceral” can be helpful.

A Year of Soda: 44.7 Gallons

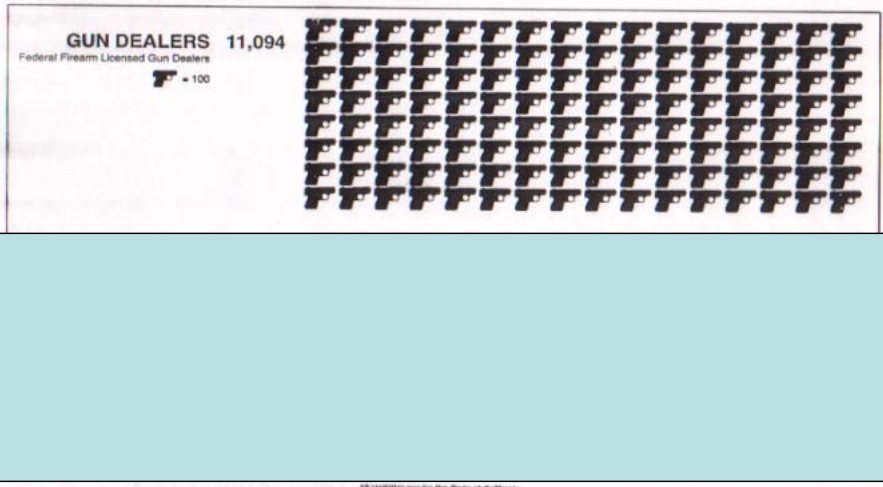
Here's what carbonated soft drink consumption — sugared and diet sodas — looked like in 2010. The average American chugged the equivalent of 48 two-liter bottles and 206 12-ounce cans of soft drinks (one of many possible container combinations that add up to about 44.7 gallons):



**Bad Food? Tax It, and
Subsidize Vegetables**

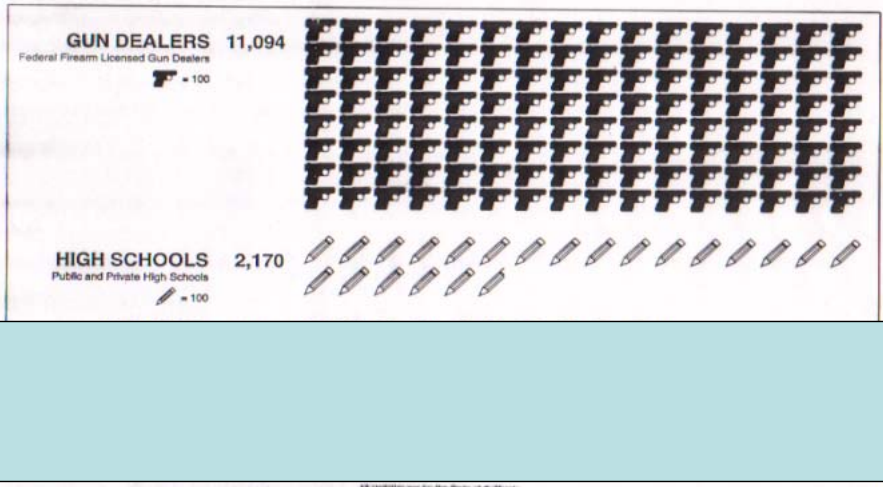
~ M. Bittman
July 23, 2011
New York Times

State of California Gun Dealer Comparisons



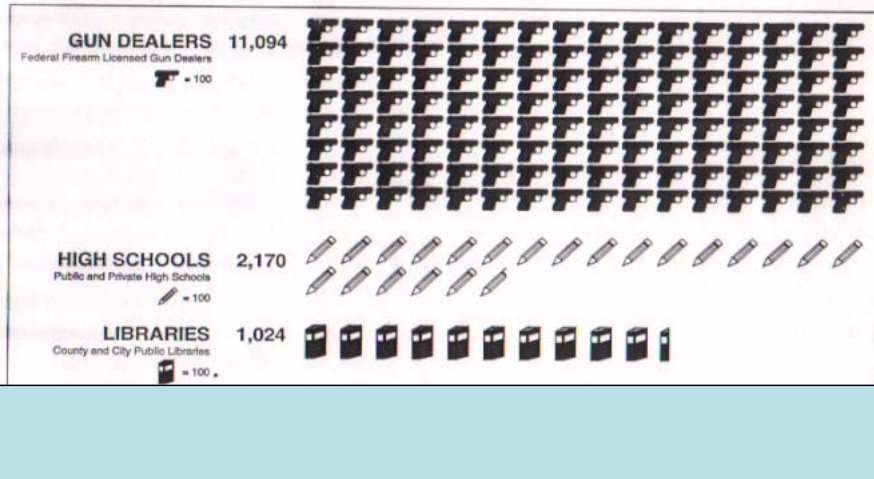
Gun Dealers - Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, 1999; High Schools - Department of Education, Educational Demographics Unit, 1994; Libraries - California State Library, Library Services Bureau, 1994; McDonald's - McDonald's Corporate Headquarters, 1996.

State of California Gun Dealer Comparisons



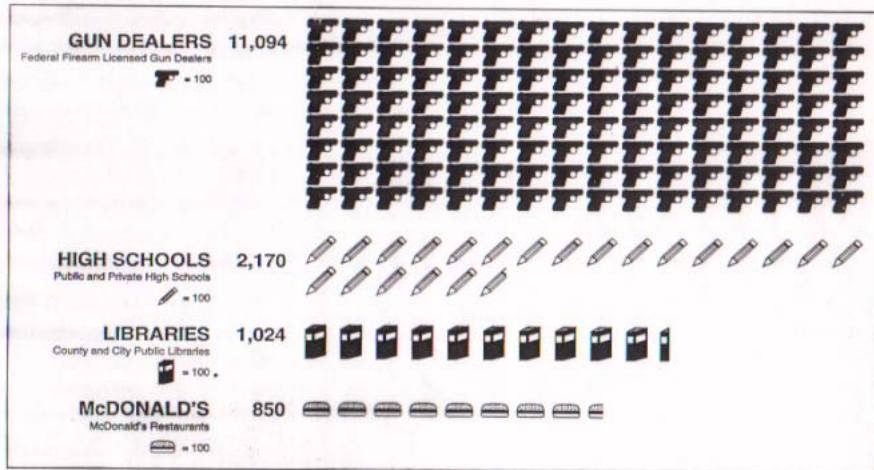
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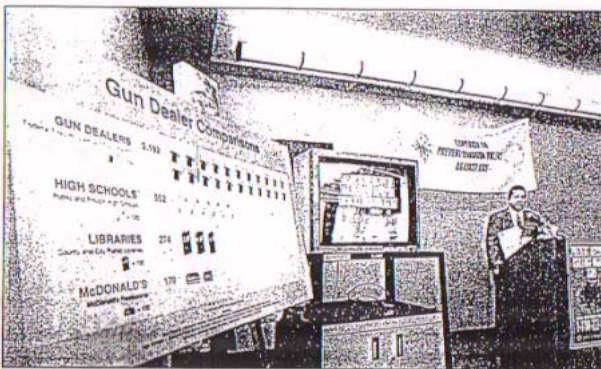
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 Gun Dealers - Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, 1999; High Schools - Department of Education, Educational Demographics Unit, 1994;
 Libraries - California State Library, Library Services Bureau, 1994; McDONALD'S - McDonald's Corporate Headquarters, 1998.

Poll Indicates Support for More Gun Control

■ Violence: Health foundation survey shows backing for ban on the sale and use of cheap handguns.

By PAUL H. JOHNSON
TIMES STAFF WRITER

A Los Angeles-based health care foundation that advocates treating gun violence as a public health crisis released a survey Wednesday showing strong support in Los Angeles and Orange counties for stricter gun control regulations—including a ban on the sale and manufacture of so-called Saturday night specials. In a telephone survey of 1,000 registered voters, the California Wellness Foundation found that 65% of Los Angeles County residents and 58% of Orange County residents support a ban on the sale and use of the small cheap handguns. Seventy-one percent in



California Wellness Foundation compares the number of licensed gun dealers to other things.

Frame Deconstruction Exercise

“... A talent for speaking differently, rather than for arguing well, is the chief instrument of cultural change ...”

- Richard Rorty