

The Cost of Conviction: How Sacred Value Frames Lead Us Astray

When choosing, we have a choice: Do we consider the best outcomes or prioritize our deepest values about what action to take? Do we frame issues consequentially or in terms of sacred values? The two frames have different formal justifications, but my focus will be on their different psychological implications. Simplicity and communicative ease often lead us to sacred value frames when consequentialist frames would make big problems more tractable. I will report studies showing that, relative to consequentialist frames, sacred value frames reduce people's willingness to compromise, make them more vulnerable to outrage, and increase their willingness to act. Sacred value frames, I argue, are an important contributor to extremism and thus polarization.