

★ INTRODUCTION ★

Reframing Is Social Change

We think with our brains. We have no choice. It may seem that certain politicians think with other parts of their anatomy. But they too think with their brains.

Why does this matter for politics? Because all thought is physical. Thought is carried out by neural circuits in the brain. We can only understand what our brains allow us to understand.

The deepest of those neural structures are relatively fixed. They don't change readily or easily. And we are mostly unconscious of their activity and impact.

In fact, about 98 percent of what our brains are doing is below the level of consciousness. As a result, we may not know all, or even most, of what in our brains determines our deepest moral, social, and political beliefs. And yet we act on the basis of those largely unconscious beliefs.

My field—cognitive science—has found ways to study unconscious, as well as conscious, modes of thought. As a cognitive scientist, my job is to help make the unconscious conscious, to find out and let the world know what is determining our social and political behavior. I believe that such knowledge can lead to positive social and political change. Why? Because what goes on in people's brains matters.

Do we have to go to the neural level to understand our politics? In some cases, yes. Diving that deep will be important, and we will discuss the brain when necessary. But, on the whole, the most important brain structures for our politics can be studied from the perspective of the mind. They are called “frames.”

Frames

Frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world. As a result,