

Persuasion In Everyday Life



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Key Ideas

Frames

A frame is a mental structure that shapes how we think about and perceive the world. A frame determines what we perceive (what is INSIDE the frame) and what we ignore (what is OUTSIDE the frame). Framing is related to ideas such as agenda setting, spin, paradigms, and worldview. Some frames we construct for ourselves in an attempt to make sense of the world while others are manufactured by professional persuaders.

Contrast and Compare

Contrast is a specific kind of frame. The idea that you should "compare to this" or "contrast with that" is an attempt to control your frame.

Context

Context is the setting for an object or idea – it is what is most closely connected. A sentence has paragraphs and pages as context. To take a phrase or sentence out of a book is to take it out of context. The act of taking out of context can change meaning.

Confirmation Basis

We pay more attention to ideas that fit our existing beliefs than to those that challenge them. We see and believe what we want. Instead of seeing things as *they* are we see things as *we* are. In short, we have a bias that helps confirm our existing beliefs.

Social Influence

Social influence recognizes that humans are strongly influenced by the behavior of others. We tend to feel more comfortable in like-thinking groups.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is one type of social influence. To reciprocate means to return a favor. If someone gives us something we want to reciprocate – give them something in return. To give can be an act of generosity...or it can be an act of persuasion.

Placebo Effect

Our belief in something can have a stronger influence than the thing itself – the placebo effect. A doctor who writes a prescription for a pill that has no drug (a "sugar pill") will find that this non-drug will often lead to an improvement or cure the patient's illness. The placebo effect works in areas other than medicine. Belief can grant to something a power beyond what it has to non-believers.

A nocebo is a negative effect generated by belief. A person who believes himself allergic to something might actually feel physical effects from the allergy solely from a belief that the substance is present.

Overview

Brain Frames

What do we mean by “framing”? Think of a picture frame – it’s a boundary that focuses attention on what is INSIDE the frame. It says “this is what you look at,” and “this is what you ignore.” When effective, what is outside the frame becomes nearly invisible.

We make sense of the world by applying mental frames. Some of our “brain frames” are shaped by our personality, culture, or history. But often, others seek to control the frames we use.

For example, a courtroom trial in which opposing sides attempt to shape the frame the jury uses in its deliberations. The attorney who can best shape the frame used by the jurors is most likely to win the case.

In political campaigns, negative ads often attempt to frame the opposition as a lying scoundrel interested only in personal gain or special interests. The effectiveness of such ads does not come not from the truth of the charges leveled (they are often carefully constructed half truths or facts taken out of context) but from their ability to shape the frame voters use.

The most common merchandising tactic is a “sale.” Sales are so common we can easily forget they are a persuasion tactic. A sale is a framing device that focuses shopper attention on how much money they are supposedly “saving” instead of on how much they are spending. A simple sign announcing “save 20%” focuses attention on saving instead of spending. Note: A rule of thumb in retailing holds that 15% off is the least you can reduce a price to increase sales. People won’t flock in for a “5% off sale.”

Words or phrases often serve as frame shapers. Many phrases that have been perceived as negative have been changed to create a more positive connotation. The video provides these changes as examples:

“throw out the garbage” to “waste management”
a “used car” to one that is “pre-owned”
“townhouse” to “townhome”

Political correctness as framing

The phrase “politically correct” (or P.C.) is often used to describe language carefully chosen so as not to offend particular groups. This phrase signals frame shaping at work. Groups try to control how they are seen by the public. To them, it is about identity. For example, using words like “weird” or “crazy” places a defect “in frame” and leaves the person “out of the frame.”

The phrase “politically correct” is itself an attempt to frame the process as a point of etiquette rather than as a struggle to control perception.

Brain Frames in advertising

Advertisers, marketers and politicians use words and images designed to control frames. A label on a package of ground beef announces (85%) lean. The label does supply useful information, but it also draws a frame in order to shape opinion. Using “percent **lean**” provides a “healthy frame” compared to the same label reading “15% **fat**.” Consumers “think lean” instead of “thinking fat.” A frame highlights what is IN the frame (lean, in this case) and ignores what is OUTSIDE (fat, in this case).

Brain Frames used by professional groups

Professional groups attempt to control the words that frame how they are seen by the public. For example:

Insurance companies sell “home owners” insurance not “house owners” insurance. A home is a universal desire, a house merely a building.

Dentists don’t “pull” teeth, they perform “extractions.” “False” teeth long ago became “dentures.” Dangerous sounding “x-rays” gave way to more friendly “pictures.” A filling is a restoration and the waiting room is a reception area.

Framing in fashion

Fashion is framing. We choose clothing and hair styles in order to frame our best assets and hide or minimize others. Clothing schemes to dress for success or to “flatter your figure” are exercises in framing.

Brain frames create the celebrity

Celebrities are created by skilled publicists who control the frame through which they are seen by the public. The celebrity is what is “inside the frame,” the real person typically remains outside the frame.

Brain frames in the media

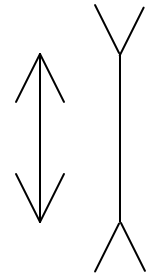
Photographs, movies, and videos can be powerful frame shapers and are often the media of choice for propaganda campaigns. What we can see with our own eyes is judged as important in decision making. But what the photographer or film director leaves “outside the frame” (what is unseen) is often just as important. A picture persuades precisely because it is a carefully controlled frame. A picture of smokestacks can leave one angry at factory owners who darken the skies...but the benefits that people gain from the goods that factory produces remain outside the frame.

Scenes of a beautiful development with happy people leaves outside the frame what was destroyed or displaced to create the development. To take a picture is to create a frame, to engage in persuasion.

Setting, Contrast, Context

Defining context

Many view “optical illusions” as clever tricks that fool our normally objective judgment about what we see – they are exceptions to the rule. Instead, consider optical illusions windows into the process of perception and decision making. The figures at right illustrate that to judge the length of the lines we do not merely “compare the two lines.” We are influenced by what surrounds the lines, by the context. We make decisions based on the context; so a change in context can alter our judgment.



A common persuasion technique is to present true facts but change their setting – their context. Any politician can be made to look bad by taking statements out of context. Any movie can be made to sound great by taking a sentence from a review “out of context.”

Context influences purchasing

A shopper compares several paintings at an art fair, and buys one. But she takes the picture home and finds it disappointing. Weeks later she wonders why she liked it so much.

Purchases from paintings to toasters to houses suffer the same fate. Psychologists call it “buyer’s remorse.” It wasn’t the product that changed; it was the context. To bring a purchase home is to take it out of the setting in which you judged it, to take it out of context; and that influences your opinion.

Compare and contrast creates context

Comparing and contrasting are ways of placing items into a context. A persuader who can shape or define the items being compared or contrasted has the power to control the context.

When you buy a car or make any purchase requiring negotiating, a good salesperson will not give you the best price first; much to your annoyance.

He makes a first offer. Maybe you’ll just say yes and he makes a great sale; because his first offer is a high price. He knows that, like most savvy shoppers, you will judge the first price as “too high.”

So the salesperson goes “back to the boss” to “see what I can do.” He returns, and often with a dramatic flair, shows you a number – a lower price.

Why didn’t he do that right away? Why play games? The salesperson is controlling the context. You now compare that number with the first offer. So now it SEEMS lower because you compare it with the higher number.

The above example uses the experience of negotiating a price for a car to illustrate that the very act of comparing values creates a context that influences our judgment. The salesperson controls the setting by forcing a comparison with an initial high price. The goal is to sell the car at the price the salesperson needs while leading the customer to believe the price is a good deal forged through hard-nosed bargaining.

The next example from the video shows an experiment in which job applicants altered judgments about their own abilities when they compared themselves to other applicants. The study suggests that even our self-image depends on the context of our lives.

Male job applicants were asked to take a battery of tests along with a self-evaluation questionnaire. The applicants were told the questionnaire had nothing to do with the chance of being hired but honest answers were needed to assure a fair response.

As the applicants worked on the tests, an actor arrived. The applicants assumed the actor was a rival candidate for the job. Half the applicants saw “Mr. Success” – a tall, professional guy in a business suit who seemed to have a lot of experience. The other half of the applicants saw “Mr. Underachiever” – a man dressed in a t-shirt and jeans. No conversation occurred between the applicants and the actors.

The self-evaluation questionnaires showed a sudden drop in self-esteem with the arrival of Mr. Success and a psychological lift from Mr. Underachiever.

After Mr. Underachiever's arrival, applicants felt more handsome, confident, and optimistic about themselves. We form judgments and opinions based on the context, on what surrounds the object, person, or event.

Mind Filters (The Confirmation Bias)

What's the fastest way to separate a mix of salt and corn? Use a filter that allows only the salt to pass through.

Now imagine a "mind filter" in your brain that allows information that confirms your existing beliefs and keeps out what conflicts. We all have one.

If you believe people are generally selfish you will find plenty of experiences to confirm that belief. You will view generous behavior as exceptions. If you believe the world discriminates against you, you will find discrimination at every turn.

Beliefs as confirmation bias

A confirmation bias gives greater weight to existing beliefs and downplays ideas that conflict. Since we define ourselves by our beliefs, ideas that challenge these beliefs are personally threatening. Like any organism, we construct defenses against perceived threats. A confirmation bias is one such defense.

Listen to a shopping experience as sifted through two different mind filters: *First from a woman shopper*: "I was at this electronics store here. Well, I'll never shop there again. I couldn't get any help. The sales people are all guys. They don't think a woman would buy electronic gear, so they just ignore me."

Next from a male shopper: I was at this electronics store here. I'm not sure I'll shop there again. I couldn't get any help. They ignored me. I guess they keep prices low by not hiring many sales people."

Note in the above examples that both shoppers were ignored by sales personnel at the electronics store. But each interpreted the situation in terms of their existing beliefs. The woman saw yet another example of gender discrimination in a man's world of electronics. The man saw the lack of help as a discount store cutting expenses in order to cut prices.

An audience watching a political debate is most likely to interpret the results according to the beliefs they held before the debate. Both will see their candidate as the "clear winner."

Show a close call in slow motion from a football or basketball game to fans and most will clearly see it in favor of their team. And each believes "I call it like I see it."

We tend to think that we operate on the principle that "I'll believe it when I see it." In reality, we often act on the principle that "I see it when I believe it." In other words, we often see things the way WE are instead of the way THEY are.

When this confirmation filter is at its strongest, beliefs become more like a blinder than a telescope.

True believers block out events and data that challenge their convictions. Even cults huddled to greet the end of the world next Tuesday survive the fact that the world is still going strong on Wednesday morning.

A scientist will study global warming looking for causes and effects. A global warming “true believer” will see every heat wave, tornado, and tropical storm as confirmation of impending doom.

Often we shape our personal mind filter by listening to talk radio where callers agree with us, reading magazines and websites that support our beliefs, and watching only news outlets friendly to our beliefs. We seek voices that confirm our beliefs while avoiding those that challenge them.

Mind filters and purchasing

You’ve heard someone say about an idea , “Oh, no. I don’t BUY that!” To hold a belief is like making a purchase.

And once purchased, we treat that belief like a prized possession. So we treat anyone trying to change that belief as a threat – a thief.

Mind filters and self image

One part of our mental filter is often “I’m better than average.” Surveys reveal most people consider themselves a better than average driver.

A survey of high school students found that 70% considered themselves “above average” in leadership ability.

Countless would-be inventors, writers, or musicians believe they work at a near genius level and view repeated rejection as a persecution by a public not able to appreciate true talent. For them, rejection is not a lesson, it is a strengthening of their exalted belief.

We demand little of stories that support our beliefs, but set the bar high for what seems to challenge them. Weigh yourself and the scale says you gained three pounds. What do you do? You step off the scale and try it again. That can’t be right.

But weigh yourself and the scale reveals you lost three pounds. You accept the good news right away and head off to raid the fridge.

When future doctors were asked about influence by gifts from pharmaceutical companies, they said 84% of their colleagues were influenced by the gifts. But only 16% predicted that they would be influenced.

We are not good at seeing our own filters. We rarely catch ourselves in the act of self-deception. It’s easy to have the courage of our convictions. What’s difficult is to find the courage to question them.

Social Influence

The following experiment presented in the video is based on those tested by Stanley Milgram in the 1960s.

The Man-on-Sidewalk Experiment

A man stops on a busy sidewalk and gazes skyward. There's nothing "up there." His action is part of an experiment about how the behavior of others influences us. Most pass him by. Only about 4% join him in looking up.

Now the experiment is repeated.....with one change. Now five people look up. This time 18% of passers-by stop to join them.

When the starter group is increased to fifteen, 40% of passers-by join them gazing skyward. The behavior of others influences what we do. If a lot of other people are doing it, it must be OK. Monkey see, monkey do.

Social Influence and Persuasion

You're persuaded by this "social influence" everyday. Salespersons often say that people "just like you" have already made the purchase, joined the club, or accepted the offer. For example, one is influenced by:

- A list showing which movies pulled in the biggest box office over the weekend serves as advertising. It's as good as seeing fifteen people staring up at the sky.
- A fund raiser might show you a list of neighbors who already contributed, knowing it will increase the chances you will also contribute. The longer the list, the more likely you will join them.
- The tip jar at the coffee stand fills up faster if there is money already in it. It invites you to "join others" in leaving tips. And seeing dollar signs others are tipping at least a dollar.
- TV comedies feature a soundtrack of "canned" laughter so viewers can laugh along with the crowd. Studies show people rate a show funnier when accompanied by the sound of others laughing.

The last example is quite interesting. Contrary to common belief, laughter is not typically the result of a joke or funny story. Instead, think of laughter as a signal about group participation. One researcher (Robert Provine, University of Maryland, Baltimore County) recorded over a thousand examples of public laughter and found that people in groups tend to laugh unconsciously, to feel included, to set a tone of playfulness. We laugh more in groups than when alone. Laughter is a form of social influence.

Television shopping networks and fund raising telethons make sure viewers know people are buying. Think of it as a monetary laugh track. But people do not blindly follow the leader. Social influence is strongest in the face of uncertainty.

Another experiment discussed in the video is detailed in Latane and Darley, 1968 "Group Inhibition of Bystander Intervention in Emergencies" in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 10, 215-221.

Experimenters studied how people would react to smoke coming from a hallway door. Those who walked the hallway alone reported the smoke about three-fourths of the time.

But when people in groups of three passed the door, the smoke was reported only 38% of the time. If those other people aren't concerned, why should I be? If the situation is uncertain, social influence can lead to doing nothing, even when action is clearly demanded.

Reciprocity as Social Influence

One type of social influence is **reciprocity**; meaning if someone gives us something we want to reciprocate – give them something in return.

The video illustrates an experiment in which volunteers "judge" artwork. In this experiment volunteers believe they are judging artwork. People work in pairs – one subject and one person who is secretly "in on" the study. During the experiment she leaves to get a soft drink. Half the time she brings a drink only for herself. Half the time she brings a soft drink for the volunteer. After the task is complete she asks the volunteer to buy a raffle ticket for her school.

The result? Twice as many volunteers who received the soft drink buy a raffle ticket than those who were not given a drink. We feel a need to return favors – even small ones.

Other examples include:

- Fund raising appeals by mail produce up to twice as much money if they give a free gift – return address stickers, for example.
- Free brake or muffler inspections work this way as do free samples at grocery stores.
- Some restaurants give an after dinner mint with the bill. The free gift leads some diners to reciprocate – to leave a larger tip.

Placebo And Expectancy

Our belief in something can have a stronger influence than the thing itself – the placebo effect. (*placebo is pronounced pla-see-bow.*)

When drugs are tested they are compared against a placebo – a pill that contains no medicine. Surprisingly, between 30 and 50% of study participants who get the placebo show the same improvements as those being treated with the real medicine.

Neuroscientists working with advanced brain imaging find that people promised a painkilling drug but given water instead often report relief. The expectation of the pain killer prompted the brain to start releasing natural pain killing chemicals.

One popular over-the-counter pill for stomach distress takes at least thirty minutes to hit the blood stream. But many users report relief within twelve minutes. And the relief is not “just in their heads,” it can be measured by changes in body chemistry.

If you read the lengthy drug notices with medicines you will often find test results that compare the drug to a placebo. For example, an asthma control drug might point to how many people experienced a variety of side effects – “14% experienced ‘respiratory infection’ from the placebo.”

Even more amazing are experiments in which some people are operated on and others receive a fake surgery. They find that the “fake” operations often produce lasting positive effects even in knee surgery and brain operations.

The symbolism behind how medicine is delivered influences its power. A placebo injection is more powerful than a pill. A large pill is more effective than a small pill, but a very small pill is better than a regular-sized pill.

Even the color of a pill can produce different effects depending on the subject's expectancy. For example red and orange pills are more likely to stimulate while blue and green tend to sedate. People report this is true even if the pills are placebos.

The placebo effect works outside of medicine as well. In one experiment, a team of psychologists gave a test to students. Teachers were told that the test would identify students most likely to spurt ahead in their learning in the rest of the school year.

But the test was a fake. The students the test labeled as poised for rapid improvement were randomly selected. At the end of the year, the randomly selected students did in fact show the most improvement. Teachers believed these students would improve, and that belief helped foster the improvement.

A placebo produces a healing or positive effect. When the effect is negative we use the less familiar term *nocebo*. We sense a pain because we expect one or believe we have used something that can produce pain. A simple example is in taste.

People served blue mashed potatoes might gag at the thought of eating them. Expectations interfere

with taste. Experiments show many people become physically ill by perfectly good food of an unexpected color.

Rub a green leaf that looks like poison ivy on 100 people's skin. If those people **believed** it really was poison ivy, many would report itchy skin and some would develop a real and visible rash. Psychologists call it "expectancy theory."

Another example that is not discussed in the video is that many people fear the effects of MSG. Today, many Chinese restaurants have menu notes saying "no MSG used." For years people reported headaches after eating in Chinese restaurants. Today, we realize MSG is present in many foods and is about as safe as vinegar and salt. But the connection of MSG, Chinese restaurants, and headaches caused thousands to report suffering from the "Chinese restaurant syndrome". As belief in the so-called disease decreased, so did reports of its occurrence.

A few years ago McDonald's announced they were seeking a cooking oil for fries that would eliminate trans fatty acids. Two days after the announcement, their customer service line was flush with calls complaining about the fry's bad taste.

The problem was, they weren't using the new oil. The announcement of a change led some consumers to actually taste a difference.

Something similar happened to Coca-Cola back in 1985. They made a small change in taste and conducted blind taste tests that showed customers preferred this "new Coke."

But when the New Coke was rolled out, consumers complained about the taste and demanded the old taste back. Coca-Cola was unable to introduce an improved version in spite of tests showing customers preferred the new taste. The original Coke was labeled "Coca-Cola Classic." The new taste violated consumer expectations.

The Coca-Cola example provided in the video also illustrates the power of a label and expectations. In blind taste tests, people preferred the taste of the new recipe. But once the the label was applied, the new taste was seen as an unwelcome change. It is quite possible that Coca-Cola was unable to introduce an improved product because it violated consumer expectations.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is persuasion?
2. How do you use persuasion in your everyday life?
3. The video showed us how ground beef is advertised as 85% lean rather than 15% fat creating a “healthy frame”. Can you think of other ways brain frames are used in advertising?
4. How does context affect decision making?
5. How do our mind filters affect our decision making?
6. How is laughter a form of social influence?

Quiz

1. What shapes brain frames?
2. How is a sale a framing device?
3. How are words used as frame shapers? Provide an example.
4. Why did the job applicant's self evaluation fall when Mr. Success entered the room?
5. A confirmation bias gives _____ weight to existing beliefs and _____ ideas that conflict.
6. What is a placebo?
7. What is a nocebo?

Classroom Activity 1

How a Label Can Change What We See

Materials: Sheet of paper with drawings of a "cat" an "owl" and a "qox." Cut into three sheets as indicated.

1. Divide the class into three groups. Each group should have eight or more members for the experiment to work effectively. Groups of five may or may not be enough to demonstrate the effect of labeling on perception.

Members within each group should be arranged in a straight line or some clear sequential order. Groups should be far enough apart so they cannot see the drawing either of the other groups is passing.

2. Give one of the three cards containing the owl/cat drawing to the first person in each group. No other person should see the cards. Have the first person look at the drawing for about fifteen seconds. Then take the cards away and have each duplicate the drawing and the word beneath it on a piece of paper. When all are finished pass the copied drawing to the second person in each group who should look at it for about fifteen seconds. Take the copied drawing away from each of the group members and have them reproduce the drawing and word from memory. Repeat this procedure until each person has had a chance to draw the figure.

Take care that each person sees only the drawing and word of the preceding person.

3. Compare the final drawings of each group to the original printed drawing. What should be obvious is that as the drawing progressed, it became increasingly like the label "cat" or "owl" and less like the original drawing. The group with the drawing labeled "qox" should have the drawing which most closely matches the original.

Class Discussion

Discuss how and why the pictures changed. How would the pictures have fared had the groups been much larger?

Can mass media apply labels that influence how we perceive people, events and things?

Classroom Activity 2

Group Pressure Experiment

The following experiment illustrates the effect of group pressure on individual judgment.

Materials: Five sheets with lines. Each consisting of a single line and three additional lines labeled A-B-C.

Background

We prefer to believe we do not "go along with the crowd." We view ourselves as free from the influence of mass psychology and group pressure. The following experiment demonstrates the power of crowd pressure in making even simple judgments. The "group pressure experiment" is based on a classic experiment conducted by Dr. Solomon E. Asch. The details and results of his experiment can be found in the November 1955 issue of *Scientific American*. The classroom exercise here is not a scientific experiment, but serves to illustrate the feeling and effects of crowd judgment.

The experiment attempts to demonstrate that people will sometimes literally "take leave of their senses" and join the crowd. In short, if a group says that A is longer than B but the subject sees B as longer, he will often ignore the evidence and go with the group and agree that A is longer.

Activity

Select four respected members of the class who will secretly be "in on" the experiment. Select and brief these students at least a day before the experiment, but make them appear to be random volunteers as the experiment begins. The class will believe that these four are the "subjects" of the experiment. In reality, these four are "in on the experiment" and the rest of the class is the "subject."

The teacher informs the class and subjects that they will be comparing lengths of lines to test a theory of visual perception of horizontal versus vertical line segments. The fact that some lines are horizontal and others vertical actually has nothing to do with the experiment.

The experiment proceeds as follows. Two cards at a time are held up for all to see. One contains a single line. The second card contains three lines labeled A, B, C. Each of the four volunteers announces out loud which of the lines he or she thinks is the same length as the single line. The class acts as a kind of fifth subject and each silently writes down his or her own choice – A, B, or C.

Warn the class to be absolutely quiet during the choosing—no groans or audible signs of agreement and disagreement. The volunteers and the class are asked to pick which line is the same length from five different sets of cards.

The catch: The four student volunteers have been instructed to select the wrong line on cards number three and five. On three they all select line A and on five they all select line C. In all cases all four volunteers agree on the same answer—this is the group pressure that is the basis for the experiment. They should be coached to sometimes sound confident and other times hesitant but should not overact. All four volunteers answer as follows: 1. (b), 2 (c), 3 (a), 4 (a), 5 (c). The first "volunteer" should have the proper answers memorized (or written down discreetly) so the others have only to follow the lead of the first volunteer.

After the final line choice conduct a survey of student answers or have the answers collected and tabulated by a volunteer. Compare how many incorrect answers there were on each of the five test questions. If lines three and five had significantly higher number of incorrect answers this should serve to demonstrate that group pressure is a very real force influencing personal judgment.

Discussion

Discuss the results of the experiment. Ask those who "went against the crowd" and picked correct answers if their task was made more difficult by the group pressure. Point out that selecting lines is a relatively easy task compared to other decisions subject to group pressure. Find examples of group pressure in advertising, politics, school, and society in general. How are words used to apply similar pressure?

In Asch's original experiments threefourths of the participants conformed to the wrong line lengths at least once. Overall, about a third of the judgments of the subjects were incorrect due to group pressure. This compared to an incorrect rate of only one percent from a control group without group pressure. Do not expect your results to duplicate those of the original experiment.

Test

Match each example with the persuasion tactic (or decision shaper) it most closely illustrates.

- A. Framing (except for framing by comparing)
- B. Compare or contrast
- C. Social Influence (except for reciprocity)
- D. Reciprocity
- E. Setting: Changing the context or taking out of context
- F. Confirmation Bias
- G. Placebo or nocebo effect

1. _____ "One day only! Save up to 40%!"
2. _____ Changing a corporate name from "Global Oil" to "Global Energy Management."
3. _____ A homeowner says "Thank goodness. We're so lucky," after hearing that his house burned to the ground while unoccupied while they were on vacation.
4. _____ A sidewalk sale.
5. _____ You receive mail requesting you fill out a "customer information survey." Inside the envelope is a crisp new one dollar bill.
6. _____ Bright neon colors are the hottest trend in men's belts this season.
7. _____ After a televised debate between political candidates, a poll shows 43% feel candidate A "won" while 44% believe candidate B won.
8. _____ A TV ad for a Broadway musical shows comments from people leaving the theater. They all report the show was heartwarming, fantastic, and outrageously funny.
9. _____ You hear your bank might be in financial trouble. As you drive by you see a line of people outside the bank. You decide you should go to the bank and withdraw your savings "just in case." A long line forms and the bank runs out of money.
10. _____ You believe Americans and Canadians are quite similar and see many examples of that in your daily life. Your friend believes Americans and Canadian are very different and he too finds many examples of that in daily life.
11. _____ I can't believe Melissa is a librarian. She sure doesn't look like one.
12. _____ If you look at the statistic you will see that a lot of people who live along Pine Creek suffer from various allergies. Evidently, something living in that water causes a lot of problems.
13. _____ Ground beef – 85% lean.

14._____Two detectives interview a suspect in the hopes of getting a confession. To do so they play “good cop/bad cop.”

15._____A lawyer’s client is found guilty in a trial. At the sentencing hearing she argues that her client deserves a minimal sentence because he is the victim of cruel parents and social discrimination.

16._____On a trip to Hawaii a couple stops at a Kona coffee plantation and take part in a tasting of several varieties of coffee. They order a case of the coffee to be shipped back home. A month later when they try the coffee at home they say “what did we find so special about this coffee?”

17._____Tattoos were once seen mainly on sailors or prisoners. Today they are a common fashion accessory for young people.

18._____Students at a school notice an odor in the air. One student becomes ill with an upset stomach. Another student feels faint. Soon, dozens of students are ill and the fire department and ambulances are called. Students taken to the hospital are observed and later released. Fire officials report that a thorough sweep of the building finds the air quality good and no signs of suspicious smells or chemicals. Parents demand a complete study to eliminate what might be a “sick building.”

For More Information...

Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion by Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson (W.H. Freeman and Company, NY, revised edition, 2000).

How We Know What Isn't So: The Fallibility of Human Reason in Everyday Life by Thomas Gilovich (The Free Press, NY, 1991).

Influence: Science and Practice by Robert B. Cialdini (Allyn and Bacon, Boston, MA, fourth edition 2001).

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Mind Hacks: Tips & Tools For Using Your Brain by Tom Stafford and Matt Webb (O'Reilly Media, Sebastopol, CA, 2005).

The Placebo Effect edited by Anne Harrington (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1997).

The Placebo Effect and Health by W. Grant Thompson, MD (Prometheus Books, NY, 2005).

The Power of Persuasion: How We're Bought and Sold by Robert Levine (John Wiley and Sons, 2003).

The Truth About Truth edited by Walter Truett Anderson (NY, Putnam Books, 1995),

*For a more detailed exploration of optical illusions and our habits of perception see the Introduction to Michael Schermer's book **Science Friction**.*

For a longer examination of framing and political correctness see the entry "Political correctness" on the Internet site wikipedia.org.

Quiz Answer Key

1. What shapes brain frames?

Some of our “brain frames” are shaped by our personality, culture, or history.

2. How is a sale a framing device?

A sale is a framing device that focuses shopper attention on how much money they are supposedly “saving” instead of on how much they are spending.

3. How are words used as frame shapers? Provide an example.

Words provide connotations and because many phrases have been perceived as negative, they have been changed to create a more positive connotation. The video provides these changes as examples:

*“throw out the garbage” to “waste management”
a “used car” to one that is “pre-owned”
“townhouse” to “townhome”*

4. Why did the job applicant’s self evaluation fall when Mr. Success entered the room?

The job applicant was comparing himself to Mr. Success who he perceived as better than himself.

5. A confirmation bias gives **greater** weight to existing beliefs and **downplays** ideas that conflict.

6. What is a placebo?

A placebo produces a healing or positive effect.

7. What is a nocebo?

A nocebo is a negative effect generated by belief.

Test Answer Key

1. A

B would also be acceptable because a sale often forces a comparison with “regular” prices

2. A

3. B

4. E

5. D

6. C

7. F

A case could be made for B since the debate forces viewer to compare only those two candidates. B would be an interesting answer if other valid candidates are excluded from the debates thus allowing the debate organizers to suggest that only the two debaters are real contenders

8. C

9. C

10. F

11. F

12. A

The writer here wants to frame Pine Creek as the cause of allergies. Focusing on the creek takes other likely causes out of frame.

13. A

14. B

The “good cop” appears to the suspect as a “friend” in a time of need. The role of “friend” is enhanced because the suspect compares him to the “bad cop” he follows.

15. A

16. E

17. C

18. G