

Baumgartner, Frank R. **The decline of the death penalty and the discovery of innocence**, by Frank R. Baumgartner, Suzanna L. De Boef, and Amber E. Boydston. Cambridge, 2008. 292p index; ISBN [9780521887342](#), \$75.00; ISBN [9780521715249](#) pbk, \$23.99. Reviewed in 2008aug CHOICE.

Cognitive linguists (e.g., Lakoff, *Moral Politics*, CH, Nov'96, 34-1814) and political strategists recognize that people respond to social issues in terms of the frame in which an issue is defined. If the frame can be changed, public opinion can be changed. Baumgartner, De Boef, and Boydston (all, Pennsylvania State Univ.) explain how that process works with respect to the death penalty debate. For example, they argue that, as long as the death penalty debate is framed in terms of its morality, few people will change their perception of its legitimacy. Genuine change in the death penalty debate has occurred because the issue has been reframed in terms of the possibility of the execution of an innocent person. The authors establish their methodology through an analysis of the death penalty from 1945 to the present, the development of the innocence frame, and its effect on public opinion. The book makes a significant contribution to rethinking how policy issues in general can be reframed to effect social change. It is important to realize, as the authors observe, that a new frame could displace the innocence frame and restore the death penalty to its previous level of strong public support. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. All readership levels. -- *M. A. Foley, Marywood University*