

# Racial Discourse In America

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# Background

- Research on race and crime
- Race running through many of the FrameWorks' projects (e.g., early child development, healthcare reform, education reform, immigration, public safety, rural policies)
- Aspen Institute
- Kellogg, AECF, Mott, JEHT, Ford

# What We Hope To Come Away With

- Better sense of what you are up against from a communications perspective
- A set of strategic communications analytic tools
- A preliminary set of communications recommendations

# A New Racial Landscape?

- Election of Barack Obama in 2008
- Signs of a “post-racial” America
- Backlash against Obama administration
- Rise of the Tea Party movement

\*\* Whither the public discourse on race? \*\*

*What is the most effective way to have a public conversation about race that leads to higher levels of support for a progressive race policy agenda?*

## Three Perspectives

1. Lead with Race
2. Colorblindness
3. Framing Order

# Communications, Framing and Cognition

# Why Does Communications Matter?

- It shapes the culture (and is shaped by the culture)
- It directs the thoughts and actions of policymakers and influentials
- It determines (or at least influences) the public agenda
- It defines issues as public or private
- It primes people for action or disperses accountability
- It can propel social movements

# But I Just Want to Provide Services

- **Prioritization** of public and charitable dollars is affected by framing of issues
- **Relevance** of services and specific approaches affected by way problem has been defined by media
- Ability to **prevent** social problems will be affected by public discourse



# But I Really Want to do Grassroots Organizing, Create a Social Movement



“The way in which the world is  
imagined determines at any  
particular moment what men  
will do.”

Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 1921

# What Is A Frame?

The way a story is told - its selective use of particular values, symbols, metaphors, and messengers - which, in turn, triggers the shared and durable cultural models that people use to make sense of their world.”

(Frameworks Institute)

# Communications Is Storytelling

“Finding some familiar element causes us to activate the story that is labeled by that familiar element, and we understand the new story as if it were an exemplar of that old element.”

“Understanding means finding a story you already know and saying, ‘Oh yeah, that one.’”

“Once we have found (the) story, we stop processing.”

Roger Schank

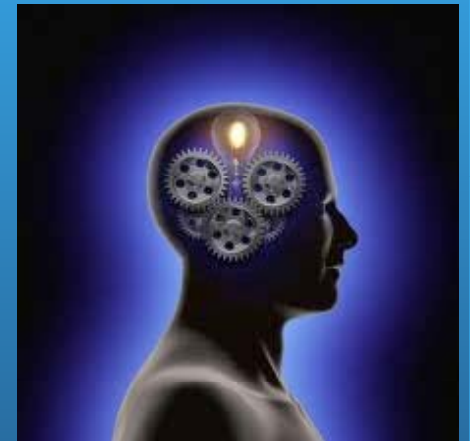
# Dominant Frames: Expectation Drives Perception

“People approach the world not as naïve, blank-slate receptacles who take in stimuli ...in some independent and objective way, but rather as experienced and sophisticated *veterans of perception* who have stored their prior experiences as an organized mass. This prior experience then takes the form of expectations about the world, and in the vast majority of cases, the world, being a systematic place, confirms these expectations, saving the individual the trouble of figuring things out anew all the time.”

Tannen, D. (ed). 1993. Framing in Discourse. New York: Oxford University Press.

# What Research from The Social and Cognitive Sciences Suggests About How People Process Information

- People are not blank slates
- People use mental shortcuts to make sense of the world
- Understanding is frame-based, not fact-based
- Incoming information provides cues that connect to the existing pictures in our heads
- People get most information about public affairs from the news media, which creates a framework of expectation, or dominant frame
- Over time, we develop habits of thought and expectation that configure incoming information to conform to this frame
- To change opinion, you must shift the frame



# Framing Lesson: Attribution of Responsibility

We reason within the frame.

We assign responsibility to actors within the frame.

We solve the problem with what we've got.







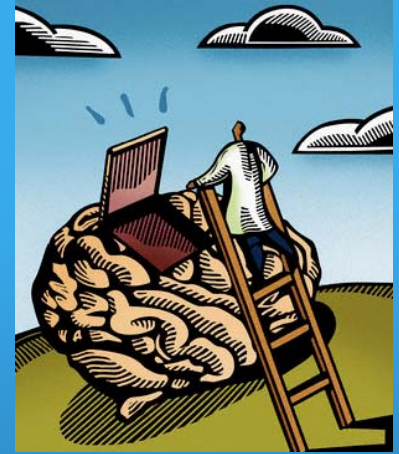
# Framing Lesson: Order

Order matters. Once a frame is established, it will dominate the conversation and crowd out subsequent frames. You shouldn't repeat a bad frame or wait to kill it off. Don't lodge your reframe in the last paragraph.



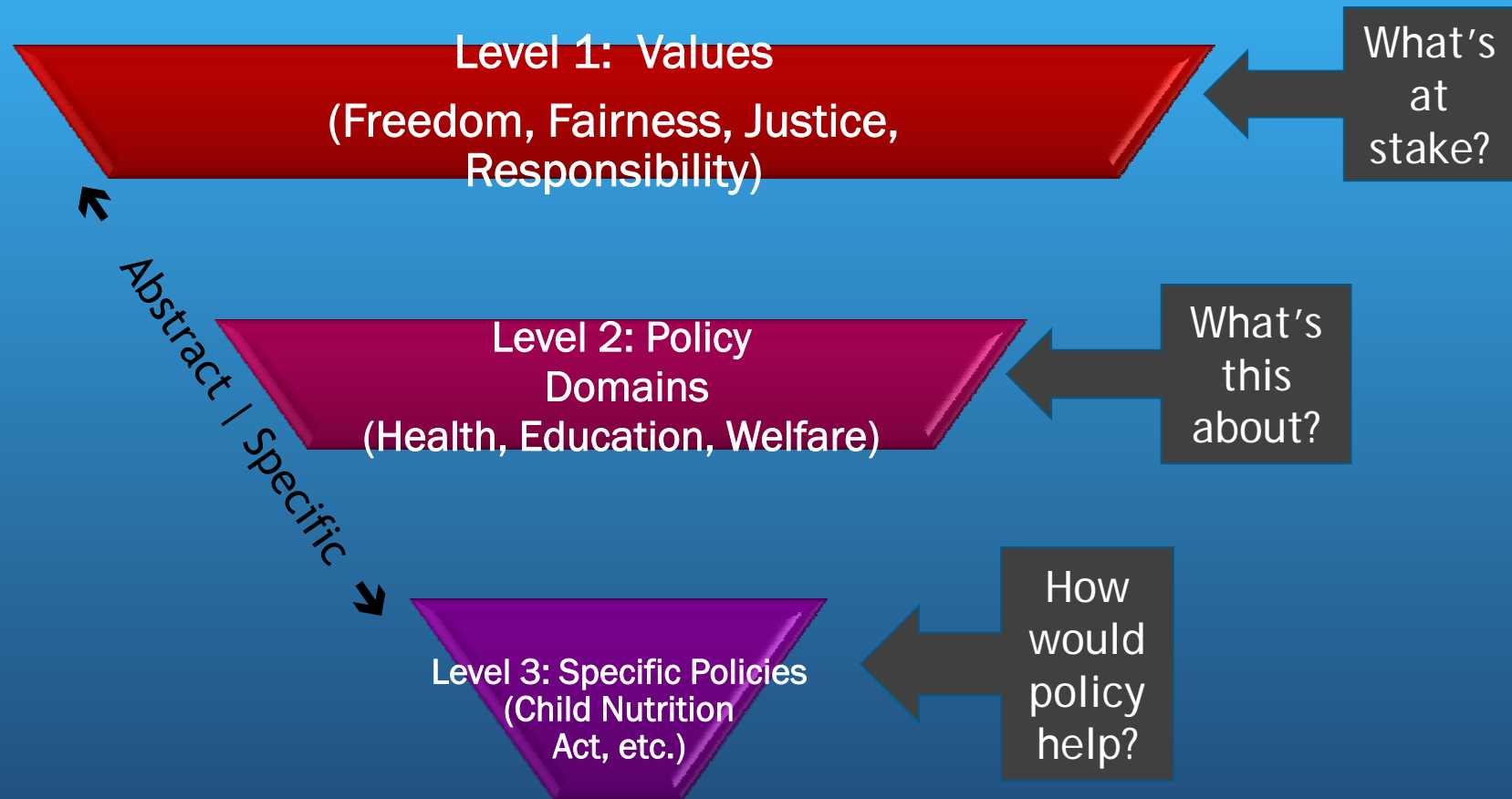
# Levels of Thinking:

## People need values cues



- ▶ **Level One:** Big ideas, like justice, prevention, family, equality, and opportunity
- ▶ **Level Two:** Issue-types, like women's rights, the environment, children's issues, work
- ▶ **Level Three:** Specific issues, like pay equity, bycatch, SCHIP presumptive eligibility, etc.

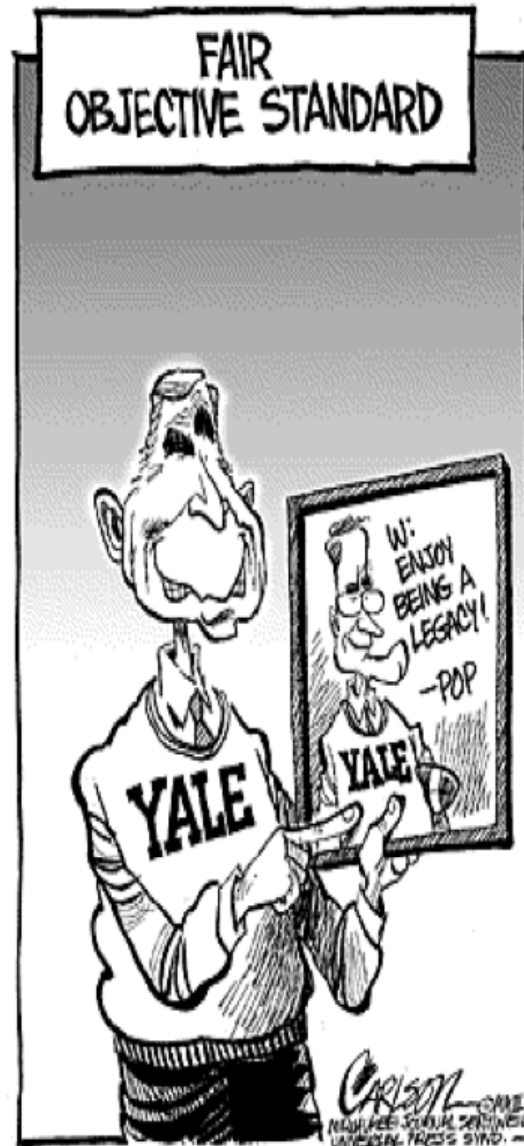
# Levels of Thinking





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# Strategic Frame Analysis™

Pump the  
Swamp

Map the  
Gap

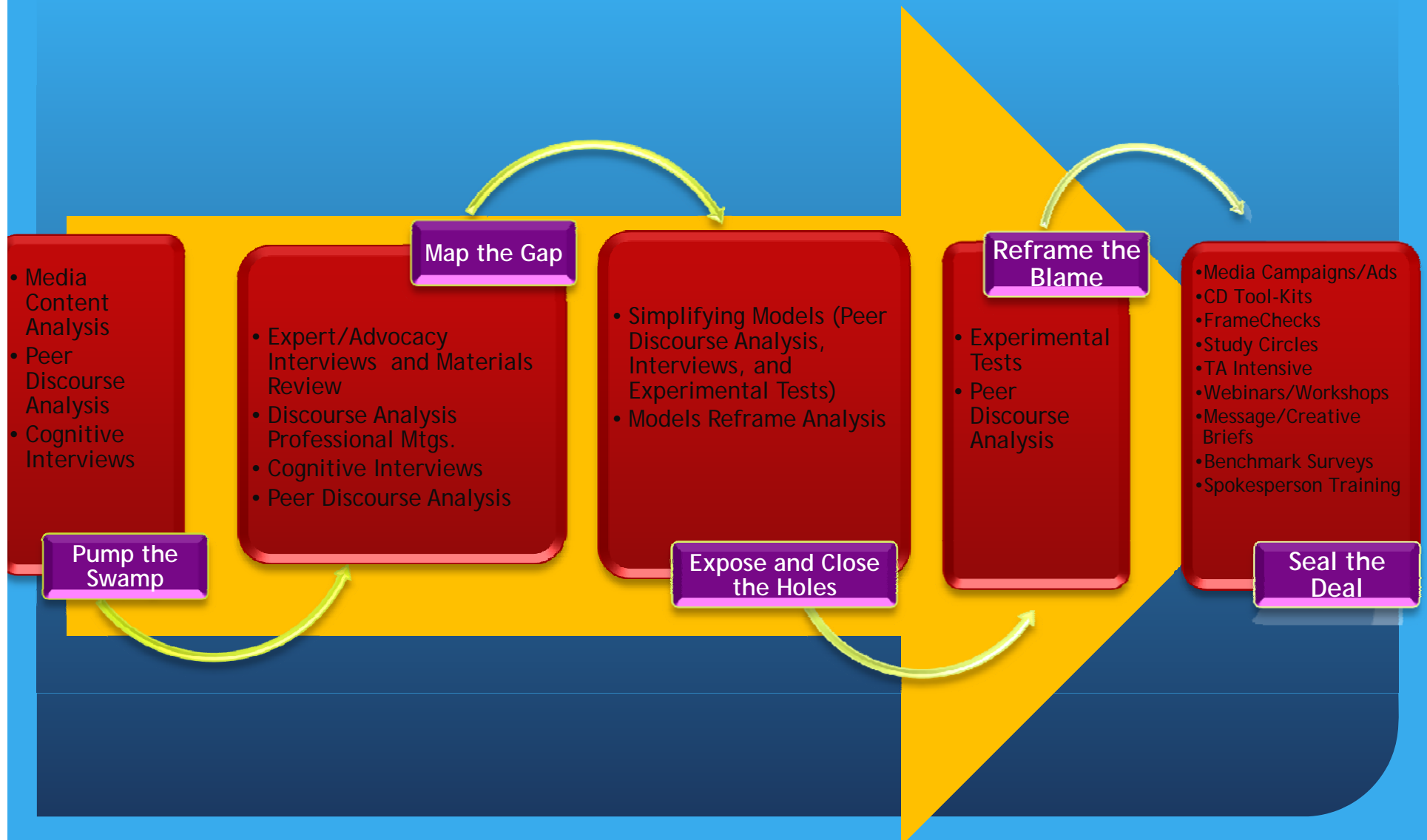
Expose  
and Close  
the Holes

Reframe  
the  
Blame

Seal the  
Deal

# Strategic Frame Analysis™

## Decomposed





# Framing Research on Race

What are the pictures in the public's mind when it comes to race?

What can be done to redirect these pictures in ways that support different policies?

# Is there a dominant frame on race?: Pumping the Swamp

Data from qualitative research (see, F.D. Gilliam, Jr. " The Architecture of a New Racial Discourse", 2006)

- cognitive elicitations
- peer discourse sessions
- media content analysis

## Elements of the Dominant Race Frame: Cognitive Elicitations and Focus Groups

- Historical Progress and Personal Racism
- Self Making Person
- Separate Fates

# Historical Progress

## Americans believe:

- Racial matters have improved dramatically in America over the last half a century
- The improvement is the direct result of changes in anti-discrimination laws and policies
- Little more can be done, because racist attitudes are no longer socially accepted and discriminatory practices have been banned

# Talking About Historical Progress

“How long ago was slavery? A hundred years?. Black people are mayors, congressman, doctors, lawyers. What have they got to complain about? They’ve got the same opportunities I have. I think their only handicap is if they think, you know, ‘I’m being crapped on because I’m Black.’” (White conservative male, AL)

“My own personal belief is that, that was then and this is now. And I don’t believe because of your ethnic background at you should be allowed special funding for anything. I’m sorry.” (White liberal female, OR)

“There might be small groups that will be alienated, but overall, I think it’s much better than what it was.” (White conservative female, IL)

## Racism is Addressed by Governmental Remedies

“You can't go ahead and deny one person a job and then turn around and give it to the other person just because he is a different race. You may get yourself sued. So a lot of it is legislated. I still think there is a lot of prejudice. You look around in the room right here. We have a pretty good ideas that we don't like black people too much and you don't trust them, and they're not all that way.”

(White male, MN)

# Personal Racism

## Americans believe:

- Racism is embedded in individuals, not institutions
- Some racism will always exist because racist people pass on beliefs to their children
- Racism comes in all colors -- because racism exists at the level of the individual, it has the capacity to go “both ways”; whites are biased against blacks, blacks are biased against whites
- When skin color does matter, it disadvantages whites

# Racism is in the Hearts of “Bad” People

“I don't know how you can stop racial profiling. I think it's something that has to come from within the police officers, the people that are doing it, not necessarily something that we're telling them you can't do it. Because if that's how you feel inside, then you're not going to be able to stop it no matter what.”

(White woman, NJ)



...and they pass it on from generation to generation

“I think it's the same thing that you see in Iraq...It's embedded in the children. The kids, they are burning American flags at three years old and dancing in the streets when our soldiers are getting killed. It's just passed from generation to generation.”

(White college educated male, NJ)

“This prejudice is rooted deeply and that is why it's not going away and it is probably -- I don't know if it ever will go away.”

(White college educated woman, NJ)

# Reverse Discrimination

“When I went to college in Florida I was out in a bar one night and a couple of Afro-Americans came in and they wanted beer. They wanted it to go and they wanted a glass at the bar. The lady said, ‘You can take it to go, but I'm not serving you at the bar’...Then maybe 10 years later...we walked into a bar and it was an Afro-American bar and they wouldn't serve us...I've seen it from both sides.”

(White male, NJ)

“I was born in Jackson, Mississippi, and have been able to see the other side of racism, as far as Afro-Americans being racist against Caucasian or someone of another race, and it can be just as vicious. So that's my opinion.”

(White liberal female, OR)

# Self Making Person

## Americans believe:

- A person's ultimate success depends, more than anything else, on the person themselves
- Racial inequality is thus a function of minorities' (especially blacks') failure to take on core values associated with the Self Making Person
- Individual responsibility, not discrimination, is the driving value

# Individual Responsibility

“Everybody's fate is in their hand. You can work towards it. You have your destiny and you have your limitation, but you have to work. It's not depending on the government...They can do the regulations, but ultimately it falls to individuals and organization.” (Chinese American woman, NJ)

*Q: What is success, what does that mean?*

*A:* Just kind of making / getting out of life whatever you want, you know. You can go as far as you want. If you'll just put your mind to it, that's stuff is part of success; just accomplishing things.

*Q: Where does it come from?*

*A:* The will to want to do it. You've got to have will to get somewhere. (White conservative woman, AL)

“Two words. Bill Cosby. If you ever read the hot water he got himself into but he didn't care a bit, was personal responsibility. Everybody at some point has to realize that they are responsible for themselves.” (White woman, CA)

# Individualism Cuts Across Racial Groups

- “I think sometimes we hold each other down, whether it's jealousy or whatever. You need to stop stepping on our own people and start lifting ourselves up.” (Latina, CA)
- “I feel that it is back to us. It's our responsibility... We're not doing what we need to do, and until we take responsibility and make the politicians do what we want them to do rather than to give them no direction, we're not going to change. I'm not going to wait for them to come and change things in our community. We're going to change it and we're going to make them help us.” (African American woman, CA)
- “So it's not just your environment, but it's what you do with it after you get it. What you've been educated to do, who you met, who you know. Do you know where to go? Don't just stay in your community to get things and wait for things to come to your community to lift you up. You've got to go outside of your community a lot of times and bring things back.” (African American man, MD)

# Separate Fates

## Americans believe:

- Minority concerns are disconnected from the shared concerns and aspirations of the broader society
- Different races live in parallel universes
- Minorities are often the “Other” and, by definition, out of the system
- There are few clear causal connections between minority life chances and structural arrangements

# Reframing Race

- The graveyard of framing hypotheses
  - Miner's canary
  - Diversity as strength
  - White privilege

# Reframing Experiment

- Web-based
- Nationally representative sample (N=4275)
- Subjects randomly assigned to experimental treatment conditions
- Dependent variables are race-specific policies (early childhood/youth policies; health)



# Race-related Values

## Colorblindness

Lately there has been a lot of talk about the value of having a colorblind society. Some people believe that in order to get to a point where race is no longer a dividing line, we need to resolve differences in the quality of health and education programs and services that racial and ethnic groups can get. These continuing differences block our ability to achieve a colorblind society. According to this view, we should promote programs and improve services to racial and ethnic minorities so that our nation can move on. Have you heard this explanation of why we should allocate societal assets to achieve a colorblind society?

## Disparities

Lately there has been a lot of talk about disparities in our country. Some people believe that discrimination continues to create differences in the quality of health and education programs and services available to people. This puts some groups at greater risk for problems than others. For this reason, it is important to reduce disparities by promoting programs and improving services available to those groups. According to this view, we should eliminate differences in the quality of services people can get because it harms their quality of life. Have you heard this explanation of why we should allocate societal assets to address disparities?

# Race Neutral values

## Prevention

Lately there has been a lot of talk about prevention in our country. Some people believe that we should prevent health and education problems before they occur. When we don't address them, they eventually become worse and cost more to fix. For this reason, it is important to promote programs and improve services that keep problems from occurring in the first place. According to this view, we can save lives and money if we make good prevention programs easier for everyone to access. Have you heard this explanation of why we should allocate societal assets to prevention? **Opportunity for All**

## Opportunity

Lately there has been a lot of talk about opportunity for all in our country. Some people believe that too many people still face barriers to good health and education. Our country's ability to achieve is undermined when not enough people have access to the things that help you succeed in life. For this reason, we need to ensure that everyone has access to the programs and services that strengthen opportunity in our country. According to this view, promoting programs and improving services that enhance opportunity will result in a better quality of life for the whole nation. Have you heard of this explanation of why we should allocate societal assets to improve opportunity for all?

# Study 1

## Policies in the Child and Youth Development Battery

1. Improve the quality of early care and education centers for racial/ethnic minority children by investing more resources in small class sizes, low teacher-child ratios, and highly skilled teachers.
2. Make high-quality early care and education programs more affordable for lower-income minority families by providing public subsidies.
3. Forgive federal loans for students who become trained and work for at least five years in child care and education programs in low-income minority areas.
4. Increase access to Early Head Start and other comprehensive, high-quality settings for minority infants and toddlers.
5. Require all parents that receive public subsidies for their children to attend preschool sign a pledge to read to their children at least 3 times per week.
6. Give publicly funded preschools in minority communities more authority to expel children who continuously disrupt the classroom until their parents complete a parental responsibility seminar.

### Policies in the Health Battery

1. Increase recruitment and retention of underrepresented minorities in the health professions.
2. Improve funding for public hospitals and community health centers that provide comprehensive quality services to underserved minority populations.
3. Improve access to affordable health care for minorities by setting income-based standards for out-of-pocket health care costs (such as lower premiums, copayments and deductibles).
4. Fund community health assessments that measure and try to improve the effect of the “built environment” (such as the quality of housing or the availability of healthy foods) on people’s health in minority communities.
5. Allow insurers to adjust health insurance rates for minorities who have pre-existing conditions caused by unhealthy lifestyle choices.
6. Get health food manufacturers to provide coupons that can be distributed in minority communities to encourage families to buy healthier foods.

Table 1. Race Frame Effects – Child and Youth Development Policy

Summary of Main Effects

Treatments	Control Group
All Treatments	.037 (.012)**
Racialized Value Treatments	.026 (.014)*
Non Racialized Value Treatments	.042 (.013)***

Summary of Race Effects Across Discrete Treatments

	Treatments	Control Group
Race-related Values	Disparities	.040( .017)**
	Color Blind	.012 (.017)
	Fairness Across Groups	.029 (.017)*
Non Race- related values	Prevention	.054 (.016)***
	Prosperity	.015 (.016)
	Opportunity	.044 (.017)**
	Interdependence	.037 (.017)**
	Ingenuity	.049 (.017)**
	Fairness (Places )	.051 (.016)**

Statistically Significant Differences \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \* $p < .10$

**Note 1:** Standard errors are indicated in parentheses.

**Note 2:** Several controls were included (age, race, party, marital status, religious observance, income, region of residence, and news attentiveness).

Table 2. Race Frame Effects – Health Policy

Summary of Main Effects		
Treatments		Control Group
All Treatments		.022 (.012)*
Racialized Value Treatments		.009 (.013)
Non Racialized Value Treatments		.024 (.012)**
Summary of Race Effects Across Discrete Treatments		
	Treatments	Control Group
Race-related Values	Disparities	.017 (.017)
	Color Blind	.004 (.017)
	Fairness Across Groups	.007 (.016)
Non Race-related Values	Prevention	.041 (.016)**
	Prosperity	.009 (.016)
	Opportunity	.034 (.016)**
	Interdependence	.012 (.016)
	Ingenuity	.030 (.016)*
	Fairness (Places)	.037 (.016)**

Statistically Significant Differences \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \* $p < .10$

**Note 1:** Standard errors are indicated in parentheses.

**Note 2:** Several controls were included (age, race, party, marital status, religious observance, income, region of residence, and news attentiveness).

**Table 1. Race Frame Effects – Child and Youth Development Policy**

Summary of Main Effects	
Treatments	Control Group
All Treatments – Racialized	.009 (.014)
Summary of Race Effects Across Discrete Treatments	
Treatments	Control Group
Opportunity for All (African Americans)	.037 (.022)*
Ingenuity (African Americans)	.013 (.022)
Prevention (African Americans)	.006 (.022)
Fairness Across Groups (African Americans)	.002 (.022)
Fairness Across Places (African American)	.012 (.021)
<p>Statistically Significant Differences *** <math>p \leq .001</math>; **<math>p &lt; .05</math>; *<math>p &lt; .10</math></p> <p><b>Note 1:</b> Standard errors are indicated in parentheses.</p> <p><b>Note 2:</b> Several controls were included (age, race, party, marital status, religious observance, income, region of residence, and news attentiveness).</p>	

**Table 1. Race Frame Effects – Health Policy**

<b>Summary of Main Effects</b>	
<b>Treatments</b>	<b>Control Group</b>
<b>All Treatments – Racialized</b>	.015 (.016)
<b>Summary of Race Effects Across Discrete Treatments</b>	
<b>Treatments</b>	<b>Control Group</b>
Opportunity for All (African Americans)	.047 (.024)**
Ingenuity (African Americans)	.022 (.024)
Prevention (African Americans)	.023 (.024)
Fairness Across Groups (African Americans)	.011(.024)
Fairness Across Places (African American)	.006 (.024)
<p>Statistically Significant Differences *** <math>p \leq .001</math>; **<math>p &lt; .05</math>; *<math>p &lt; .10</math></p> <p><b>Note 1:</b> Standard errors are indicated in parentheses.</p> <p><b>Note 2:</b> Several controls were included (age, race, party, marital status, religious observance, income, region of residence, and news attentiveness).</p>	



# Summary of Findings

The order of racial cues in framing communications matters

It is not whether you can talk about race; it is **how** you talk about it and to **whom**

Exposure to explicit racial cues drives down white support for a race policy agenda,

# Central Hypothesis

Exposure to explicit racial cues in communication will increase opposition to a progressive race policy agenda

# Challenges and Opportunities

- Challenges

- Not confusing the social analysis with the communications analysis
- Making sure that the focus does not fall away from minority communities (The Smiley hypothesis)
- Making sure not to bifurcate the community by class or gender

- Opportunities

- Expanding the coalition
- Creating a more favorable context for younger generation
- Get to the work of providing solutions in disadvantaged communities

# Communications Research is a Strategy Tool

- Research pre-flights communications problems
- Eliminates many stories you could tell
- Explains how to turn good stories into effective policy promoters
- Gives you an overall communications strategy that can be mapped on to many issues and policies
- Unifies the work you do across issues so you can benefit from each other's successes

# Field-building

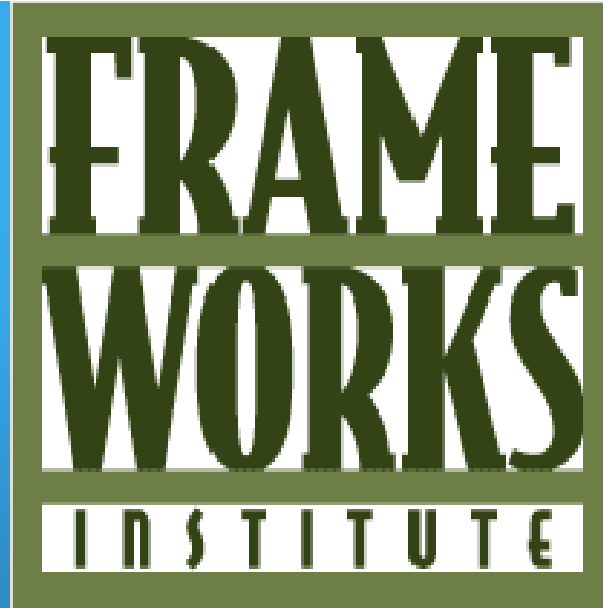
- Disparities toolkit
  - [www.frameworksinstitute.org/cdtoolkits.html](http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/cdtoolkits.html)
- Study circles
- On-line race research
  - [www.frameworksinstitute.org/race.html](http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/race.html)
- Advocate training

# Racial Equity and Educational Institutionalization

- UCLA School of Public Affairs / NYU Wagner Race Dialogues
  - Within/between institution dialogues on racial equity
  - Proposed bi-coastal training institute for schools of public policy, public affairs, public service, and public leadership
- UCLA School of Public Affairs – Los Angeles race dialogues
  - High school (Crenshaw); UCLA undergraduates; Public Affairs graduates
  - Los Angeles Urban League

# **UCLA** School of Public Affairs





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