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"My Race is My Community:" Peer Discourse Sessions on Racial Disparities

A FrameWorks Research Report

Prepared for the FrameWorks Institute

by

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Table of Contents

Introduction

This report details findings from a series of Peer Discourse Sessions FrameWorks conducted with engaged U.S. citizens about racial disparities, supported by a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. This research builds directly upon the extant FrameWorks research that began in 2003 and sought to understand how Americans talk and think about the issue of race. The overall objective of the study is to develop a communications strategy that advances a more constructive public conversation about racial disparities in the United States. The full scope of the study includes a wide array of qualitative and quantitative methods associated with the Strategic Frame Analysis™ (SFA) perspective. This report outlines the Peer Discourse Sessions — one layer of analysis in the multi-layered, multi-method SFA approach to evidence-based communications research.[1]

During the Peer Discourse Sessions, FrameWorks sought to (a) confirm and expand upon the results of the prior research and (b) experiment with specific frame elements that might create more productive conversations; these elements will then be tested and refined in subsequent research inquiries. The Peer Discourse Sessions provide an opportunity to see how patterns of thinking about racial disparities function in practice — in a group setting that more closely approximates the social contexts in which discussions about race and racial disparities might naturally occur. In conducting this research, FrameWorks gathers data on how individuals work with and publicly negotiate their existing default patterns of thinking in reasoning and debating issues related to racial inequities. In addition, peer discourse sessions allow FrameWorks to experiment with "primes" — frame elements intended to redirect or create different types of group conversation.[2] In this way, these sessions examine whether, by intentionally priming conversations with specific frame elements such as Values and Draft Simplifying Models, we can incite a conversation that is markedly different from those that characterized the unprimed conversations documented in earlier descriptive parts of the research process. Peer Discourse Sessions are therefore a critical part of the SFA approach because they bridge the early descriptive phases and the later prescriptive phases of the research process. In the sections that follow, we provide a summary of the research findings and a detailed description of the Peer Discourse methodology and research findings.

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[1] For access to previous FrameWorks research reports on race, please visit:
http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/race.html

[2] Refer to the Appendix for the complete execution of the tested primes.

Summary of Findings

- During the open-ended conversations that preceded the introduction of the primes, few participants defined, described or used the idea of "structural racism" — the notion that racial disparities are created and reproduced at a systemic level, often without the conscious intent of individual actors. Most unprimed group discussions focused on social class disparities, with the result that participants then downplayed the saliency of race in structuring an individual's life chances.

- In these unprimed conversations, participants favored explanations of racial inequities that focused on the inability or unwillingness of communities of color to overcome difficult circumstances. Furthermore, most participants reasoned that the concerns of poor communities of color were separate and removed from those of the broader American society. Policies designed to address racial inequities were believed to be ineffective because they could not change individual motivation. Policies were also described as dangerous because increasing resources in one group inevitably reduces resources available for all others. These patterns of thinking were identified in previous FrameWorks research and their strength in structuring public conversations about race were confirmed in this round of Peer Discourse Sessions.[3] Furthermore, although some of the primes were able to shift conversations, they were all vulnerable to cueing these dominant models we observed when people think about racial disparities.

- The primes were designed to use common values to shift conversations away from the dominant models towards an understanding of the systemic nature of racial disparities and the importance of social policies in reducing those disparities. The ideas of Ingenuity, Interdependence and Prosperity Grid were relatively effective in shifting group conversations away from the dominant models and discourses.

- More specifically, the Ingenuity prime was relatively successful in encouraging participants to see racial inequality as a systemic inequity in accessing valuable social resources for communities of color and to talk more concretely about policy solutions.

- After exposure to the Interdependence prime, participants emphasized the common and mutual benefit of policies aimed at reducing racial disparities. This prime showed the potential to foster greater understanding of systemic inequalities by focusing participants' attention on differential access to resources between communities, and it elicited a "can do" spirit among participants who expressed optimism that certain policies might be effective.

[3] See Davey, L. and Bales, S.N. (2008). *FrameWorks MessageBrief: Framing race.* http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF_race/message_brief_race.pdf

- The Prosperity Grid prime similarly encouraged participants to focus on differences in access to resources between racialized communities and was the only prime that garnered support for the *redistribution* of social resources.

- Despite the successes of the above-mentioned primes, each had tendencies to default to unproductive models that Americans apply in thinking about government.[4] Policies were often discussed as intrusive, as ineffective in making communities more responsible, unfair to other groups of people, and inappropriate in rooting out the racism found in the hearts and minds of individuals.

- The Stakeholder, Opportunity for All, Futures/Legacy and Protection primes resulted in less productive conversations. The Stakeholder prime led participants to define racism as primarily an attitudinal and individual problem and to pathologize certain communities or "those people" in order to explain racial disparities. After exposure to the Opportunity for All prime,[5] participants argued that opportunities were available to communities of color and instead concentrated on why individuals did not take advantage of those opportunities. The discussions following the Futures/Legacy and Protection primes quickly defaulted to conversations about inept and ineffective government policies.

- Working with fellow citizens as policymakers in the negotiation section of the peer discourse exercise, participants were actively engaged in thinking about solutions and ceased to view the problems of racial inequality as inevitable or immutable. Even after the primed discussions that preceded the negotiation exercises, however, participants had difficulty speaking directly about racial disparities. The negotiation conversations also revealed that participants defined "opportunities" as allowing racialized groups a chance to demonstrate their ability to overcome difficult circumstances, rather than support for the direct provision of material resources to marginalized communities. As such, at least one sub-group in each of the Peer Discourse Sessions used an iteration of a concept they named the "ripple effect." Participants reasoned that the reduction of racial disparities could be achieved when individual communities achieved educational or business successes that would "ripple" through and spread to other communities.

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[4] See Bales, S.N. (2006). *How to talk about government: A FrameWorks message memo*. Washington, D.C.: FrameWorks Institute. http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF_govt/GOVmessageMemo.pdf

[5] The Opportunity for All prime has been very effective when framed as race-neutral in previous FrameWorks research. However, in these Peer Discourse Sessions, participants were directly asked if the Opportunity for All prime was a helpful way to think about reducing *racial* disparities. The poor performance of Opportunity for All in this round of research is therefore a result of the explicitness of race in the execution of the prime.

- In general, the Peer Discourse Sessions supported ongoing FrameWorks research about the communication implications of the explicitness with which advocates and experts talk about race.[6] On the one hand, participants were very comfortable talking about disparities among communities and supported policies that ensured access to resources in those communities. When pushed to define the term "communities," many responded that they were talking about racialized groups. That is, the "disparities among communities" framing was an effective and implicit way of talking about racial inequality. On the other hand, primes such as Opportunity for All, that were explicitly racialized in these discussions, were less successful than had been suggested in previous FrameWorks research when the same prime was executed in more race-neutral terms.

Research Method

FrameWorks approaches Peer Discourse Analysis with three specific research objectives described below. Peer Discourse Analysis sessions are directed conversations and, as such, follow a fixed guide and are moderated by a trained moderator. In these sessions, the moderator introduces framed passages or "primes" designed to influence the ensuing discussion in specific ways.

1) *Confirm* the dominant models that emerged from earlier FrameWorks research by triangulating results using a different method. There has been much discussion in the public sphere that the election of Barack Obama represents a marked change in the way Americans think and talk about race. The Peer Discourse Sessions, which were held after his election, were an opportunity to examine whether the dominant models indentified in the pre-election research continue to structure public conversations about race.

The first confirmation exercise used a word-association task and open-ended discussion about the causes of racial disparities to confirm the dominant cultural models and public discourses attached to the issue of racial disparities.

2) *Experiment* with speculative reframes that emerge from other FrameWorks research, or from area experts, to narrow down the number and refine the execution of frame elements that are then taken into quantitative experimental research. The experimentation phase gives essential information about how the primes work, what they are missing, and how to revise for testing in subsequent stages.

In the experimental portion of the session, the moderator introduced Values and a number of Draft Simplifying Models as potential ways to see if, through the use of these primes, the groups could overcome the dominant patterns and habits of thinking that were

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[6] See Davey, L. and Bales, S.N. (2008). *FrameWorks MessageBrief: Framing race*. Washington, D.C.: FrameWorks Institute.
http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF_race/message_brief_race.pdf.

observed in previous FrameWorks research (for example, the Self-Making Person model). Our choices for these primes were driven by findings from past FrameWorks research on how Americans think about racial inequality.

3) Engage people in a *negotiation* in which they experience efficacy and agency over a complex problem and have to debate and articulate a position as a group.

In the negotiation exercise, each nine-person session was divided into three groups of three participants. Each group was assigned to design a program that would address racial disparities in one of three key areas: health care, education or small business ownership. FrameWorks used small handheld digital recorders to capture the discussions and negotiations within the small groups and, in analysis, examined the arguments that people used to rationalize choices and convince others in the group of specific positions. In this third exercise, we were interested in participants' discourse — their patterns of talk — as well as in determining whether their active engagement in the exercise could overcome the dominant models that structured unprimed conversation about race. We were, therefore, not as interested in the specific policies that each group proposed as in the rationale they employed in constructing arguments for their specific issues and plans.

Put another way, Peer Discourse Analysis is a way to explore the common patterns of talking — or public discourse — that people use in social settings and how they negotiate among these patterned ways of talking, using both cultural models that they naturally employ in understanding the issue as well as empirically-based "cues," or "primes" introduced by the moderator.

FrameWorks' more specific goals in these Peer Discourse Sessions were to observe the specific assumptions and norms about racial disparities that people employed when in *social group* settings; to begin to see whether the introduction of specific frame elements (as "primes") allows participants to understand the systemic nature of racial inequality, overcome individualizing habits of thinking and talking, and imagine public solutions to address racial inequities; and to explore how people negotiate among and work with common cultural models and discourses in forming positions and making decisions about issues related to racial disparities.

Subjects and Data Collection
A total of nine Peer Discourse Sessions were conducted with United States citizens in May and June 2009. These sessions were held in four U.S. cities: Cleveland, Ohio; Boston, Mass.; Baltimore, Md., and Los Angeles, Calif.

FrameWorks recruited participants through a professional marketing firm using a screening process developed and employed in past research. At each location, 11 to 13 people were screened, selected and provided with an honorarium for their time and participation. Each group comprised nine participants. Participants who were selected varied in terms of ethnicity, gender, age, educational background and political ideology (as self-reported during the screening process). FrameWorks explicitly selected

participants who reported a strong interest in current events and active involvement in their communities and who were therefore likely to be willing to express opinions on issues related to racial disparities.

Based on previous FrameWorks research, researchers expected participant responses and views to be particularly sensitive to variations in race, level of education, and age. Based on these specific variables, we composed six groups with people over age 24 divided as follows: one African American group with at least "some college" experience, one African American group with no college experience, one mixed-race group with at least "some college" experience, one mixed-race group with no college experience, one white group with mixed education levels and one Latino group with mixed education levels. FrameWorks conducted three additional youth groups (defined as ages 18–24), which were divided by race (one white, one Latino and one African American) and mixed along the other variables of interest. Sessions were facilitated by either trained FrameWorks research staff or under onsite direction of a FrameWorks researcher. Moderators were selected to match the racial background of the focus group participants.

All participants were given descriptions of the research and signed written consent forms. Peer discourse sessions lasted approximately two hours, were audio and video recorded, and were later transcribed. Quotes are provided in the report to illustrate major points, but identifying information has been excluded to ensure participant anonymity.

Analysis

Similar to the methods used to analyze data from prior FrameWorks research on race, *social discourses*, or common, patterned, standardized ways of talking, were first identified across the six groups. These patterns of talk were then analyzed to reveal tacit organizational assumptions, relationships, logical steps and connections that were commonly taken for granted. In short, analysis looked at patterns both in what was said (how things were related, explained and understood) and in what was not said (assumptions). Anthropologists refer to these patterns of tacit understandings and assumptions that underlie and structure patterns in talk as *cultural models*.

In addition to cultural models and social discourse analysis, discussions following the introduction of each prime were analyzed for the patterns that existed across groups in how ideas developed and the specific conversational direction in which these ideas led. In this way, analysis focused on *what* cultural models emerged in response to the specific primes, *how* groups interpreted the primes, and in *what directions* their ensuing discussions followed.

FrameWorks also concentrated on the patterns of negotiation that emerged in the final exercise, looking specifically at *how* groups came to decisions regarding their strategies of argumentation and their rationales for their plans to address their particular issue. To analyze these patterns of negotiation, audio from both break-out group (the smaller groups in which participants made their proposals) and full group discussions was analyzed.

FrameWorks researchers conducted independent analyses of the peer discourse data. The findings presented below synthesize these analyses.

Results

I. Confirmation

1. Historical Progress and Personal Racism

Consistent with the results of earlier FrameWorks research, Americans have very dominant cultural models — sticky implicit assumptions — of what "racial inequality" means and why it does (or does not) persist.[7] The Peer Discourse Sessions were generally void of concrete, specific or detailed conversations about the *systemic* nature of contemporary racial inequality. In all nine Peer Discourse Sessions, clear assumptions emerged that legislation has dismantled racism perpetuated by the government or other types of authorities. Participants in youth sessions were particularly vocal about racism being a relic of another historical period.

> *Moderator: Not everybody has the same access to healthcare. Not everybody has the same access to jobs. Does society have any responsibility?*
>
> *I think to some extent, yeah, but it's like people focus too much on that and then that's when they get lazy cause it's like, okay, we did 200 years of slavery, or 400 years of slavery. But I've never picked cotton. I don't know about the rest of y'all.*
> *Baltimore, African American Youth*

Many participants argued that, because the country has largely overcome its racial past, the true source of disparities between groups was fundamentally economic in nature. In fact, many sessions, regardless of the racial background of the participants and despite being directly asked to reason about the nature of *racial* disparities, argued that social class was the basis or "root" of all current social inequalities. Scholars of racial inequality speak about the "intersection" of racial, class and gender inequalities or the ways that multiple sources of inequalities can simultaneously impact an individual's life chances. In contrast, for many participants, class and race were *competing* categories used to explain social inequities. In short, since inequalities were rooted in class, they did not have anything to do with race.

> *Because of economical questions, I think that has to do with it (racial disparities). Lack of money sometimes has something to do with that.*
> *Cleveland, Mixed Race, High Education*

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[7] See Davey, L. and Bales, S.N.(2008). *FrameWorks MessageBrief: Framing race*, http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF_race/message_brief_race.pdf

You know, like you said, you don't see a lot of Hispanic people in your classes. Well, if you're born — if you're raised in a low income neighborhood, and you have to go out at 15 working to help your parents pay rent, or get food on the table, your education is not going to be the first priority on your list, and so you have to go out and work, and then you get sucked into like some low income job where if you would have had better opportunities, you would have had better choices.

Los Angeles, Youth Latino

The assumption that socioeconomic background was the primary source of inequalities implicitly shaped how participants downplayed the significance of race in structuring inequalities. Participants reasoned that since there are economically disadvantaged people of all racial groups, *all* Americans independent of their race are susceptible to discrimination.

Participants not only asserted that all groups could be victims of discrimination, but they argued that all groups have an equal opportunity to harbor prejudices against another group and be *racist*. According to this line of thinking, since the historical legacy of racism that was built into systems or laws has been largely overcome, any group could be prejudiced against another with equal consequences.

I mean, with racial disparities, you've got to look at — the framing of a larger picture where there's African American, European, Irish, Hispanics, Asian, there's different groups have experienced different things, and sometimes it seems there is no disparity dependent upon race, and sometimes there is. So, I guess things that I see is in certain things there's not disparity because of race.

Cleveland, Mixed Race, Low Education

And people are racist against White people, as well, so they're a victim, as well. I don't feel that just cause you're Mexican you're being racist against them. Nowadays, when you apply to the universities, Caucasian is considered a minority, so I think it's everywhere.

Los Angeles, Latino Youth Group

I think everyone, at one point, kind of has a little racist in them — you might not see it, but everyone does kind of, and it is stupid, it is. It's kind of like, my team is better than your team, you know, but people are just ignorant.

Los Angeles, Latino Youth Group

For many participants, the way in which race structures distribution of social resources is largely obscured. Racism becomes an issue of individual mentalities rather than a product of inequalities that remain built into systems. Furthermore, there is no sense that racism disproportionately impacts communities of color, because even white people can be victims of "reverse racism."

Individual prejudices based on race were also frequently discussed as an inevitable or natural part of interaction between "different groups." In this formulation, policies that address racism were viewed as futile because they could do nothing to address the "natural" and immutable feelings of animosity between groups.

> *I think it's a difficult situation, and I don't think it's ever gonna go away. It's been — it's always kind of existed, I think. I don't think there's any — you can probably narrow the gap a bit, but I don't think it's ever gonna go away.*
>
> *Boston, White Adult Group*

> *It's always gonna be there. It's always gonna be that way.*
>
> *Cleveland, Mixed Race, Low Education*

These predictable patterns in how people think about both the historical nature of racism and in how they distinguish this history from contemporary "prejudices" have profound communications implications. The Peer Discourse Sessions reveal that focus on class disparities implicitly disavows *race* as a factor that structures life chances. The term "racism" for many respondents — and often irrespective of their own racial background — was confined to individual discriminatory acts, rather than embedded in systems. Since any person can be a victim of another's prejudices and since prejudices are understood to be a natural part of human interaction, racism is unfortunate and shameful, but ultimately has nothing to do with systems and policies. When these models are cued, they take over and crowd out discussions of structural or systemic sources of racial inequality, obscuring thinking about public policy solutions to racially disparate outcomes.

2. The Self-Making Person

The Self-Making Person — or the implicit assumption that individuals ultimately determine their own destiny irrespective of social circumstances — was another dominant cultural model that shaped participants' discussions of racial disparities. Participants argued that individual actions and moral qualities are ultimately responsible for successes or failures — for positive or negative outcomes. Participants drew on the rhetoric of "personal responsibility," which has invigorated and cemented the Self-Making Person cultural model to discussions of race and racial disparities. The Self-Making Person narrative is substantiated and validated through individual stories of triumph over adverse circumstances and in the face of formidable challenges.

> *Well, it seems to me whenever you address any of these problems you're speaking in generalities because, you know, there's always an exception to every rule. You know, if you say well, just because of education you'll find people that didn't have an education who overcame that so you're speaking in generalities, but, education always plays a part. That's for sure! And I think another big part is personal responsibility. You know, taking responsibility for your life, and what you want to do with it in spite of your environment.*
>
> *Cleveland, Mixed Race, High Education*

My parents didn't teach me about money; I taught myself. I was little, and I wanted to know about investments, so I used to read the paper to find out about investments. I taught my parents how to invest. I got my own wealth from investing. I was in the government. I came into the government, knew about Thrift Savings; putting my money in there. When it was time for me to buy my first house, I pulled the money out so I could make my own down payment. But a lot of people are not taught that. A lot of people of color are not taught that, and don't know how to go out, and find the resources to get it. And don't even worry about — they're not thinking about that. 'It's better for me to go out on a corner and sell drugs, cause it's quick money, than for me to work for it, and to get it slowly.' You have to work to get it. It's not gonna come easy. That's definite. I can tell you that from my own experience. I worked, and went to school. I'm about to get my Masters now, but I had to work for it. Nobody sat there and gave me anything on a platter.

Baltimore, African American, Mixed Education

Two things. I think one, hopefully we can all admit that we're in the best country in the world, so from no matter what beginnings we come from, the possibility to succeed is there, one, and two, I think — well, I'm in the middle — I'm a little on the older end of this, but as we get older, you realize — what's the classic line, the grass is always greener. You know what? Quit looking at someone else, and thinking he's got a better chance; he's got more than me; he's better looking; she's this; he's that. Just whatever you want, it's there.

You gotta go for it.

Cleveland, Mixed Race, High Education

Analysis of peer discourse data showed that the Self-Making Person cultural model was very viral in that when it appeared, other participants grabbed hold of and clung to this pattern of reasoning. The following excerpt illustrates the power of the Self-Making Person model to lead conversations into narrow, dead-end discussions of individual responsibility. The first participant begins to talk about systemic social inequalities, but is quickly shut down with the Self-Making Person model.

Participant 1: I mean, sometimes you're dealt the hand you're dealt with, and everybody, you know, just say you can pull yourself, and there's opportunities for everybody, but there's also a lot of hardship in there. You know, people have a lot of — probably have physical disabilities. They might have parents who, you know, aren't there, and there's other factors. You can work hard a lot of times, and it could still be very hard for you. You know, there are the working poor, and a lot of times in workplaces, and different places, there's discrimination.

Participant 2: Can I say something?

Well, I don't disagree with anything she said, but I would add this; you know, when you come into this world, you have certain conditions thrust upon you over

which you have no control. For example, I had no say in who my parents were. I had no say in the color of my eyes, or my physical makeup, the side of the tracks I was born on, my social circumstances, or even the economic condition of my family. And you know, those all play a bearing on how you're gonna be growing up and raised, and who you're gonna become, but you know, after you reach a certain age, you can't use those circumstances as an excuse for your failings, and shortcomings in life. You have to overcome those things by the decisions that you make, and what you choose to do with yourself, and what you choose to become in this world.

Cleveland, Mixed Race, High Education

Although racism was most often discussed as individual-level acts of prejudices, at certain points in the Peer Discourse Sessions participants discussed how different groups have different levels of access to social resources. However, according to participants, inadequate access to valuable resources was merely an "excuse" available to individuals, and particularly to poor people of color, to explain or justify their lack of success. Differential access was not assumed to be an explanation for disparities, but instead was seen as another challenge for people to meet. In short, even participants who were able to see *disparities in resources* defaulted to the Self-Making Person model in understanding *disparities in outcomes*.

Well, I believe that some groups, especially, let's say that they have less access to things, they limit their selves … thinking they need to stereotype themselves, thinking they need to put themselves in the group where they feel as though they were put, but obviously they put themselves there. Like some people who say, it was hard to go to school, and it's hard to get a job. These main people, they're saying it's hard, but a lot of them don't really try and they make up excuses, and they really don't do anything.

I definitely agree. I think that a lot of times we use "racial discrimination" is kind of like a crutch to not do things that they really can do. Even if you're not exposed to it, there's always people around that can help you be exposed, and I agree with her, also, it does have to do with where you're from, or where you live, and stuff like that, cause people get different opportunities based off of where they live, but on the other hand, you can always get an opportunity. You just have to work harder to get your opportunity if you're not somewhere where there is a lot of opportunities, you just have to work harder to get to where you want to be, so I really think that if racial discrimination, of course it exists, but I think that there's always a way around it, and I think that a lot of people just use it as an excuse.

Baltimore, African American Youth

The ability of the Self-Making Person to take over conversations and "eat" other ways of thinking illustrates the power of dominant cultural models to shape and restrict thinking, and of the need for reframing strategies that shift thinking off of these sticky patterns of interpreting information.

3. Separate Fates

In response to the early open-ended questions, the participants offered explanations as to *why* certain groups of people were disadvantaged. As expected, rather than attributing responsibility to systemic inequalities or differential access to social resources, most participants focused on the different set of values and attitudes held by people of color, particularly African Americans, as the "reason" for disparities. More specifically, *poor* people of color were envisioned as living separate fates from middle-class America. According to the Separate Fates model, marginalized people do not have the same values, attitudes or mentalities as broader society and the absence of these attributes explains their failures. These values included having a strong and determined work ethic, commitment to "traditional" families, and a sense self-reliance, among others. It is important to note that the Separate Fates model appeared even among Peer Discourse Sessions with people of color. Participants of color often spoke of lower-class people or people living in marginalized neighborhoods as the pathologized or separate group.

> *Depends on where you go, and all the guys in the kitchen, and the guys cleaning up are — they don't speak English very well, and they just — some of the places that I've worked, they were very intelligent, people that were just absolutely competent to work in the front of the house, but they lacked the confidence to do it, whether it was their language or not, and that really bothered me a lot. You know, I'm not saying I walked around, you know, trying to help everybody, but there was people that I really liked, and I said, listen, you're busting your butt back here, you know? It's not that easy to make the jump, just do it, and some of the people I worked with, you know, the owners and stuff, said yeah sure, and they gave them opportunities, but I think for the most part, no one's gonna walk up into the back of the kitchen, and say, you know what, you're a hard worker, you're doing well, why don't you come up here, and triple your weekly pay. Granted it's not easy work, but it's different work, and you're getting tips and whatnot, and I just think there was this attitude of that's where they belong, and this is where we belong kind of thing.*
>
> *Boston, All White, All Adult*

The construction of certain groups as fundamentally separate and "other" was also attributed to their perceived lack of other values, including religious beliefs, commitment to the nuclear family, or the drive to take care of oneself and have pride in one's community.

> *The "family" has changed, and the family is society. So until we come back to get the families the way that they were to value each other, we will still have man's inhumanity to man. And there will always be disparities because of the lack of respect and those are kind of value systems — the ethics that are taught within your family. That a lot of families in the past were Christ-centered instead of party-centered, or me-centered or just let me go out here, and work, and do the best I can to raise you. Children are raising children. And they don't have the experience nor the exposure, or what it takes to be a family, and to maintain the*

family. And once the family is broken down, everything else is going to break down; health, education, church.
Baltimore, Adult African American, Mixed Education

Well, I think historically, not cutting off that, Americans, and I hate to say, Black Americans have an enabling attitude. You're supposed to do for me.
Baltimore, Adult African American, Mixed Education

Like you think about Pennsylvania Avenue, for example, I don't know why, I just thought about this, but like there is a mural down there. They have a lot of art there on the wall, and it used to be a really famous area for like music, and stuff, and now it's just so bad that people don't really want to — like it's dangerous. People won't even go there. So, if you have an area like that, for example, that's like run down, and like it's a lot of drugs and stuff, you're not gonna be looking to try to help that type of area if like the people around it don't even appreciate it; don't even try to make it better. It's kind of like overlooked.

Baltimore, African American Youth

While participants used the Self-Making Person model to explain how individuals have overcome difficult circumstances or poor environments, the Separate Fates model was employed to explain why certain individuals or entire communities remain impoverished and socially disenfranchised. It is critical to note that participants were asked open-ended questions about how racial disparities should be addressed. In responding to these questions, most participants focused on people and communities of color and discussions centered on the fact that some have and others have not succeeded. Relatively absent from the unprimed conversations were discussions of communities in which social resources are concentrated or are monopolized and how disparities can be built into systems. Instead, most conversations devolved into the separate and faulty values of certain communities and the exceptional character and drive of certain individuals.

Because certain communities were characterized as lacking key values, addressing racial disparities was an issue often discussed in terms of taking away resources from a deserving group in order to assist other, less worthy groups. That is, the Separate Fates model includes a kind of zero-sum thinking about policies that promote racial equity in which "deserving" groups — those that do uphold society's values — will inevitably suffer.

Participants had difficulty envisioning how policies could address the different values and "cultures" that they assumed to be the root of racial disparities. The Separate Fates cultural model also stood in the way of realizing the collective benefits of a racially equal and just society. Instead of emphasizing benefits, the Separate Fates model renders policies that ensure racial inequality threatening to certain groups of people.

II. Experimentation

Analysis of peer discourse data revealed that three of our candidate primes were relatively effective in shifting conversations from the dominant cultural models and dead-end patterned discussions. The Ingenuity, Interdependence and Prosperity Grid primes led to more productive discussions of the causes of and solutions to racial disparities in the United States than the unprimed conversations and conversations following less successful primes. However, even these more successful primes were not completely effective, and in some groups, on some occasions, these primes proved unsuccessful in shifting away from the dominant, sticky and viral cultural models described above. This may say as much about the intractability of racial stereotypes as it does about deficiencies in the primes.

Below we discuss the measures FrameWorks used to evaluate the success of the primes. We then provide a more detailed analysis of the effectiveness of each of the six primes tested in Peer Discourse Sessions.

1. Measures of effectiveness

Ingenuity, Interdependence and Prosperity Grid were the most effective primes in their ability to meet some or all of the following criteria:

1. User friendliness
The three successful primes were "user friendly." Participants were able to use the language of the primes, which "seeped into" or pervaded their discussions. Put another way, participants were able to effortlessly incorporate these three ideas into their discussions. As further evidence of their "user friendliness," these primes, more than the others, appeared in other areas of the Peer Discourse Sessions, even in the discussions of subsequent primes, and, in several cases, during the final negotiation exercise. Based on these criteria, the Stakeholder, Ingenuity and Interdependence primes were the most user-friendly.

2. Shifting away from the dominant models
The three successful primes were also relatively effective in "loosening the grip" or inoculating against the dominant cultural models and conversational patterns discussed above. After being exposed to the Ingenuity, Interdependence and Prosperity Grid primes, group discussions were measurably different than both unprimed conversations and discussions following exposure to some of the less successful primes.

3. Float time
Related to the ability to shift off the dominant default patterns of thinking and talking, FrameWorks looked at the "float time" of the primes. Float time refers to the time from the introduction of the prime (when the moderator finished reading the prompt) to the point at which the group conversation makes its inevitable way back to one of the dominant default discourses. Float time is a proxy for the duration of the effect of the primes — the time that the prime is able to shift people off the dominant patterns before they inevitably return to the dominant patterns. Ingenuity, Interdependence and

Prosperity Grid had the longest float time. However, regardless of the specific prime that was used, there was a point at which group conversations shifted back to ideas of Self-Making Person, Failing Governments and/or Separate Fates.

4. Filling the cognitive hole
Prosperity Grid, Ingenuity and Interdependence were also relatively successful in filling gaps between the ways that the public understands a concept and the way that experts do. In the case of racial disparities, the most conspicuous gaps are the inability to understand racial disparities as systemic and the role of policy in addressing racial disparities. Ingenuity, Interdependence and Prosperity Grid were relatively effective in filling this gap and facilitated discussions in which participants were able to think about systemic causes and policy solutions to racial disparities.

2. Results of individual primes
In the following section, we discuss the results of the primes tested with respect to the five measures of effectiveness discussed above.

1. Ingenuity

The Ingenuity prime was effective in several respects. First, the prime helped participants articulate the systemic nature of racial disparities. For example, in one group a participant connected the disproportionate arrest rates in communities of color with disparities in employment rates between racial groups.

> *I think it's a good thing because they came out with the law to say "equality," but ... they come up with ways to get around the law. I think ingenuity is good because you can figure out ways to make people conform to what the law says. Like the law says, give Blacks jobs, but they give Black people so many felonies for stupid reasons, and then they say well, we won't hire felons so the person's still out of a job because he's Black. You say, well he's not on the job because he's a felon, but he might really be out of a job because he's Black, and he got the felony because he's Black. So there's disparity right there, and they need to clear that up.*
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Cleveland, Mixed Race, Low Education</div>

The above excerpt was one of the few places in all of the Peer Discourse Sessions in which participants *directly* discussed systemic racial disparities. Although the connection to racial inequality was usually less explicit, in several cases the Ingenuity prime precipitated discussions of unequal distribution of social resources between communities and the effects of this inequality.

> *Participant 1: The thing is, as far as innovative programs, that type of stuff costs money and the areas where you have the racial disparities, they don't have money. So, it takes money, but that's what's missing most of the time. So the areas that have the money, they're probably getting these innovative programs. I mean, they're already good, but they're getting better now. I think that's why everything's separated.*

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Participant 2: I agree with what he's saying. A lot of the neighborhoods that have these type of programs are not really being placed where they really, really need it. And the neighborhoods that do need it, they don't have the money to support the programs. The communities want to do what they can, but at the same time there's not really a lot of people that are actually pushing it to happen, but in the communities with a lot more money, it happens quicker, but you really don't need it there.

Baltimore, African American Youth

I think one of the ways that I interpreted this was "good ideas," and I think for me, the simplest example of that was a good way to teach a third-grader to read better, and so, places that have [high] levels of education, have these really great teachers, and great schools, and support systems, [they] come up with these great ideas, but it is gonna cost like zero dollars to post it on the Internet, and make that accessible to teachers in areas where the students still need to read, but don't have the same kind of like support or access, or whatever they would need. So when it comes to the idea — like American ingenuity, I think that is ... an incredible powerhouse — that there are social problems that <u>exist</u>.

Boston, White Youth

Now, my kid goes to school in PG County, but there's a kid that goes to school in East Baltimore. The kids get the same education in East Baltimore, as the kid in PG County, but it doesn't happen that way. Therein lays the disparity. So, this child's lacking because he lives in a quote unquote "lower economic area," as opposed to a high economic area. The kids in Montgomery County, do they get a better education? You're damn skippy, 'cause they got more money, and it shouldn't be that way. So, if everybody had the same thing, everybody would at least have the same opportunities, and therein lays the problem with disparities.

Baltimore, African American, Low Education

After being exposed to the Ingenuity prime, groups were more likely to have this type of unequal-access-to-resources discussion about *racial*, rather than *class*, groups. Furthermore, in all of the above conversations, participants talked about the supports that are absent in certain communities, which is a qualitatively different view from unprimed discussions, where participants talked about sources of inequalities in terms of the motivation that *individuals* lacked.

The Ingenuity frame was also able to overcome "crisis" thinking. Research has shown that when social problems are framed as in-crisis, the public is likely to identify the problem as intractable and disengage from thinking about concrete and realizable solutions. Ingenuity helped groups contemplate concrete ways to reduce racial inequalities. This can be seen in the decidedly more optimistic and pragmatic view of the tractability of social problems compared to the disengagement and pessimism that characterized discussions in other parts of the Peer Discourse Sessions.

There was a program with high school kids. It was on the Wednesday night special. If they could replicate some of the programs — some educational programs like that, that would help impact our community, and bring up other communities throughout the nation, in terms of education, because there was one high school program that had a 100% college attendance rate. So I think that replicating programs like that is essential.

Baltimore, African American, High Education

The high quality programs just sticks out. I mean, if you're going to do something, and has quality in it, then people will of appreciated it. I think it has to do with supporting the residents — the community. Making sure they have the programs available so they can properly do what they have to do to function.

But this says it has been successful. It didn't say, it <u>could</u> be. It didn't say "<u>maybe</u>." It said, these programs have been successful in reducing disparities in things like high school graduation rates, and it's worth it to try it. The graduation rates, of business ownerships, infant mortality, these things are worth trying. Why not try these things.

Cleveland, Mixed Race, High Education

There was also a model of social change embedded in the Ingenuity prime, which helped participants think about realistic, feasible and "do-able" approaches to solving social problems. Participants spoke about how racial disparities might be reduced by making step-by-step, purposive and efficient changes that have been "proven" effective. Participants grasped the idea that policies and programs that were shown to be effective in certain communities could be adapted to other communities. Participants referred to this model of social change as a kind of "ripple effect."

If we've proven in certain communities that it's working, start putting little pods, don't make a brash decision about the whole country, start working it in the communities that need it, and if one community has a program that's already working, leave that one there; move on to the next most needed area. But still thinking of new ways, and using what they've proven to work in these small little pods, spreading it out.

Boston, White Adult

I thought of the Massachusetts health care [system], the insurance that they standardized. Everyone pretty much has health insurance in the state of Massachusetts. I guess the President wants to just kind of overlay it across the entire nation to have everyone use similar plans, and I forgot who mentioned it, but having that — just tweaking that, seeing what went wrong, 'cause there were things that went wrong with it, but just tweaking it, and making it good for each individual state, each community, and see what works best, and getting the people within the community to see what they need, and how they can achieve that.

Boston, White Youth

> *Well, you have to think outside the box. I mean, if something's not working then try something new, and if you can put a little research, and facts behind it to prove to people that it's gonna work, and get some "buy in" — you gotta take small steps, and build on it, and get people's trust.*
>
> *Cleveland, Mixed Race, High Education*

Despite these promising directions, analysis showed that the Ingenuity prime had some unproductive effects. The "ripple effect" concept, while providing a model of social change that people could "buy into," led to discussions about how communities were responsible for pulling themselves out of economic and social marginalization.

> *Well, I think it's just getting people's ideas [on how] to help a problem that exists. Like my mom, and her group of friends were all on the school's side, "I want to support the community I grew up in, what can we do?" She found out that these afterschool programs weren't funded, and that these kids got into trouble that way, and found a solution. It's nonprofit now, CASTLES. It's like Caring Alumni Supporting Students, or something like that. It was just a whole bunch of alumni thinking what can we do to improve the community; having an innovative idea, not asking for any government funding; it's all supported by fellow alumni, and it's helping, and it's specifically speaking to the poor community, which in this case happens to be more racial minorities.*
>
> *Boston, White Youth*

In this formulation, the responsibility for reducing racial inequalities is ascribed to the community members themselves — not to the systems into which they are embedded. Therefore, there is little room to consider the effectiveness of government policies that address these systems.

In addition, the Ingenuity prime inspired dead-end conversations about the role of government in reducing racial disparities. The analysis suggests that the prime's discussion of "programs" and "policies" cued participant thinking about government. Previous FrameWorks research has shown that the public tends to think of the government as an impossibly large, tangled and complicated mass of indistinct workings, with a few elite individuals who serve as its "mind."[8] Participants expressed profound skepticism that government was able to solve problems.

> *I think this is, again, too much reliance on government. Where it says, "our country needs to create new policies" instead of saying, "our communities." I think this is too much reliance on the government. Yes, it may help, but if the people who live in that government aren't willing to cooperate, or aren't interested in, or excited about these programs, then it's not gonna work.*
>
> *Baltimore, African American Youth*

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[8]Aubrun, A. and Grady, J. (2004). *Mind and monolith: Findings from cognitive interviews about government.* Washington, D.C.: FrameWorks Institute.

I was actually having a talk about my mom, about past events where they brought programs to schools, and she told me that there wasn't really any changes. They brought these, so called "programs" to the schools, and they paid the teachers more, but the programs in the schools didn't really change. It was just teachers were getting paid more, and they made it seem like these programs were helping students out, but they weren't really doing anything.

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Los Angeles, Latino Youth

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Particularly for the youth groups, "programs" were conceptualized as exacerbating existing social problems. In fact, many participants reasoned that the government lacks innovative capacity and that "real" solutions need to come from private industry.

If you're working with the government, and every policy that they're putting in place is wrong, and you just sit there for 20 years with the wrong policies, you're never gonna make any forward progress, which is exactly why we need to think differently, and act on those new thoughts, and it's not just about coming up with good ideas, it's implementing them, and I think out country is very slow to implement new ideas, and very slow to throw out bad ideas. We need to start thinking like small businesses. They say, "fail fast" in Silicon Valley, and that is exactly what this country needs to do. If a program doesn't work, throw it out. You learn in the first three years that this is never gonna work, throw it out, put a new policy in place. Don't wait another 10 years and hope it's gonna come around. If you've done the research, if you've done what a capitalist society should be doing, which is, you know, where is the profit in this? Are we not seeing graduation rates go up? Okay, not working. Fix it.

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Boston White Adult

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The other thing, too, I think they need to have more businesslike approach in the government, and I think it would work better. The government wastes so much money, and they're not thinking about profits. Like when they send the entire staff home when there's two inches of snow, the rest of the world is all out there making money. Well, they're wasting my money. I'm like, I'm at work, <u>you</u> should be at work.

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Boston, White Adult

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Furthermore, some participants expressed the idea that policies aimed at reducing racial disparities were in reality contributing to racism. Some white participants gave the example of affirmative action, but even participants of color argued that race-based policies contribute to, rather than address, racism.

I guess the part that popped out was at the very beginning where it says, "create new policies that reduce racial disparity." I didn't know that there was policy that actually recognized racial disparity. I think that's the problem. When you recognize something, you give it power, but when it doesn't exist for you — when

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racism doesn't exist, and you just treat people the way they are instead of by their race …

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Los Angeles, Latino Adult

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I don't think new policies are the answer. There are so many policies in place that aren't working. Why are new policies going to help? You know, there's ideas now, like what he was saying with going "race blind" for colleges? Sonya Sotomayor, had one of her cases overturned because she made race such an issue for I think it was Connecticut firemen. I'm not sure. But everybody has talent. When you look at people who are applying for one specific thing, or going out for one specific thing you should be looking at who has the most talent, not we don't only have, you know, in our company of 100 people we have 80 white people, and only 20 minorities, so the next person we hire should be another minority. It should be whoever has the most talent. So, I think there's already a lot of programs in place to help people in minorities get to schools, and that kind of thing. I don't think there needs to be more programs to make that work.

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Boston, White Adult

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Finally, the prime's reference to "programs" activated the default model of Separate Fates. Programs were deemed ineffective not because they were bad programs, but because people of color did not share the same values as middle-class America.

Not only that, a lot of people come from families where that is the "norm," and if you were raised in a situation where you come from uneducated people and nobody in your family went to college, and that's just what you think that you can have I personally think that education, and all those things are great, but I think that that's more than anything, where it come from. It's "family," and a lack of family, lack of support, lack of, you know, lack of like just time with your family and you know, any kind of guidance, "lack of guidance," definitely.

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Los Angeles, Latino Youth

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But you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him think, and you can't make them receive it because I've worked on both ends of the scale… and again, I'm beating the thing — it's the "home."

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Baltimore, African American, Low Education

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I think in the long run it might make things worse.

Moderator: So tell me — tell me why you think that?

Unfortunately, Hispanics are always with Hispanics, whites are always with whites, blacks are always with blacks, and everyone seems to be more happy that way. When you start to force people to do things that they don't want to do, I just don't think it will be a good outcome.

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Cleveland, Mixed Race, Low Education

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2. Interdependence

The Peer Discourse Sessions revealed several promising effects as a result of using the idea of Interdependence to shift thinking about racial disparities. More than any other tested prime, Interdependence helped participants see the reduction of racial disparities as critical to the common good and mutually beneficial for all members of society. In this way, Interdependence shifted group discussions away from the idea of separate and competing fates — that racial justice policies must always come at the expense of other groups.

> *Because I used to work for a major utility company at one time I worked on 300 foot high voltage towers, and I worked mostly with well, equally with blacks, Latinos, and whites, and I seen a couple of guys fight on a tower, and fall off ... [CHUCKLE] ... down the hill one time; a white guy, and black guy, and we were gonna throw them a rope, and the foreman said, whoever throws them a rope is fired. And you know, you're working 300 feet up, so you and I can't have a problem. You may get electrocuted or I may, and you may have to lower me down to my safety, so the "racial" thing kind of was thrown out the window there. Kind of like in the military, you know, you are your brother's keeper.*
>
> *Los Angeles, Latino Adult*

> *What it does, is it makes everybody accountable, but accountable to somebody else. Like if you live on your street, and you see a piece of trash, it's not your trash, but it's your street so, you pick it up. Or like he mentioned in the military. I also served in the military, so when you're in there, there is no time for racism. I mean, it could be your life just because of something you can't fix between you and your comrade.*
>
> *Los Angeles, Adult Latino*

> *What I see here is at the grass-roots level it helps you to improve other people's situation, and that's not an easy idea, you know, it's not an easy idea to promote. I lived in Rocklin for a while. Very different from Newton, and people didn't want to spend money. "I don't have kids in school; why should I spend money on the schools," you know? "I'm not Black; why should I care about…" — well because it affects you. It affects your community, it affects the quality of life. That's what they're talking about here.*
>
> *Boston, White Adult*

> *It's a program where you're awarding people for doing good, and working together. Whereas some of the other ideas could be perceived as, you're taking away from Elizabeth — money that she normally would have, and giving it to David. This is like, you guys are working together. You're doing great things. We will reward you for that. It's all about perception, and so, it's rewarding people for doing good instead of what some people may perceive as taking away from other people, and giving it to other people.*
>
> *Boston, White Adult*

During some groups, the Interdependence prime led to discussions of the shared rather than separate fates of racial groups in American society. Interdependence also facilitated conversations about communities, and when talking about communities, participants were able to realize and discuss the inequities between communities.

> *Just because a majority doesn't want to do it doesn't mean that there are few that want to go to school. I mean, I don't know where everybody grew up, but you know, I grew up in the inner city. I went to school, Baltimore City public schools, and I grew up in Northland Long, and I hate to hear, every week, that somebody I went to school with is dead, or is on drugs, but that doesn't mean that I didn't benefit from the good things that Baltimore City School did, like the citywide school. I benefited from going to citywide school. So the benefits are there, but they need to be "there." If people don't want to take advantage of them, then you know, it's up to them. It's their personal responsibility that Joshua was talking about, but there are some people, maybe few in some instances, it might be just one, but there are people who would like to have that opportunities out there.*
> *Baltimore, African American Youth*

> *Yeah, like the going with the "location" thing cause, personally, to me, like I used to grow up in a city then I moved to the country. I moved to the country, and the country does give you a lot of things, but when you look back at the city, they give those kids so many opportunities. They just throw stuff at them, and it's like some people that's in the country, we want those things that those people are not taking, and I really don't think that's fair. I think since they think of the location, they don't think that some people in the country need it, but now it's coming to the point, where in the country, that's where a lot of people from the city are at.*
> *Baltimore, African American Youth*

These two quotes, admittedly, contain elements of the Self-Making Person frame and emphasize "personal responsibility." However, the perspective is more balanced and does not focus solely on whether individuals are motivated. Instead, there is discussion and consideration of equity between "locations." Fairness between places — where places were conceptualized as communities — was able to disrupt, even if temporarily, the power of individual self-makingness.[9]

The Interdependence prime was also relatively successful in helping people think about potential solutions and changes.

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[9] See Bales, S.N. (2008). *A FrameWorks Institute FrameByte: Fairness as a frame*. Washington, D.C.: FrameWorks Institute
http://frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/framebytes/FrameByte_fairness_frames.pdf

Well, I think it does start in our communities, and we all have to work together, you know? One community, and then your surrounding communities. It just all spreads out. I mean, if you work together, and not look at your neighbor, as black, white, or whatever. Just look at them as a person, and if there's a problem, let's solve it, and not worry about race, or color, or income - how much you make, how much I make. You know, that's all basically. You have to work together to get things solved.

Los Angeles, Latino Adult

I think that this is so key, and I think that the way it could work, or how it will work, and what will bring it all together eventually, is that, maybe if there's people — Hispanic people from a Hispanic community, and black people from a black community who don't have racial issues, and those people, you know, join into these programs, they can influence people who maybe do feel that way ...

Despite these promising trends, many discussions following the Interdependence prime veered in less promising directions. Most significantly, some groups downplayed the role of social policies in reducing racial disparities, and placed responsibility on individual communities for social change — another articulation of the ripple effect concept generated by participants.

I think it was probably the most important of the ones [the primes] we've discussed 'cause there's a big problem with education, opportunity for all, there's a problem with taxes, and capitalism, but interdependence is, one of the most key things that we should focus on, because say after Hurricane Katrina, one part of the nation affects us all. It would have been so easy for each state to have a program where you could volunteer for like two weeks, and they could pay for it. It would have just been a really good way to connect people, but without confronting tax issues, or deep social problems like affirmative actions, and stuff like that.

Boston, White Youth

Participant 1: They have their own community within the community. So they're not necessarily working across communities. You know, working together across communities, I don't think, to ensure that we all thrive, but they're looking out for themselves, and they're looking out for their future generations. So in another generation, some of these, you know, the Vietnamese, or whatever, the Koreans, they're gonna be really, you know, in high positions, and in a very dominant financial position in this country.

Participant 2: That's a very good point. I think the integration was the worst thing ever to happen to black people. Before we were integrated, when we were segregated, lived in our own communities, we had doctors, lawyers, and neighborhoods where everybody took care of everything. The moment we got integrated, where do we go? We moved up the county because we had money, and

then we were better than those people living in the city because they lived in the city, and they lived in the ghetto, they lived in the slums, and I live out in the county, and I make a lot more money than you do, and I'm still looking down on you. In there lie the problems.

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Baltimore, African American, Low Education

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In discussing Interdependence, several groups saw racism as individual prejudice that could only be addressed when groups became more connected — a process that was seen as beyond the scope of government intervention. There was little room for policy solutions when ideas of personal racism entered conversations.

Oh man people are gonna try to come up with ideas for this, but I mean, "race," I mean, it's been happening since the beginning of time and you know, you go to jail; you're not gonna hang out with the blacks or the whites or the Asians, so it's hard to say.

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Los Angeles, Latino Adult

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I don't see how they're gonna get people to work together. You can't get somebody to do something they don't want to do. And they're talking about making one community depend on another one. You're not gonna get Crips and Bloods to work together. You're not gonna get Mexicans and blacks to work together if they don't want to.

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Los Angeles, Latino Youth

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Several participants argued that opportunities and resources were available in marginalized communities, but that individuals did not want them or did not have the work ethic to seek out such opportunities. This self-makingness model was extremely powerful and viral; it could override more productive conversations about the lack of opportunities available to specific communities. Similar to other counterproductive dominant cultural models, such thinking completely obscured the role of public policy to address racial disparities. According to many participants, there was little need for policies to fix individuals lacking in core, fundamental motivation and discipline.

I think that where they say, "we need programs that give us greater support," programs are there. People just don't take the opportunity to use them, or they don't seek them out. The government has a lot of programs for people but they don't want to use them. Even people in my generation they want stuff to be given to them. They want someone to tell them, well, you can go such and such a place. They feel like they don't have the need to go to the library, and look up stuff, or go on the Internet, and look up information and stuff. They just want somebody to tell them, well, you know, you can do this, and you can do that.

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Baltimore, African American, Low Education

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I think that making all the programs, and all that stuff, and getting banking all that stuff was good, but I could also depend on the people. Some people, they

don't even want to do this kind of stuff, so to start with in the community, you know, you gotta try to get people into all this kind of stuff. Most people they just go to school, and complain. So, you are trying to get them into programs to help them in school, and they don't even like school. I think that it has to start with the people, and what the people want to do. If they want to make themselves better or not?

Baltimore, African American Youth

The Interdependence prime was vulnerable to discussions about how reducing disparities could negatively impact other groups. It is important to note that the Separate Fates model emerged at one point in all Peer Discourse Sessions, regardless of the racial makeup of the group.

I guess I don't understand what it means to be interdependent. I mean, are you gonna have a community in Oregon caring about a community in Kentucky? I mean, what's gonna make them <u>want</u> to help that community. I mean, it's fine with a pen pal when you're 12, but am I going to be sending my money to another state when that state doesn't have to pay income taxes. I guess I don't understand how it works. Like how to bond these communities together. I guess that's why states are set up like they are. They have their own laws and programs, and then federal comes in for the bigger issues.

Boston, White Adult

It's dumb. Like if something's going on, and it's where you are and it don't affect me at all, I could care less. But if what is going on where you are is starting to affect me, then it's a whole new ballgame it's a whole new system that I have to work with, and try to work around, and then I will care about what's going on with you, but if it don't affect me …

You're on your own.

Yeah, [CHUCKLE] … I guess it's true. I guess in this day and age, everybody's just kind of like to themselves. It's just like every man for himself. Like yeah, you have people that do care, but it's like, to be honest, like I mean really if something happened like the Katrina incident, I don't want to really bring that up, but I mean, yeah, it was sad. Like you know you cared, but at the same time it's like, well, we're in Maryland, that didn't really affect us. Like maybe the gas went up but I mean, you just go on about your everyday life.

Baltimore, African American, High Education

3. Prosperity Grid

Prosperity Grid is a simplifying model[10] that was developed in earlier FrameWorks research on race and has been proven effective in past FrameWorks research on race.[11] The Prosperity Grid idea gives the public a new, concrete way of thinking about how differential access to social resources affects outcomes. Prosperity Grid had many promising effects in Peer Discourse Sessions. Like other successful primes, it led to discussions and realizations of structural differences between communities.

> *I think we're thinking about like the available, and non-available areas. Whether it's for hospitals, or education, or whatever, I think we're thinking about rural/ suburban or country/city, but I think if you go to like downtown Detroit, you're probably not going to find a hospital that can really suit people's needs, and there's a shitload of people in Detroit. So I mean, obviously, some place where there are 30 people they're not gonna throw a hospital down. But if you're in downtown Detroit, they don't have the proper people there to even take care of the people.*
>
> *Boston, White Youth*

> *If you haven't had things for a very long time and they're trying to get you to come back up to where everyone else is, you're gonna need a lot more stuff. So they kind of need to shift gears to make it seem like right now you're more important to the community, and you're more important to the nation so that we can bring you back up to par. Like because, obviously, they don't have the schools, they don't have any of those things that the other communities technically can afford to do by themselves. Like, I know that my community can afford to do a lot more than a community in Baltimore City. So, if Baltimore City got more stuff than us, I don't feel as though we're gonna be like, oh, why did they get more because we know that, in the back of our minds we know they need more than we need. So it shouldn't be the community that's doing better asking those questions.*
>
> *Baltimore, African American, High Education*

> *We need it to look like a grid, like a town to function properly, and for its community to prosper, needs to have a good hospital, good school, and good whatever they listed here. A desire for people to go work there, or start their own businesses. That's why I think this is a great idea that the federal government needs to look at it that way. They don't need to be giving grants to the towns that are sustaining themselves. New Hampshire, where everybody wants to move there. Those towns shouldn't be getting federal funding for their hospital to get a*

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[10] FrameWorks defines a simplifying model as a research-driven, empirically tested metaphor that captures and distills an "expert" concept by using an explanatory framework that is consonant, or fits in, with the existing patterns of assumptions and understandings (cultural models) that the public uses to make sense of incoming information on a particular topic.

[11] See Davey, L. and Bales, S.N. (2008). *FrameWorks MessageBrief: Framing race.* http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF_race/message_brief_race.pdf

new MRI machine. That money should go directly to a prosperity grid area that doesn't have any funding, and then when they see, oh look, Oklahoma's getting money, that doctor is gonna want to go there because they get to use the new technology, and so then there's benefits for people coming into the community. I like this idea of the prosperity grid. I think it's a great idea that it actually put resource into a pot. You have to put money into this pot. If it's coming out of some other pot to put in there, you need to do it, otherwise this community's gonna fail, and we're all gonna support them on welfare for hundreds of years. You need certain resources to function.

Boston, White Adult

Not only did Prosperity Grid structure conversations about the importance of equal access to resources among communities, but as the above excerpts demonstrate, many participants argued for the government's role in ensuring greater equity. Some participants even advocated for the *redistribution* of resources to marginalized communities.

The Prosperity Grid prime also facilitated conversations about shared fates and common good, rather than individual interests, discipline, and responsibility.

Yeah, we do — I mean, what is it, it takes a whole neighborhood to raise a child. You do what you have to do to help your fellow man.

Cleveland, Mixed Race, Low Education

Let's take worst-case scenario; everybody that can't afford it, that doesn't have medical, gets sick with the Swine Flu for instance, I'm still here giving you my germs because you didn't pay for my medical.

Well, I agree there should be more metro hospitals. You know, we should have like two metro hospitals in the city because one is just not enough.

If you want to survive, you got to help everybody else like endangered species. If you want to survive, why not help another person as well?

Cleveland, Mixed Race, Low Education

The focus on communal values and common good was highly effective in keeping conversations away from the need for individual benefits. The emphasis on equal *access* to services was also effective in keeping participants from employing self-makingness cultural models.

Despite these promising effects, analysis revealed that Prosperity Grid had several less productive effects. In discussing the Prosperity Grid, some participants reasoned that racial disparities were a natural part of society.

I mean, you put a hospital in my neighborhood … Anglos ain't gonna be coming into the neighborhood to go to that hospital, so it's probably gonna be more

Hispanics. So I don't think that's gonna work. You open up a new school with better facility, better books, and whatnot, it's not gonna encourage the white kids to come into the neighborhood.

It's good to help our community, but I don't think it's gonna solve the racial issue.

Moderator: Why not?

It's always gonna be like this. Like he said, it's been here since the beginning of time.

<div align="right">

Los Angeles, Latino Adult

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You cannot legislate away the inequities there. You can't legislate away the racial disparities, unfortunately. You're not gonna legislate away how people think, so, when I read this, it kind of scares me.

<div align="right">

Cleveland, Mixed Race, High Education

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The final two quotes reflect the idea that racial disparities are fundamentally about how people *think* — the implication is that changing how people think is seen as beyond the scope of government intervention or public solutions. More so than any other prime, the Prosperity Grid was labeled as communist and socialist and for some participants, this prime invigorated dominant cultural models about government not as a facilitator of common good but as a deterrent to individual freedom.[12] Several participants reasoned that the government cannot and should not be in charge of bringing resources and institutions to areas where services are lacking. Group members justified such statements by explaining that either the government is unable, due to corruption and lack of transparency, to handle these interventions, or that these types of developments are most efficient when left to the "power of the free market." Predictably, these conversations defaulted to dominant models and discourses of government, which all group members could engage in and from which no group could dig itself out.

Socialism and communism at its finest.

Nothing wrong with socialism; it works in many other countries, and you know, not trying to get off the subject, we're talking about our universal health care; Switzerland has it, England has it, Canada has it.

<div align="right">

Baltimore, African American, Low Education

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I think this one really gets to the heart of the socialist/capitalists issue because, you're essentially ensuring that everybody has the same health care, access to

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[12] See Bales, S.N. (2006). *How to talk about government: A FrameWorks message memo*. Washington, D.C.: FrameWorks Institute.
http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF_govt/GOVmessageMemo.pdf

education, access to loans, and all that, and that pretty much completely contradicts that the current model of the United States.

Boston, White Youth

To me it's more of the idea of saying, you know, okay now everybody has equal opportunity, education, equal opportunity to health care, and equal opportunity to loans, and to me, that's what's striking the chord for communism, or socialism, at the very least. It's nice in theory, but in practice it doesn't really work out that great.

Boston, White Youth

As exemplified in the first quote, not all participants understood "socialist" or "communist" policies to be an inherently negative thing. However, these policies were universally understood as standing in opposition to the American political and economic system. Even if understood in a positive light, policies such as universal health care were viewed as beyond the capacity of the American system. Other participants more directly addressed the perceived negative consequences of public policies that seek to ameliorate social inequities.

It's gonna be real tough 'cause we just had the biggest example of what happens when you try to force this — the subprime mortgage, and, it was a disaster

Boston, White Adult

I think, in a large part, this idea is not good. This is a rule of the government to come in, and plan a town, a city, metropolitan area, and say, okay, you need so many banks, schools, hospitals per square mile, powers, electricians, this, that, and so many blacks, Asians, that's way too much. To come in, and say, okay, we're going to re-plan this town for you. I don't think that's a role of government, and I don't think that's the best way at all.

Cleveland, Mixed Race, High Education

The Prosperity Grid was also unable to inoculate against invocations of the Separate Fates model. Participants saw policy solutions as unrealistic because of the assumption that certain people or communities lack the core American values or orientation to become successful, productive members of society. Participants argued that one could "lead a horse to water" but not force them to drink.

I think it's really unrealistic because there are some communities, and neighborhoods that, as horrible as it sounds, just really don't want help. You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. If you're gonna go into a community where people don't really want help, and could care less because of whatever their situation is, whether they don't know better, or whatever ...

Baltimore, African American, High Education

You have to think of the consequences of some of these things, and of course, I always go back to the beginnings of things. If you try to start out with children,

make sure they have the right food, and the right medical care, that helps. I don't know how you change the social structure. And I don't know how you change the orientation. When I worked in the post office, there were a lot of minorities, and the difference between black, Hispanic, and Chinese, or Vietnamese, was day and night. There was a different orientation completely. I don't know how you change that orientation. You live in Newton, and everybody wants to go to Harvard, you know? It doesn't matter the quality of the teaching — everybody wants to learn. Their predisposition is towards it. So, how can you change that predisposition?

Boston, White Adult

And just looking at where it says, "hospitals," what comes to mind is John Hopkins verses Bon Secours, and Bon Secours probably can treat heart attacks or strokes with lifesaving equipment, but I think what happens is that the people in the neighborhood, they don't take care of themselves as much. So Bon Secours was set up as an inner city hospital 'cause there weren't many, but Bon Secours has a reputation. It's really very dirty. So again, you have the institution, you set it up in the middle of the inner city of Baltimore, great ideas, looks good, sounds good, we're gonna help people, but if the people don't take advantage of it, it's now just run down, and basically is there for homeless people who need a bed.

Baltimore, African American Youth

Some of the excerpts above acknowledge that communities do have access to different resources. However, when reasoning with a self-makingness model, those differences are dismissed or attributed to people's own failures to succeed. Again, systemic differences are completely obscured as individuals are assumed to be wholly responsible for their fates.

As with the other primes, self-makingness found its way into the discussion of the Prosperity Grid. Participants discussed how "smart" and hardworking individuals can overcome even the most dire of circumstances. In fact, some participants questioned whether opportunities were even lacking for certain communities.

So we have to have an underclass and they can get prosperity, as well. Right now with stimulus money, people say there's no jobs out there. Bullshit! There's hundred of jobs out here. You gotta go find where they are, and you may not do what you want to do, but there are jobs out here to do.

Baltimore, African American, Low Education

What's the point of putting air conditioning, or vending machines in schools, if the kids are gonna vandalize it? If you have this nice pretty school with a cafeteria, and the vending machines, and the lobster for lunch, that's fine, the whole purpose of being there is to get an education. If you're not gonna take advantage of it, then what's the point in having a new facility? You can sit very well outside in the grass, and learn more than sitting inside a technology school.

Baltimore, African American Youth

As you were reading I drew a grid. And a grid means everyone supposedly gets the same amount, but not all of us work the same amount, so I was brought up in here in the U.S., the land of opportunity — you go out and get it. No one brings it to you. It's free enterprise. So no one's gonna dictate the size of my piece, therefore, I create my value, and no one tells me how much I'm worth. So if someone were to try to put a prosperity grid, and I've worked to have a bigger piece, then I deserve it. Whereas, if someone dictates, okay, your piece will now be this big — if mine were bigger and you decrease it, now there's a negative feeling ... but if my piece was small, and now you're just giving me a big one, now I'm just lazy.

Moderator: You think that's even on a community sense?

I do. Because it depends how big you want to draw your grid, but that is why we have the Brentwoods, and the ghettos. Because people can be born in the ghetto, and thrive, and want to thrive, and get a better education, and get scholarships, and go to a college where, when you go to a college, and a university, you see that race no longer exists because you're not being ignorant anymore, and as you see that, oh okay, color doesn't matter, it's all about education, and what I know, and what I thrive to achieve, then you can go from the ghetto to Brentwood, if you choose, but it's all about "choice."

Los Angeles, Adult Latino

These excerpts demonstrate two clear problems with the Prosperity Grid prime. First, several participants questioned whether communities actually lacked access to resources. Second, many expressed the expectation that people should become successful *despite* lack of access to resources. Furthermore, policies that would ensure that everyone has access to the Prosperity Grid were frequently interpreted through zero-sum thinking, in which those same policies were seen to penalize other groups. Some participants were unable to conceptualize the benefit of ensuring all members of society have access to critical resources.

But if we have a prosperity grid, suppose this group isn't working as hard as this group?

Baltimore, African American, Low Education

I mean, once people excel past the playing field, then their accomplishments shouldn't be taken for granted, and they shouldn't be penalized, and I just feel like with this kind of thing, it's gonna be a lot of spreading out wealth.

Boston, White Youth

The Prosperity Grid was relatively successful, even if susceptible to the dominant models. While other primes encouraged participants to describe systemic inequalities and focus on equality of opportunity, Prosperity Grid led to greater support for restructuring access to social resources. The downside to this was that these discussions of

restructuring and access were susceptible to charges of "socialism," which was viewed as fundamentally un-American.

4. Opportunity for All

In past research, the Value Opportunity for All moved discussions in productive directions.[13] In these Peer Discourse sessions, the results were decidedly more mixed. This is likely due to the explicitness of race in this execution of the prime. The value of Opportunity for All in this iteration was directly connected to racial groups. As a result, during some groups, dominant and unproductive models about racial disparities (self-makingness, etc.) hijacked discussions.

The Opportunity for All prime led to some promising conversations, although these productive discussions were relatively infrequent when compared to those elicited from the more successful primes. One of these promising effects was a focus on systemic inequality.

> *I like the idea 'cause it's starting at the roots with education. I think if one of the biggest disparities between races, is the fact that some races have better education as a whole than the others, and if we can start from the beginning, and pump a lot of money into our state schools, and elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools, and just ensure that they have great teachers and resources to prevent kids from dropping out, and make sure they stay out of trouble, it's really gonna increase overall production of America, and it's gonna make probably a much more even level.*
>
> *Boston, White Youth*
>
> *The keyword here is "funding." Money talks, basically. You grow up in a better-off neighborhood, you're not worrying about somebody trying to rob you, stab you, or whatever. If you have money, you're gonna mingle which is not true for the lower-class communities. You got to fend for yourself, and everybody's fighting for that piece of the pie. So, funding ... money talks, basically.*
>
> *Los Angeles, Latino Adult*

This more positive effect was infrequent and was not sustained in group discussions. In other words, these interpretations were neither top-of-mind for most participants, or viral — they did not spark conversation and were not "picked up" by other group members.

Many participants argued that communities do not suffer from a lack of access to opportunities — according to many participants, opportunities exist even in poor neighborhoods. Instead, as the following excerpts illustrate, the groups employed the

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[13] See Davey, L. and Bales, S.N. (2008). *FrameWorks MessageBrief: Framing race.* http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF_race/message_brief_race.pdf

Self-Making Person model in arguing that people need to make something of these opportunities.

> *I'll say again, it's all an individual thing. The opportunities that exists, you know? Opportunities exist, but if you don't go out there, and get them, there's no point. It's an individual thing. You have to go out there, and know they exist. You just have to got out there and get them. They're not just gonna be handed to you.*
>
> *Baltimore, African American Youth*

> *I think in 2009 is different than in 1959 in that the opportunities weren't there. There's certainly a lot of opportunities now. We certainly can't blame the white man for keeping us down. We have to rise above that nonsense and move on. There's still racism. There's still prejudice ... and there's still um ... companies that will keep you down, however, if given a shot, as many of us have been given, then we take the opportunity, and we run with it. So we need to grab all that we have, and take advantage of it.*
>
> *Baltimore, African American, Low Education*

> *I grew up in the ghetto. I lived on Roscoe, hung around gang members. I mean, I partied, I did stupid things, but I still went to school. I still have ethics, and morals. A lot of these kids lose their self-worth. That's the main thing. Education and self-worth.*
>
> *Los Angeles, Latino Youth*

Once the Self-Making Person model was activated, group conversations quickly turned to explanations of why people do not seek out available opportunities. A clear pattern emerged in which participants first told stories about their own self-makingness, and then discussed the separate, alien and fundamentally different values of others who had not grabbed hold of opportunities to achieve success.

> *When I finished grad school I worked at Lafayette Homes a place called Family Development Center, and it was downstairs, and I used the term "projects" not negatively, but that's what they were, and we offered GED programs, basic ed. programs, child care, health care, job training. All you had to do was bring your ass downstairs, and they wouldn't do that. So the opportunities are there for you, and say here you go, opportunity. If we got to kick you in the ass, you come take it.*
>
> *Baltimore, African American, High Education*

> *I got to laugh, 'cause I was just talking to a friend of mine about this. You could pour all the funding you want into a school, and try to get the better quality teachers in there, but if the student doesn't want to learn, he won't learn.*
>
> *Los Angeles, Adult Latino*

> *The opportunities are there. They are there. If you take them, you take them. If you don't, you don't. You're taught how to eat healthy. You're taught how to do*

this. You know the high rate of stroke and heart disease in the black community,
so again, there's no more excuses. This is more of a personal responsibility.
Baltimore, African American Youth

As the above excerpts demonstrate, participants reasoned that racial disparities could be reduced only when people learned to be hard workers or found the motivation to achieve. Discussions of the inequitable distribution of resources were rare following the Opportunity for All prime. The prime was easily incorporated into the Self-Making Person and Separate Fates models and therefore became an easy idea to think, given the existing dominant models that people are used to using to think the issue.

Although less so than other primes, the Opportunity for All prime also lead to discussions about the inappropriateness and inefficacy of government intervention to reduce racial disparities. Interestingly, some participants commented that the prime sounded like "socialism" and a threat to a "free market" society.

Once again, I think it comes back to people's moral foundations and their
morality. I mean, our government's run by these people that you can't trust as far
as you can throw them.
Cleveland, Mixed Race, High Education

I think it comes back to priorities. I mean, they implement these programs, and
they gear them towards certain areas, but who says this is best for every situation.
Who says that every community needs small business owners above everything
else, so I think, again, they need to stop trying to micromanage.
Baltimore, African American Youth

I will give my opinion that government should be a certain size, it should be
small, but when I just see the plain word "allotting greater funding," to me that
means, "increase taxes," and "increase government deciding where the money
should be spend."

So the term smells of socialism. "These policies level the playing field so that
people can get ahead. To me, "it's a level playing field," means that everybody
has the same thing, and if everybody has the same thing, isn't that the definition
of "socialism" and "communism"?
Cleveland, Mixed Race, Low Education

These negative assumptions about government persisted even when participants spoke about how government policies assisted with their own educational achievement. In one youth peer discourse session, the participants talked about the role of government funding in securing their own educational achievements, despite the fact that the remainder of the conversation was dominated by stories of their personal perseverance and explanations about why certain people do not have the "self-worth" or work ethic to succeed.

Several discussions characterized Opportunity for All as taking resources from other, more deserving groups. Again, drawing on understandings of "socialism," the prime cued up models of the competing fates of racial groups.

> *When you think about opportunity for all, people think less opportunity for me, more work for me, whereas, if you think prosperity grid, you have an itemized way to think about it — that it's not taking away from you specifically. Like if you say "opportunity for all" you're thinking wow, that guy's gonna get the same opportunities as I do even if, you know, I ran two miles extra.*
>
> *Boston, White Adult*

> *Participant 1: I read this one as being socialism, and I would agree, and I would say the history shows that socialism is not best for society as a whole because, how does a central group of people know what's best for everybody, everywhere, in their parts in country, or even state, or even city. How do they know what's best? I am definitely more of a free market type of person, and that brings about what's gonna be the best for that locality. If we have choice A, B & C, then people are gonna choose what's best for them. A central group of people is not gonna pick what's best for that group. That's what history shows.*
>
> *Participant 2: Well, if you're a free market person, how do you feel about making opportunities for other people? Are you against that?*
>
> *Participant 1: I am against forcing one group of people to make an opportunity for somebody else. I am against one group of people oppressing another group of people, and there should be protections there on whoever is taking advantage either through the theft, or deceit ...*
>
> *Cleveland, Mixed Race, Low Education*

Finally, some groups discussed how the Opportunity prime was "pie in the sky" and unlikely to be realized. Participants reasoned that since a level of inequality was inevitable, providing opportunities for all people would do little to fundamentally affect racial disparities.

> *I think that I think that's a great idea. I just think that there's a lot of things that just wouldn't work out smoothly in America. Two of the lines that stuck out to me was "this would ensure that we can continue to be a prosperous nation," but like as sad as it is like we are built on capitalism, so we're built on the fact that someone's gonna be the trash man, and someone's gonna be the CEO of, you know, Lehman Brothers. If we were all equal, everyone would be like, I want to be better than someone else, and so for you to be better than someone else, someone needs to be the trash guy.*
>
> *Boston, White Youth*

> *I think it's "pie in the sky." I mean we've always had poor. As long as mankind has existed on this earth there's always been poor, and there's always been wealthy, and that's the way it's gonna be. I'm not saying that we shouldn't try to*

help people. I mean, a person who has, should try to help those who haven't, but to think that somehow everybody's gonna be living fine, and there ain't gonna be any poor people; there ain't gonna be suffering, there ain't gonna be racial disparities, it's just inevitable.

Cleveland, Mixed Race, High Education

In these sessions the Opportunity for All prime did not perform as well as it had in previous FrameWorks research, when the executed as race-neutral value mapped on to everyone. It was susceptible to all of the dominant models that impeded more robust conversations about systemic and structural racism and ability of policies to address such disparities. While many participants "liked" or "agreed" with the prime, it did not lead to support of more progressive racial policies.

5. Stakeholder

Similar to the Opportunity for All prime, the results of the Stakeholder prime had negative entailments. The most significant obstacle was that the prime cued thinking in which racism was assumed to be an interpersonal phenomenon. In response to the Stakeholder idea, "opening people's hearts" or increasing contact between racial groups was the primary solution that participants proposed for addressing racial disparities.

It comes back to the problem of people living in separate places. 'Cause you might have clinics in the projects, and also have clinics in some really rich white neighborhood, and those people still aren't gonna be able to see each other because they're just geographically separated. Their communities are separate, so I think that they wouldn't be mixing, but they would still have a stake.

I think this doesn't go deep enough. Like saying that people have adequate access to business ownership. It just doesn't reach the root of the problem.

Boston, White Youth

I mean it's just not gonna do it because, you know, if I hate somebody because of their race then I have to have a change a heart … and until that happens, none of these other things are really gonna work.

Cleveland, Mixed Race, High Education

For most part a lot of races tend to live in the same areas together, so if you have people down in one area that's one race, they're only gonna see each other. It's important that everyone is able to see different cultures. I think that's the only way that we can really grow as people, is that people being able to work together and not just be around people that look like them all the time and come from the same places that they come from. So it would be a good idea if people allow other people to come into their community and not act negative towards them,

Baltimore, African American, High Education

Because participants were unable to understand racial disparities as systemic inequities, they struggled to see how increasing access to social resources to communities of color

would reduce racism. Participants continued to reason that racism was a feeling or an emotion that groups naturally have toward one another and therefore would be immune to policy interventions.

The Stakeholder prime was also susceptible to the Separate Fates model. Discussions of the prime focused on the futility of ensuring that people have a stake in their communities because, as many participants noted, certain groups simply do not "want" such resources. This was again connected to the assumption that different groups have different "cultures" — values and ways of life, rather than a lack of access to things like quality education, employment and health care.

> *If you give everyone a stake the whole country's gonna fall apart. There's so many idiots in this country.*
>
> <div align="right">*Los Angeles, Latino Youth*</div>

> *I traveled all over this country from Alaska all the way down, and I was amazed at the despair, and ignorance of a lot of people across this country, I've seen people live in hovels, I experienced incidences in Mississippi, and Louisiana when Katrina hit. A lot of those people were so used to complacency. When you go around this country, you'd be surprised at how many people are impoverished. A lot of the people have not been taught.*
>
> <div align="right">*Baltimore, African American, Low Education*</div>

> *I actually think this is one of the more dangerous ones because not many people care if they have a stake in America.*
>
> <div align="right">*Baltimore, African American Youth*</div>

> *Participant 1: It seems like these things are in place to some degree, but people just aren't interested in them, and what would make them interested in them in the future? I mean, it's not like people can't get active in their towns, or cities. There's plenty of opportunities for volunteer work. If they're not doing it now, what's to make me think they'd do them in the future? I just don't really see that happening.*

> *Participant 2: I agree. Like you said, the people that want to get involved in these kinds of things are already doing it, and I don't think trying to force people into these kind of community activities is gonna go too far. I mean, access to business ownership is great, but just saying that people who have equal access isn't, you know, isn't doing a whole lot. It starts with education like everybody says.*
>
> <div align="right">*Boston, White Youth*</div>

While support for quality education *for all* may be in line with a progressive policy agenda, one cannot assume that it works as an orienting value about common good. As will be discussed in more detail in the negotiation session, it appears that support for education was brought up by many participants because of its fit with the Self-Making Person model.

Like all the primes tested, there were positive effects and aspects of the Stakeholder prime. Following their exposure to the idea, participants were able to talk in depth about how certain resources and opportunities are lacking in certain communities. But again, discussions of inequalities among communities were always surrounded by arguments that individuals needed to be willing to take advantage of opportunities — and the reasoning for disparities remained, not the limited access provided by systems, but the limited motivation of individuals in systems.

> *I agree. This is ensuring that the opportunities exist. Especially ensuring that people have adequate access to business ownership that's basically ensuring that the opportunities are gonna be there. It's making you be in the place of making the decision for yourself ... whether you want to take it or not. So you no longer have an excuse. You can't say, oh this is not available to me. I can't get this. It's there for you whether you want it or not.*
>
> *Baltimore, African American Youth*

> *People should have a stake in their community and this is just one way of doing it, but I think there will probably be more effective ways of dealing with it. As I said, I think resources are a major problem and without the resources, having a stake in a community with no resources is nothing.*
>
> *Baltimore, African American, High Education*

There were less productive aspects of talk about communities. For some participants, community development was fundamentally different from public policies. For some, "grassroots" movements even worked in opposition to government policies. In other words, the "self-making" community should be able to develop the resources it needs without government intervention.

6. Protection and Futures/Legacy

The Protection and Future/Legacy primes had largely negative results and were therefore only tested in the first set of Peer Discourse Sessions in Cleveland. In the two groups in which the Protection prime was tested, it was overwhelmingly unsuccessful in shifting off the dominant models, and had a very short float time before groups managed to get back into default discussions about inept government and how certain groups lack a sense of responsibility for their future. For example, one conversation immediately devolved into how laws are ineffective at ensuring racial equality.

> *The people are ingenious. They find ways around you. You can create a law, and the thing is — how have the laws helped us so far? I mean, people talk about all the crime that's going on, well heck, look at all the laws we got. We've got a lot more laws than we did 200 years ago, that's for sure. Aren't they working? If they're not working then why create more of them?*
>
> *Cleveland, Mixed Race, High Education*

Conversations that ensued after the Future/Legacy prime similarly devolved into discussions about government inefficacy.

> *Are we talking about legislating again, or are we talking about just making decisions for yourself? If they're talking about legislating it — I truly don't believe you can do that. I don't believe you're gonna legislate people to do different things — to change. If we keep doing the same thing, and it's not working, well let's stop doing it, but how are we gonna do that? Change people's minds? Again, you can't pass a law that says stop thinking like that! So, I'm not sure exactly how that [affects] racial disparities.*
>
> <div align="right">Cleveland, Mixed Race, High Education</div>

> *We got a bunch of educated thieves working — running our government, and you can't trust none of those politicians, and somehow, in some way, success for mankind lies in some type of "moral" foundation, and, all these other things are fine. You know, I'm not saying God places a premium on ignorance, and that education isn't important, but it's not gonna solve the problem.*
>
> <div align="right">Cleveland, Mixed Race, High Education</div>

III. Negotiation

In the negotiation exercise, participants were divided into three groups and tasked with developing programs that would reduce racial disparities in either education, health care or small business ownership and to then convince the larger group to support their plans. The small groups developed in some cases very specific proposals about how to improve each issue area. The most promising outcome of this part of the peer discourse session was that participant assumptions shifted from perceiving racial disparities as natural, inevitable and immune to policy interventions to considerations and productive thinking about how the issue could be addressed. This finding speaks to the power of the perceptual shift that occurs when participants move from passive observers of the process to active participants in developing and planning social policies.

In this section, we discuss three findings from the sessions: participants' use of the "ripple effect" to explain and justify their proposals, the primes that most frequently entered negotiation discussions, and the avoidance of race in the groups' proposals.

1. The "Ripple Effect"

The negotiation exercise led to discussions in which participants spoke concretely about the possibility of social change and the reduction of racial inequalities. Similar to the discussions that followed the primes, participants frequently employed a "ripple effect" model of social change — in which change needs to begin in individual communities. This metaphor was invoked in several group negotiation discussions and, as noted, was generated by the participants themselves.

> *If I was the governor, I would choose small businesses because I think it starts in the community first. You have to do things community-wise before you can reach out to other things, and I think it starts with the community first, and small*

businesses I think play a significant role in the community. Job opportunities, sponsorships, just small businesses give that type of support to the communities.

Baltimore, African American Youth

So, our argument is that in order to get a good job, and to succeed in this world, you need to have a good education, and that for every one person that graduates, they are not only affecting themselves, and their future, but also their family's future because setting that example goes a long way. By going to college and having the ability and the equipment to do something like that, you are setting yourself up for numerous possibilities including the possibility of one day homeownership. The possibility of travel around the world. The possibility of meeting people from different cultures, and different backgrounds, and different races, that you may never have done before by not going on to higher education. By getting a better job after having this college education, you would be able to do things like feed your family better, stop going to McDonald's, and start going to Whole Foods, which in turn would have less people in health care. You wouldn't need it nearly as much.

We like to think of it as an economic and social ripple effect. If we feed this, it will better us.

Boston, White Adult

We think that business development could create a stronger community. And providing opportunity in jobs and it's kind of like a domino effect. Once a few individuals get that opportunity, they might be an example for other ones to follow. So it would also create more independence, self-sufficiency, providing strength. Also it will also make it easier once you build that strength to be able to access better education and health. And it might also change the way other groups view that particular community. It might break down some of those stereotypes where certain groups are thought of as lazy, or not as hardworking.

Los Angeles, Latino Adult

The ripple effect was brought up most often by subgroups charged with solving racial disparities in education and small business ownership. However, while facilitating concrete discussions of social change, the ripple effect was not without its pitfalls. First, the ripple metaphor identified communities and individuals within those communities as the *source* of social inequities and social change. The problem was framed fundamentally as an individual's inability to achieve, succeed, or create positive change. Social structures and systems were obscured as participants reasoned about the ripple effect through their dominant cultural models of self-makingness and Separate Fates.

2. Opportunities versus Material Resources

During the negotiation exercise, most participants favored increasing *opportunities*, rather than changing the distribution of actual *material resources*. For several participants, ensuring equity in opportunities meant instilling certain values in people, such as the desire to pursue higher education, own a business, or learning to live healthy

lifestyles, rather than ensuring that public schools are well funded, health care is affordable, or that potential small business owners have access to financial resources. Educational aspirations were understood to be easily instilled in young people. Educational opportunities also accommodated the Self-Making Person model: When people want to get educated, they can achieve other kinds of social successes. Again, racial disparities continued to be conceptualized as a problem of individual motivation and not an inequitable distribution of social resources. Not surprisingly, at the end of the exercise, several people abandoned their own proposals and argued that education was the most important way to reduce racial disparities — citing the increase in opportunity that such a focus afforded as an important factor in their decision.

> *So we had a very, very good discussion. The reason that we believe that education is where we need to put that funding is because it's very much a root of other issues that are on the table, and resolving those as a whole. Just like when we're talking about setting up plans now to help the future, this is kind of something very normal. I always bring these back to what we all can agree on, and maybe even things we've been taught in our childhood, going to school, or college, or whatever it might be, we know that if we do something at this time it will set up a great result or goal for the future. We know that we have to put in the effort.*
>
> *Cleveland, Mixed Race, Low Education*

> *But solving the racial disparity problem in education solves the racial disparity in by reaching our kids when they are young. Give them a sense of morality, a sense of right and wrong. Why is this wrong, and why is this right? Why should I do what's right? And once they get an understanding of that, it's gonna directly impact racial disparity, and healthcare, and employment, and it's just gonna have tremendous impact, and there's a direct correlation between education levels, and success in employment, and access to superior healthcare.*
>
> *Cleveland, Mixed Race, Low Education*

> *I'm gonna break the mold, and not vote for my own plan. I'm gonna go with education. They said a little bit to us before, but I really believe that education is the ultimate goal because it affects every facet of people's lives. Essentially, if you can get a good education, make more money, then you're able to start your own business, and you're able to afford health care, and educating the most people we can is important to the prosperity of our nation ... If people are educated, they can carry this into practice, and they're likely to go back to their own community, and take the things they learned in college, and try to better that, try to fix problems in their community, and I just see people with college educations being much more local leaders, and much more capable members of society, much more productive, much more willing to go back, and make differences in their society, and change things for the better. And by putting their better foot forward, it's gonna give people, the best ideas of their race, and a lot of prejudices are based on either things that have been taught to us, or based on things we've experienced only slightly, and if we can break those molds by seeing all these diverse people,*

coming into our neighborhoods, and creating their own jobs, and making innovations, it's really gonna allow people to be on the same field.

Boston, White Youth

As the above quotes illustrate, the focus on education is conceptualized as a way to "fix" young people of color by giving them a sense of "right and wrong," or encouraging them to "break the mold" and demonstrate their capabilities to other, presumably white and middle-class communities. While imagining ways that racial inequalities might be addressed, the Separate Fates model still structured the fundamental ways that people think about the causes and solutions to racial inequities in the United States. Implicit in many of the conversations was that educational "opportunities" would allow certain successful people to lift their communities and demonstrate to the rest of society their worthiness and self-reliance.

3. Employing the Primes

One measure of the success of the primes is whether or not participants employ them in later parts of the sessions or if they were user-friendly. In this case, there were subgroups that utilized the primes to convince others of the significance of their plans. Interestingly, the Stakeholder, Interdependence and Ingenuity primes were cited most often in the subgroup discussions.

I think our plan most closely aligns with the investment of the stakeholder example.

We all voted that as the best.

Right, stakeholder. Yeah, we all agreed on that. So, I think because the small business approach, because it's transformational, people are invested in the results.

Boston, White Adult

Well, we think it's really important to increase health care, especially because the fact that someone's race determines what kind of health care they get is sort of outrageous. Health care shouldn't be a privilege. So, we thought that if we could get this grant money, we would develop programs that will have a long-term effect of reducing on health care costs, and educate people on food, on exercise. You could invent programs that could have an interdependence effect; people will come together.

Boston, White Youth

Use ingenuity. Go to the grass roots, talk to employees. What kind of skills would you like to have — use them as resources for ideas. Basically, just think outside the box.

Cleveland, Mixed Race, High Education

When you get a business going yourself, you have a stake in it, and you want it to succeed. You get job opportunities. You are able to hire people from your community to work in your area.

<div align="right">

Los Angeles, Latino Adult

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During the negotiation session, the Interdependence and Ingenuity primes proved to be user-friendly — an additional measure of their success in shifting thinking about racial disparities. Although the Stakeholder frame did not perform as well in the experimental part of the sessions, several participants successfully employed the language and concepts embedded in the prime in discussing their plans to address racial disparities. This suggests that additional research might refine the Stakeholder prime so as to avoid its more unproductive aspects and capitalize on the ease with which it seeped into participant usage.

4. Avoiding Race

When making their cases to the larger group, very few subgroups directly explained how their proposals would impact racial disparities unless asked by the moderator. Despite primed conversations that were focused on racial inequality, participants still had difficulty in speaking directly about racism. For some participants, skirting around race resulted from the belief that *economic disparities* were the more important source of inequality. Yet, for many others, the inability or implicit unwillingness to address the issue head-on demonstrates the difficulty Americans have with engaging directly and explicitly with the issue of racial disparities.

Conclusion and Communications Implications

The Peer Discourse Sessions revealed clear communications implications. The first lesson is that the dominant models that structure public thinking about race — Historical Progress and Personal Racism, the Self-Making Person and Separate Fates — are extremely powerful. These implicit patterns of assumptions about race in America are highly accessible to most Americans and have the effect of derailing conversations of how policies can impact racial disparities. Our research shows conclusively that if advocates and experts are not explicitly aware of the existence of these patterns and the use of specific reframing strategies, messages of racial justice are destined to be eaten by the cultural models that currently lurk in the swamp of public thinking.

All primes were vulnerable to being overtaken by the following dominant models: the Self-Making Person, Separate and Competing Fates, and Ineffective Government. When cued, these models immediately led participants to narrowly define racial disparities in terms of individual actions and to decrease support for social policies that would address such disparities. The use of the Self-Making Person, Personal Racism and Separate Fates models has a narrowing effect — they boil down complex interactions among individuals, contextual determinants and systems to either the presence or absence of individual motivation and internal fortitude — resulting in understandings of the world in which events are the exclusive product of individual drive and internal motivation. From a reform perspective, these ways of understanding the world present unique challenges in

broadening the lens and creating support for public policies that work to improve systems rather than individuals.

Unproductive cultural models about government were present in all Peer Discourse Sessions, but were particularly powerful in the youth groups of color. When activated, the dominant assumptions of ineffective, corrupt and wasteful government led to predictable discussions about the futility of social policies in alleviating racial disparities and ultimately resulted in powerful feelings of disengagement and apathy. It is clear that when these understandings of government become active, even solutions-focused communications are dead in their tracks.

There was no clear "winner" among the primes — all primes were susceptible in different ways to the dominant models lurking in the swamp. However, the Ingenuity, Interdependence and Prosperity Grid primes were relatively more successful. These primes allowed participants to see and have conversations about how the lack of resources available to poor communities of color is a systemic cause of racial disparities — a fundamental shift in how Americans think about and understand disparities. More specifically, the Ingenuity prime had the most power in inoculating against the Self-Making Person model; Interdependence worked to emphasize common good; and the Prosperity Grid garnered support for the redistribution of social resources.

In addition, the Ingenuity, Interdependence and Prosperity Grid primes were successful in shifting people's focuses from disparities among *individuals* to disparities among *communities*. This seemingly slight perceptual shift is highly significant for two reasons. First, it moves racial inequalities from the hearts and minds of "bad" individuals and embeds them in the places and systems. This shift leads to discussions that are more about how we might change the places where people live. Second, when people focus on disparities between places, they are less likely to pathologize poor people of color and discuss their separate values, ethics and motivations to explain their "lack" of success. Rather, participants begin to consider how lack of access to social resources might structure one's life chances. FrameWorks research in other issue areas has shown that the "fairness between places" frame is successful in avoiding discussions that focus on individuals. Furthermore, as one participant noted, "my race is my community." That is, for some people, communities are imagined as racial groups and therefore communicating about differences between communities may avoid the communications traps that arise when advocates talk about the differences between groups. These findings should be tested more explicitly in future research.

One important distinction between the Prosperity Grid prime and the Interdependence and Ingenuity primes is that while Prosperity Grid is a simplifying model — a metaphorical process that clarifies an expert understanding — Ingenuity and Interdependence are clearly "values" — general claims about desirable social or personal conditions. This distinction and the positive effects of these three primes suggest that these elements may be particularly powerful when coupled in communications. That is, our research suggests that communications that employ the Prosperity Grid simplifying model *with* the Ingenuity and Interdependence values would be particularly effective in shifting away from dominant models.

There are also more general communications lessons that emerged from these sessions. Advocates may be tempted to use class as a proxy to talk about racial disparities. Our findings show that advocates should not succumb to this temptation. Exclusive focus on class disparities is unlikely to translate to more progressive ideas about racial inequities. Especially among white participants, a focus on class is often a way to *deny* the saliency of race in American life. As our Peer Discourse Sessions demonstrate, conversations about class often devolved into discussions of reverse racism and the plight of poor white Americans, even among Peer Discourse Sessions of color. Furthermore, using class as a proxy for race in communications derails messages about race — messages about class consume and obscure those about race. The communications lesson of this finding is clear: For most Americans, class does not stand in for race and class — the two are competing but not unequal frames such that mixing them into messages is likely to focus attention on one and crowd out the other.

The primes tested were most successful when they inoculated conversations from the zero-sum thinking that dominated unprimed conversations about race. When the Separate Fates model overcame in group discussions, participants' rationale for emphasizing the mutual benefit of more egalitarian social arrangements was far ranging. Some emphasized self-interest, such as the need for better access to heath care for all to protect themselves from infectious diseases like the H1N1 virus. However, participants also expressed more altruistic reasons for supporting policies that reduce racial disparities, such as wanting to care for one's "fellow man" or feeling responsibility as your "brother's keeper." Again, the communications implications are clear: Successful primes tap into the public's sense of our shared fate and avoid triggering models that incite zero-sum thinking, where what benefits one racial group hurts others.

Finally, many advocates and policymakers have pinned their hopes for progressive policy support on demographic changes. The thinking here is that, as the U.S. becomes a more diverse society and as young people, who are understood to be less racist and prejudiced than their parents and grandparents, get older, more people will express commitment to policies that address disparities. Racial equality will become a legitimate issue of public concern. While our sample of youth sessions was small, our findings suggest that it may not be wise to hang hopes of reducing racial disparities on the youth and demographic changes without intentional framing that seeks to change the public discourse that influences all of us, even young people. First, we found that conversations in youth groups were even more susceptible to unproductive models about government. The notion that young people, and particularly young people of color, have a new sense of agency and engagement with public policy matters appears misguided. Programs and policies were derided as ineffective and wasteful, even while participants acknowledged how things like Pell Grants and government subsidized loans helped them get an education. Because the government is conceptualized as a foreign entity, people have a difficult time thinking about the everyday forms that government takes. Our research shows that the youth may not explicitly espouse racist or prejudiced ideas, but that they employ the same dominant cultural models in understanding race — suggesting their support for race-based policies is unlikely to vary substantially from that of their parents.

***About FrameWorks Institute*:** The FrameWorks Institute is an independent nonprofit organization founded in 1999 to advance science-based communications research and practice. The Institute conducts original, multi-method research to identify the communications strategies that will advance public understanding of social problems and improve public support for remedial policies. The Institute's work also includes teaching the nonprofit sector how to apply these science-based communications strategies in their work for social change. The Institute publishes its research and recommendations, as well as toolkits and other products for the nonprofit sector at www.frameworksinstitute.org.

Please follow standard APA rules for citation, with FrameWorks Institute as publisher. O'Neil, Moira. (2003). "*My Race is My Community:" Peer Discourse Sessions on Racial Disparities.* Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

Appendix: Tested Primes

Ingenuity

Some people believe that now is the best time for action — that our country needs to create new policies that reduce racial disparities and to expand those existing innovative programs that have been effective in reducing these disparities. According to this view, innovative states and regions have been able to design high-quality programs that address the wide variety of reasons that such disparities exist. These programs have been successful in reducing disparities in areas like high school graduation rates, business ownership and infant mortality — but many states and counties don't have access to these innovations. Employing American ingenuity and innovation to design new programs is one way to reduce racial disparities. Is the idea of ingenuity a useful way to think about reducing racial disparities?

Interdependence

Some people believe that now is a great time to work on reducing racial disparities because what affects one part of the nation affects us all. According to this view, we need to have programs that get people to work together to solve our social problems. We also need programs that give greater support to those areas where people are already working together across communities to ensure that we all thrive. This helps to bond our communities together and deal effectively with problems. It also illuminates the ways that we depend on each other to succeed. In essence, promoting policies like this recognizes that we only succeed as a nation when all parts of the nation are in good shape. Is the idea of our interdependence on one another a useful way to think about reducing racial disparities?

Prosperity Grid

Some people believe that now is a great time to work on increasing the flow of opportunity through the grid of American institutions as a way of reducing racial disparities. According to this view, we can increase access to critical services and develop the infrastructure and talent that all neighborhoods need to support their residents. For example, ensuring that all neighborhoods have access to a hospital that can treat heart attacks or strokes with life-saving equipment, banks that make loans for small businesses, and schools that have up-to-date facilities. Some areas of the country have a strong connection to these institutions and are able to plug into the grid with relative ease — other areas are truly off the grid. Making sure all areas are connected to the grid is one way to reduce racial disparities. Is the idea of the prosperity grid a useful way to think about reducing racial disparities?

Opportunity for All

Some people believe that now is a great time to do more work to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to achieve. According to this view, we need to ensure that people in all communities get the opportunities they need to succeed in ways that secure both a better quality of life for their families as well as for the future prosperity of the nation as a

whole. For example, allotting greater funding so that schools in poor neighborhoods have additional resources and can attract quality teachers — this would ensure that we continue to be a prosperous nation. Helping entrepreneurs get start-up funds from local banks, and ensuring that all neighborhoods have access to health care prevention and treatment — these policies level the playing field so that people can get ahead. Making sure that there is opportunity for all contributes to our nation's strength and can help us reduce racial disparities. Is the idea of opportunity a useful way to think about reducing racial disparities?

Stakeholder

Some people believe that now is a great time to pursue policies and programs that make sure we all have a stake in the direction our country is going as a way of reducing racial disparities. According to this view, we can increase access to critical services and develop the infrastructure and talent that Americans need to have a real stake in what happens to the country. For example, ensuring that people have adequate access to business ownership would be one way to increase their sense of stakeholding in America. By getting young people engaged in internships in community institutions, they become part of the community. When adults have local schools and clinics that they can participate in, they gain a stake in seeing that community life goes well. So by increasing people's stake, we improve the country and reduce racial disparities. Is the stakeholder idea a useful way to think about reducing racial disparities?

Future/Legacy

Some people believe that now is a great time to work on making decisions today based on what we want for the future of our country in terms of racial disparities. According to this view, some programs and policies we create today won't show benefits for many years, but making these decisions now to aggressively address disparities will have positive effects down the line in improving our future. For example, we should work hard to improve our schools so that kids have the resources they need today to thrive, develop and prepare for the challenges our country will face tomorrow. Improving health care access early in life also makes for a better future. When we grow new businesses in neighborhoods where they have not been supported in the past, we grow a future for those communities and for business in our country as a whole. So making decisions now that will benefit us in the future is a way to decrease racial disparities. Is the idea of thinking about the future a useful way to think about reducing racial disparities?