



Thinking About Race
Findings from Cognitive Elicitations

Prepared for the Frameworks Institute
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INTRODUCTION

Recognizing that the topic of race in America has been approached from the widest possible variety of directions, including various schools of political science, cultural criticism, sociology, anthropology, moral philosophy and biology, over several centuries, this report does not attempt a comprehensive account of Americans' thoughts about race. It focuses instead on a particular line of observation and analysis that has been largely undeveloped in previous discussions of the topic. This line of inquiry, we assert, has the potential to lead to important new insights, as well as to concrete, practical recommendations for communicators. This analysis concerns the basic cognitive and cultural models of the world – i.e. basic, familiar and widely shared understandings – that underlie attitudes about race in current American society. Our experience in investigations of a wide range of public issues in American life suggests that some of the attitudinal challenges faced by advocates stem from patterns of reasoning that individuals do not articulate directly, and may not even be entirely aware of. The goal of this research, therefore, is to surface ways of thinking about race that may be derailing discussions without being directly addressed by those trying to change the public conversation on the topic.

The ultimate goal of the research is to assist the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and its philanthropic partners JEHT Foundation and W.K. Kellogg Foundation as well as their grantees and the broader nonprofit community to be more effective in moving the public conversation about race forward, and the analyses laid out in the report constitute hypotheses which can be the basis for further testing and refinement as additional phases of research are carried out.

Disparities and the Invisibility of White Privilege as Central Questions

The ultimate question that research on attitudes towards race must address concerns disparities – more specifically, perceptions about the origins of disparities between the lives and life chances of Whites and minorities. This is the reality “on the ground” that advocates are working hard to change.

A second focus of the elicitation research, less directly related to policy but more fundamental, concerns thinking about the nature of race itself. Here, the research takes its starting point in a hypothesis put forward by FrameWorks research partners Bales and Gilliam to the effect that White privilege and Whiteness itself are key pieces of the puzzle. Bales and Gilliam hypothesize that White privilege tends to be invisible to most Whites (but not to non-Whites), making it less likely that Whites will support racially conscious policies such as affirmative action. In these researchers' view, attention to this question has the potential to move us beyond some conceptual approaches which have dominated theoretical approaches to racism and racial disparities – in particular, the dichotomy between the “cultural” view that each race has “earned” whatever success (or lack thereof) it currently enjoys through its values and behaviors; and the competing “structural” view, which sees racial disparities as the consequence of external factors such as inherited wealth and beneficial social networks.

One important goal of the elicitation research was to examine the thinking surrounding race with Bales' and Gilliam's hypotheses about the invisibility of White Privilege in mind. At the same time, these researchers were also attentive to the dominant explanations advanced by civil rights groups and advocates, such as structural racism, and listened for evidence of this and other explanations in informants' thinking.

RESEARCH METHOD

Focusing on the Thinking of White Americans

While the study that this report is based on involved conversations with Whites, African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, and Asian-Americans (see discussion of Methods, below), the analysis focuses largely on the thinking of Whites – first, in order to explore the invisibility of White Privilege, and second, because we believe that it is the thinking of the White majority which has the greatest causal effects not simply on current conditions and disparities, but also on the “national conversation” on race.

Furthermore, the analysis focuses on the thinking of racial “moderates.” While there are a number of strong views held by ideologues and by especially thoughtful lay people on various sides of the issues, the most significant problems in current thinking, the stubborn patterns that must be broken if real change is to happen, lie in the thinking of Americans who represent the “center of gravity” that must be shifted. The great majority of subjects we spoke to represent this category – people who are not strongly inclined towards either of the commonly identified patterns of thinking about racial disparities – the view that disparities reflect the shortcomings (and even inferiority) of minority individuals themselves, nor the view that racist Whites are holding minorities down, more or less deliberately. Average White Americans certainly have cognitive access to both of these stories, and reach for them at times, but their subtler patterns of thinking about race are not very recognizable in either of those extremes. It is the patterns in the thinking of reasonable people in reasonable mode which represent the most important and least recognized target for advocates’ communications.

Differences between the thinking of Whites and others are referred to in various discussions in the report – and, equally importantly, data about the thinking of minority groups provided invaluable points of comparison which put the thinking of the White majority into clearer relief.

Subjects

The analysis presented here is based on intensive one-on-one interviews conducted by Cultural Logic with a diverse group of 50 individuals in California, Oregon, Illinois, Mississippi, Alabama, Rhode Island, and the Washington DC metro area. Subjects were recruited through a process of ethnographic networking – researchers began with “seed contacts” in each of the target communities, and developed a pool of subjects from which a diverse range was selected for interviewing.¹ The sample included 31 women and 19 men. Subjects’ ages ranged widely – 1 subject was eighteen, 15 subjects were in their 20s, 16 in their 30s, 7 in their 40s, and 11 were 50 or older. The sample included 19 European-Americans, 10 African-Americans, 9 Hispanic-Americans, 11 Asian-Americans, and one Native American. A range of political orientations was also included in the sample (15 conservatives, 5 independents, and 30 liberals), as were a range of educational backgrounds (high-school only to graduate degree) and occupations.

The Cognitive Approach

Subjects participated in one-on-one, semi-structured recorded interviews (“cognitive elicitations”), conducted according to methods adapted from psychological anthropology. The goal of this methodology is to approximate a natural conversation while also encouraging the subject to reason about a topic from a wide variety of perspectives, including some that are unexpected and deliberately challenging. This type of data-gathering – and the analysis of transcripts, based on techniques of cognitive anthropology and linguistics – yields insights not available from standard interview, polling or focus group techniques. It does not look for statements of opinion, but for patterns of thought that may even be unconscious. It does not look for familiarity with issues in the news, but for more well-established and long-standing, default reasoning patterns. Some of the clues to these important patterns come from topics that are *omitted*, moments of *inconsistency* where one understanding clashes with another, and the *metaphors* people use to talk about a subject. Furthermore, the method is designed to explore the differences between *rhetorical mode* – in which people define themselves in opposition to other groups and perspectives, and repeat ideas and phrases familiar from public discourse – and *reasonable mode* – in which they reflect their own experiences, think for themselves, and are more open to new information. Put briefly, this analysis focuses on *how* people think rather than *what* they think. (See the Appendix for a fuller discussion of Cultural Logic’s cognitive approach.)

Cognitive research works on the premise that unconscious, default understandings of the world (cognitive and cultural *models*) can guide people’s understanding of an issue in ways they don’t even recognize. One

¹ See discussion of “snowball sampling” as a basic technique of ethnographic research in H. Russell Bernard’s *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, 2nd Edition*. 1995. (pp.97ff).

of the most important aspects of these default models is that they often lead people to understandings that they might reject at other moments of more careful reflection. For example, average Americans recognize on an intellectual level that America's fortunes are tied to economic and other developments abroad – yet a habitual conception of America as a world unto itself obscures this understanding, and creates a cognitive “blind-spot.” People who *know better on some level*, still slip easily into a mistaken view because of well-established, default understandings of the world. These hidden, underlying understandings can be very difficult to challenge and displace, and, if they are not accounted for, they can derail communications.

FINDINGS

Racism per se?

Most Americans are aware of the problem of racism, and most express strong disapproval of racism. At the same time, most of the people we spoke with, including liberals, had trouble accepting or even thoroughly grasping the kinds of remedies for addressing race-based disparities proposed by advocates. The most basic finding of this research is that the (White) public's thinking about race and about race-based disparities is limited and distorted by *modes of reasoning that have little or nothing to do with traditional notions of racism*. While elicitation research confirms that Whites continue to hold counterproductive views with respect to race and racial progress, the findings also suggest that some of the traditional goals of advocate communications may be misplaced. That is, the analysis points to problems that would persist even if racism as usually understood, and even covert racism, vanished tomorrow.

Racial issues are at a stage where a great deal of very hard work has already been accomplished, and the important work that remains is in some ways even harder because it means bringing about change at even deeper levels of understanding. To take an analogy from another issue area, child abuse is a problem which a generation of advocates worked hard to bring to the attention of the public. Now that most Americans acknowledge the problem, though, the dominant image – of atrocities committed in the home – actually places limits on people's ability to understand the social context that contributes to the problem, and the role of the broader community in reducing it. Likewise on matters related to race, key battles have largely been won – regarding the shared humanity that transcends all races, for example, and the moral shame of bigotry. But there are fundamental patterns of reasoning, and fundamental elements of the American worldview, which continue to drive people to racially damaging views nonetheless.

Confirming the invisibility of White privilege

Two of these default patterns do much to confirm Bales' and Gilliam's hypothesis – namely, that the invisibility of White privilege for Whites is highly relevant to the cognition of racism and disparities. Elicitation research suggests, first, that Whites' show a strong "cognitive blindness" to the real causal forces which lead to disparities, and that this blindness is related to default modes of reasoning in terms of individuals rather than larger contexts. Secondly, we conclude that attitudes toward race are shaped by a cognitively powerful model of the "Self-Making Person," which relates closely to American understandings of both freedom and success. Through the lens of this model, being White is practically defined as the exemplar of a state of self-determination and therefore an excellent fit with the American model of Success. By contrast Blacks and other minorities are easily seen as determined more by their ethnic qualities and less by their individual will and, therefore, provide a poor cultural fit with American notions of Success. Both of these patterns greatly contribute to the invisibility of White privilege, and neither is based on racism as traditionally defined.

The next sections of the report discuss these two findings in detail.

Confirming the lingering relevance of familiar theoretical models

As discussed above, one of the motivations behind this research and the larger Frameworks project was an interest in moving beyond traditional analyses of the causes of disparities – including the dichotomy between cultural and structural views. Elicitation research, however, establishes that theories which are inadequate from an analytical perspective, may nonetheless be very active in the minds of average (White) Americans. While "Personal Racism" – e.g. a conscious belief in the inferiority of minorities or in the rightness of a social hierarchy that puts Whites above everyone else – is no longer felt to be a major cause of disparities, this prototype is still strong in public reasoning, with counterproductive effects. And while the failure of minority (especially Black) responsibility may also be an outdated construct from the perspective of experts, a version of this model is still easily reached for, and explicitly referred to, by average Americans, both White and otherwise.

Black-White relations as a prototype

While the elicitations included conversations with, and about, various different racial and ethnic groups, the analysis reflects the fact that Black-White relations had a special prominence in most of the discussions.

It just seems when people think about race they always immediately go to the Black. (Hispanic lib. fem, CA)

This pattern undoubtedly has many sources, including the high cultural profile of Civil Rights leaders and the special history of African-Americans, as opposed to other minorities. In addition, the historical intractability of racism towards Blacks gives this sort of racism a particular cognitive clarity. Interacting with these facts is a basic cognitive tendency to draw a two-way distinction between Self and Other, Us and Them, In-group and Out-group. This unconscious pattern means that while the United States is home to many, many ethnic groups, there is a tendency for people's thinking to be structured in twos. In the public mind and national discourse, Blacks are the prototype minority, and end up standing for a set of associations which are also applied to other groups. (Conversely, there are also minority groups which end up becoming associated with the "White end of the scale.")

An important implication for communicators is that *the inclusive "people of color" concept, which has gained universal currency among scholars and advocates, has made less progress entering the minds of average White Americans, and should not be counted on as a touchstone for communication purposes.*

THE “DISAPPEARANCE” OF RACISM

In this section we discuss a default mode of thinking, not directly connected with race, which works to obscure the forces that operate against minorities. When a fact is incompatible with basic cultural models and cognitive tendencies, we can be made to see it for an instant, but it is hard to hold onto as a mental image; it is “hard to think,” falling outside of the frames that we repeatedly use to make sense of the world.

“EAS Thinking”

One of the fundamental cognitive patterns that plays an important role in shaping understandings of race is a default mode of thinking in terms of “Everyday Action Scenarios.” Everyday Action Scenarios are scenes which are common and tangible dimensions of day-to-day experience – driving a car, talking to a coworker, eating a meal, opening a door, etc. These EAS experiences share several key features: They are concrete and tangible in nature; they take place in short time spans and at “human scale” (rather than a microscopic or societal scale, for example); and they involve cause-and-effect that we intuitively grasp. Put most simply, it is easy to default to a mode of thinking where individuals are in focus, rather than broader contexts.

The Doctrine of Personal Responsibility

The moral belief that individuals are responsible for their own fates reinforces and is reinforced by the small-picture understandings of EAS thinking. While conservatives are especially likely to be explicit about personal responsibility, it is a value which guides the thinking of all Americans to some degree. And, as with other models discussed in this paper, the Personal Responsibility stance exists both as an explicit ideology and as a deeper cultural model which makes it difficult to even see any alternatives. Many interview subjects, including sympathetic liberals, expressed the view that “anyone can make it in America,” and that a person’s ultimate success depends, more than anything else, on his or her own efforts.

Q: What is success, what does that mean?

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

Q: Where does it come from?

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

As an ideology, this stance obviously works against the position that there are societal factors which reduce the odds of success for particular groups. Even more insidiously, the cultural model creates a cognitive distorting effect, hiding from view the very real ways in which context partially determines life outcomes. There is a powerfully self-contained (and therefore self-limiting) quality to mental scenarios involving individuals, their actions, and their outcomes. In the absence of equally powerful alternative explanations or experiences, the ideology and unconscious beliefs about personal responsibility are very difficult to dislodge.

Personal racism as prototype

While experts and thoughtful observers of racial issues have developed rich typologies of racism, the term consistently evokes a particular prototype image in the minds of lay Americans. This is the familiar cultural model we will call Personal Racism, in which a racist individual feels and/or expresses negative attitudes towards another person because of race.

Q: How would you define racism, or what does racism mean?

A: *I guess when people say derogatory things about a different race. (Asian indep. fem, CA)*

Racism is in my opinion when you treat somebody differently because you don't like the color ... "skin" is not really a good way to say it, but you don't respect somebody of that race or whatever race you are talking about. (Hispanic lib. fem, VA)

Q: *What is racism?*

A: *Racism is person being judged strictly by the color of their skin ... It's not paying attention to what's on the inside of a person or a person's ability, only what you see on the outside. ... Racism is people that can't get past cosmetics. All they can see is the outer appearance. (White cons. male, AL)*

The fact that scenarios like these are prototypical is, on one level, unsurprising, but there is still something here that needs explaining. After all, explicit expressions of personal prejudice have declined sharply, as nearly all our interview subjects observed. (Exactly what this decline means, and the extent to which it represents "improvement" is another question.) The central image associated with racism is one that most people see played out less and less.

One important reason that Personal Racism remains prototypical is that it is played out by individuals, in human-scale episodes, rather than at a larger scale, and fits our default, Everyday Action mode of thinking.

The limiting effects of the prototype on understanding are clear. Many of the most pernicious effects of contemporary racism are not played out in encounters between individuals. Rather they are "statistical" in nature.

Statistical Racism

Rather than borrowing terms such as structural or institutional racism, which have been given a variety of meanings, we will refer to "statistical racism." As we will use it, the term makes no specific claims about the causes of disparities, other than acknowledging that there are external factors which reduce the chances of success for minorities. Beyond that, it is merely a reference to conditions which can best be observed through the use of statistics. An important fact about Statistical Racism is that its effects occur, by definition, at the aggregate level of the community, or other large group, rather than the individual.

The shift from an era of explicit Personal Racism to an era in which racial disparities are perpetuated despite the (relative) lack of overt racial hostility poses special cognitive challenges for those who do not feel the effects of the new situation directly.

Cognitive distortions

- Racism "disappears."

Even though the situation of minorities might in principle be worse than it was before, the problem seems to be vanishing, because it does not fit common beliefs and modes of understanding.

There might be small groups that will be alienated, but overall, I think it's much better than what it was. (White cons. fem, IL)

Personally I think that America as a whole as far as race is concerned has really, really come a long way. That is my own personal belief. (White lib. fem, OR)

I think maybe by the time our children are in positions of power, everybody will be equal, but there's so many of the old school that are still around ... (White lib. fem, RI)

Note that this pattern applies much more to Whites than to minorities, who tend to feel that racism is still quite real, even if it is harder to “see.”

Q: Do you think there's a difference between racism of years ago and racism of today in the US?

A: Yes. Racism of years ago was more open. You know, there was no consequence back then. If they made racial slurs or anything there was no one to answer to. And now, there's still a lot of racism, but it's just hidden because of the consequences ... (Hispanic lib. fem, CA)

This understanding of “covert racism” is one of the most frequently cited phenomena in minorities’ discussions of race.

Q: What's the difference between racism years ago and racism today, if any? This is in the U.S.

A: Years ago would probably be very overt. In your face, and more or less without any / because of without any fear of, what is it, punishment? And when I say "years ago," I'm talking, probably 70s. Back in the 70s. Now, if it happens, it's much more discreet, and if so it's carefully worded. More or less due to legal exposure. (Asian lib. male, CA)

- Whites seem to suffer from racism just as much as minorities

If the prototype image of racism is a personal episode, then it is natural to see that hostility can run both ways, and to ignore the wider and much more significant (statistical) effects suffered by minorities but not Whites.

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

- It is easy for Whites to feel that minorities are paranoid.

It is easy for Whites to dismiss suggestions that there are forces operating against minorities, since they can neither experience nor grasp these forces. The forces seem like fantasy.

How long ago was [slavery]? A hundred years? At least a hundred years, right? Black people are mayors, congressmen, doctors, lawyers. What have they got to complain about? They've got the same opportunities I have. I think their only handicap is if they think, you know, "I'm being crapped on because I'm Black." (White cons. male, AL)

- It is easy for minorities to develop conspiracy theories.

Even in cases where disparities are not caused by malice, or deliberate action on the part of Whites – but by structural factors such as the carryover of advantages from previous generations – it is natural for those who experience the disparities to understand them as the products of deliberate action, since this kind of explanation is a better fit with EAS thinking.

The rich [White] man runs the government. The big oil companies run the government. And as long as you have people like that, they are not willing to leave that and let me walk in the door. (Black lib. male, OR)

- People are confused/conflicted about whether things have gotten better.

Many people expressed the sense that racism is “going away,” as though this were a natural and inevitable evolution – seemingly part of the gradual and universal improvement of the world. Importantly, though, few people were able to explain this improvement in a convincing way. When they tried, they usually ended up “begging the question,” describing effects – such as the increasing number of African Americans in high profile positions – rather than causes.

Q: You said that in your generation it's getting better, it's getting different. Why do you think it's changing?

A: I think we're exposed to it more.

Q: Exposed to what?

A: Like just being around people of different race and / yeah, I'm contradicting myself, but like at school. They're at school and I'm not interacting with them, but you see that they're there and they're getting the same degree at the end of the 4 years that you're getting, so why are they any less qualified? I mean maybe it's media showing you that this person can get just as good a job and can be just as smart and nowadays I think they're putting a lot bigger effort in TV as far as commercials making it look a little more integrated. (White cons. female, CA)

In short, Whites often seem oblivious to the fact that hard work went into changing both the realities and the understandings surrounding race. The sense that racial problems are simply going away is natural if Personal Racism, an easily grasped evil, is becoming less of a feature of society.

On the other hand, since disparities are still quite evident, it is also easy for people to be pessimistic and to feel that there are still real problems. In the end, Whites “toggle” back and forth between optimistic and pessimistic views, without being able to offer a clear resolution to the seeming paradox.

- History becomes irrelevant.

From the perspective of Everyday Action Scenario thinking, history is invisible, or at best irrelevant. This mode of thinking reduces individuals to their own current situation, and obscures causal links with the past.

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

Note that the attempt to erase history is not a rhetorical move on the part of an ideologically driven elite, but the default perspective of a liberal woman (in this particular case, a woman married to a Black man) whose thinking is simply limited by default patterns of understanding.

- Disparities seem, to Whites, to be the fault of the minorities themselves.

Once Personal Racism has declined, there is no longer a significant “visible” causal force keeping minorities from succeeding, and the disparities (which remain visible) seem to have no external explanation. Even Whites who consider themselves liberal and are inclined to support Affirmative Action, for example, can easily default to this view – at least in part because the actual causes of the problem are “hard to think.”

They've got to understand, you want an opportunity, nobody makes it happen for you. You make it happen. You've got to want it, you've got to have the drive for it. (White lib. fem, RI)

- Vivid, anecdotal examples seem to “prove” that there is no force operating against minorities.

The success of Spike Lee, Condoleeza Rice, Colin Powell etc. are very visible. Since this success concerns individuals, it is very easy and satisfying to grasp, and has a strong effect on reasoning.

Q: How can we explain the fact that many black people do succeed, such as the CEOs of American Express, Avis, Time-Warner, the Secretary of State ...?

A: It's kind of like a wall that's not really a wall. It looks like a wall, at one point it was a wall, and now it's more of a transparent thing. But it does enough to mentally persuade you that it is a wall. ... It's like a fake wall now, that visually and mentally holds people back. ... It's like you're a little kid, and you're allowed to go play on the other side of the street all of a sudden, but a lot of people that grew up being told they can only stay on this side of the street, you've got to stay close to the house, and so when you're finally able to, you know...(White lib. male, OR)

THE COGNITIVE FIT BETWEEN WHITENESS AND SUCCESS

The invisibility of White privilege, both to most Whites and in the dominant American discourse, has another source besides the cognitive difficulty of perceiving statistical disparities. In this section, we discuss a strong tendency to actively associate Whiteness with Success and minority ethnic identity (particularly Blackness) with Failure. It appears that disparities between minorities and Whites are interpreted in terms of the unequal compatibility between Whiteness/Blackness and the American model of Success: In ways that are hard to combat directly, Whiteness is a good “cognitive fit” with Success, while minority ethnic identity is not.

The American model of Success is itself based on an American individualist ethos.² In cognitive terms, a successful person is a “Self-Making Person.” Put simply, there is a dichotomy in the American view which distinguishes one kind of life from another: A person’s life outcomes may be determined by external circumstances – a much better life (both materially and morally) is one determined by the actions of the Self. Racial or Ethnic identity is associated with determination by external circumstances, while White identity is defined in some sense as the absence of ethnic identity, and associated with Self-Making (and thus Success). According to the model, the more a person’s identity is defined by ethnicity, the more he or she is determined by external circumstances rather than by Self, and by implication the less connected to the model of Success.

The cognitive implications of these models for the public’s understanding of racial disparities are clear: Whiteness is implicitly understood as a minimization of Ethnic baggage, and maximization of Self-Making (and Success). And by the zero-sum rule of polar opposition, Blackness is a maximization of Ethnic baggage and minimization of self-determination.³

Success and the Self-Making Person

America is famous for its ethos of individualism, regularly evoked by both its advocates and its critics. Politicians cite individualism in defense of their positions, average people cite it in defense of their personal life choices, and various segments of the population decry it as the bane of civic and communal life. The significance of individualism in cognitive and cultural terms is less ideological and more profound, since it guides people’s reasoning in ways that they may not even be consciously aware of. For our purposes here, we associate individualism with the idea that a person’s life and identity should, as much as possible, be determined by a *private and disembodied Self*, as opposed to that person’s *external and physical Circumstances*, broadly defined. According to the largely unconscious model of the “Self-Making Person,” the Self is made up of mental rather than physical qualities: It is the seat of thinking, feeling, wanting, intentions, choosing, etc., and is fundamentally private. By contrast, circumstances include the material conditions in which we live, our socioeconomic status, the inherited qualities such as race and physical appearance which determine how people relate to us, and so forth.

In the Self-Making Person model, the Self is responsible for creating, changing, or rejecting our Circumstances. Individualism in this cognitive sense defines the ideal of a fully realized, self-governing person – as opposed, for example, to animals, children, or slaves, for example, whose lives are all largely determined by Circumstances.

The Self-Making Person model exists in both explicit and less consciously accessible forms. For example, most people express the idea that America was born out of a desire for self-determination, that most

² The cognitive considerations connected with EAS thinking (discussed earlier) do not explain the special prominence of individualism in American life, though they do help explain its power to shape the everyday thoughts of Americans who, on some level, “know better” than to accept its limits.

³ The analytical model developed in this section derives less from a simple tabulation of the elicitation data, than from a more global interpretation of patterns that pervade many aspects of American life. It makes use of findings from both the elicitation and from a more general anthropology of American culture. That said, the conclusions reported on here are intended to lead to testable implications.

immigrants come here out of the same desire, and that we sometimes go to war to help others gain their basic right to self-determination. The progress towards a state of self-determination is a story that we tell ourselves in many different ways.

A model with broad relevance

The Self-Making Person model is central to American culture – it is connected to many other important cultural models, such as Success (typically understood as an outcome of “discipline,” “desire,” and “making the right decisions” and other moral and mental acts), Freedom (often synonymous with self-determination), child rearing (American beliefs about raising children emphasize the production of self-determined, autonomous adults), and Race (discussed below).

Like cognitive models in general, the model of the Self-Making Person has important implications for what people believe and value, but also for what they *are able to see and think*.

Ethnicity and the ideal of the Self-Making Person

It is clear that the cultural model of the Self-Making Person stands directly in opposition to Personal Racism: When we deny someone an opportunity because of race, we are limiting their freedom and autonomy in a way that is relatively easy to recognize and condemn.

But, in the current context, when Personal Racism is not the main threat to racial equality, the Self-Making Person model has more negative effects: From the perspective of the Self-Making Person model, ethnicity is an aspect of Circumstances, which limits our capacity for self-determination. It is part of our heritage, our baggage, rather than something we choose and create. In this sense, the ideal of the Self-Making person requires that we minimize ethnicity as an attribute. Ethnicity and self-determination exist in a zero-sum relationship. In order to move closer to the SMP ideal, we must move further from ethnic identity. Of course, race – associated with physical characteristics – is the aspect of ethnicity which is hardest to minimize, and in addition much about the American cultural definition of what it means to be Black works to further reinforce the connection between Blackness and determination by Circumstances rather than Self.

Whiteness and the Self-Making Person

On some level, Whiteness is often associated with colorlessness and an absence of characteristic culture, as though Whites had no ethnicity or race.

Q: So what would be part of White culture, what would characterize White culture?

A: Oh... You know, I can't really think of what White culture would be. Because if they do have their traditions, I'm not real familiar with it, you know, and it's probably because I wasn't around them growing up as much. But in school, you know, I had a lot of White friends, but I don't recall them having the traditions or the culture like we had. (Hispanic lib. fem, CA)

Q: And what characterizes White culture?

A: I think of it as standard, you know, mainstream culture to the point where it doesn't feel like it's anything. (Asian lib. fem, CA)

Q: Do you think there's such a thing as White culture?

A: That's hard to define because we're all so diverse. (White cons. fem, IL)

Q: Do you think there is such a thing as White culture in America, and what would characterize White culture?

A: I'm not quite sure. I think either there is no culture, or it's more of like it's been so long that all their distinguishedness kind of blended in. I remember I had a roommate, she was part German, part Irish maybe, and she was just saying / and she was just kind of surprised by all of the different cultures and traditions that I had and that my other roommate who was Japanese had, and my other roommate who was Filipino, and it was like / she's just like surprised, and she was saying how cool it was because there isn't anything where she can teach her kids about her own history. (Asian lib. fem, CA)

Within each ethnic group there is a sense of stereotypes and race, you know, so I mean that totally factors out the White community. (Hisp lib male, CA)

From the SMP perspective, this makes Whiteness especially compatible with the ideal of self-determination.

Whiteness obscured by the Self-Making Person ideal

The cognitive dynamic also runs in the other direction: the Self-Making Person model obscures the fact of Whiteness. In other words, it is difficult for Whites, guided by the model, to think very much about the fact that they are White. Racial identity implies a causal relationship: For me to see myself as White or Black is to provide an explanation of why something about me is the way it is – “White men can't jump. Black women aren't afraid to argue in public.” But this sort of causation is exactly what is cognitively excluded by the model of the Self-Making Person. If White people believe strongly that they should be, and are, the authors of their own fates, they cannot clearly see or feel the causal role of their racial identity. Seeing themselves through this lens, White people become *the people without color*, a sort of *anti-race*.

This is the cognitively basic meaning of the old colonialist idea that Whiteness is *made* (by Civilization and other acts of will), while Ethnicity is *given* (by Nature).

White Success

The central American model of Success attributes success to the agency of the Self: Success comes from making good choices, exerting a strong will, discipline, smarts, etc. At the same time, success is, through direct observation, often associated with being White. It is easy, if illogical, to treat White success as a sign of individual self-determination and a strong Self. And the circularity of the implicit reasoning tends to be self-reinforcing.

White Privilege

Furthermore, the dominance of the Self-Making Person model means that prosperity or social status which should often be understood as (unearned) Privilege is instead naturally framed as Success. In cognitive terms, White Privilege is not denied so much as not seen at all. This cognitive blindness, of course, has significant consequences for attitudes toward progressive policies.

White Virtualism

Many of the manifestations of increasing individualism of the last 50 years have been especially associated with trends among the White population. The move to the suburbs gave (White) people a feeling of greater control over their environment and lives, and insularity from the external world (in the form of shared

public space) – an ideal context in which the disembodied Self can impose its will over the material world. More recently, the emergence of the Internet and, with it, the New Economy based on an escape (depending on one’s place in the economy) from dependence on brick and mortar stores, encounters with salespeople and other customers, or even manufacturing, repeats a similar pattern.

In these cases, as with the emergence of the automobile for an earlier generation, the escape from the constraints of the physical world that surrounds us – in a word, Virtualism – has been a feature of mainstream culture. And Virtualism in this sense tends to reinforce the image of a Self-Making Person, freed from physical constraints on freedom.

Invisibility of One’s Own Features and Circumstances

Of course, these associations at the level of American cultural models are reinforced by one of the most basic and universal tendencies in reasoning, the relative invisibility of one’s own distinctive features and circumstances. From personal experience we all know that it is hard for people to recognize their own accents, for example, or to see the idiosyncratic nature of their own behaviors more generally. The tendency to interpret one’s own situation as the norm has serious effects when it comes to race: It makes it even easier for the White majority to overlook anything special about their own Circumstances, and to attribute the conditions they live in to their own individual choices. This effect amounts to yet another reinforcement of the connection between Whiteness and the self-determining and disembodied Self.

Minorities and the ideal of the Self-Making Person

If Whiteness represents (on some cognitive level) the absence of ethnic and racial identity, and therefore maximum self-determination, then minority identity is the opposite. Minorities, and especially African-Americans, are less naturally framed within the Self-Making Person model. This means that Americans, particularly Whites, are predisposed not to associate them with success – even in the absence of any views that would traditionally be recognized as racism.

Blacks’ History Of Oppression

The recognition of Blacks’ role as victims in American history has obviously been a positive development, in important respects. It has also contributed to emphasizing the role of Circumstances in determining Blacks’ lives, as opposed to that of self-determining individuals. For a variety of related and unrelated reasons (including Americans’ tendency to replace historical perspective with timeless myth, the political efficacy of claiming victimhood, and so forth) the role has become part of some definitions of Blackness, rather than merely a temporary condition.

Positive Affirmation of Black Identity

Another positive development in American cultural history has been the affirmation of Black identity by African-Americans. Jean-Paul Sartre, discussing the Francophone Négritude movement, offers a classic statement of the the logic of this development:

A Jew, a White among Whites, can deny that he is a Jew, declaring himself a man among men. The Black cannot deny that he is Black nor claim for himself an abstract, colorless humanity: he is Black. Thus he is driven to authenticity: insulted, enslaved, he raises himself up. He picks up the word “nègre” that they had thrown at him like a stone, he asserts his Blackness, facing the White man, with pride.⁴

⁴ “Black Orpheus” introduction to Léopold Senghor’s *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache*. 1948.

An important consequence of the promotion of Black identity has been the reinforcement of an exaggerated difference between Black and White, and of their respective places on the spectrum between Self and Circumstances. In other words, this development, while creating a variety of positive effects, has also had a cost: *It suggests that African-Americans are what they are because they are Black, while White Americans are what they are as a result of their own actions.*

Black Poverty

The fact that Blacks are associated with poverty in public stereotypes reinforces the separation of roles between Blacks and Whites in direct and indirect ways. For example, African-Americans are associated with public spaces, such as inner city streets, a setting in which external circumstances are more likely to have an impact on the person.

To sum up, the perceived cultural specializations that are stereotypically associated with Blackness – such as cultural roles associated with music, sensuality, sports, violence, and suffering – root Blacks (in the White view) in their material circumstances, and in their physical reality, rather than associating them with autonomous Self. The result of this pattern of thought is a circular story in which Whites are successful because they have shed their external-determination (ethnicity and even color) and Blacks are not successful because they are Black. *Color, in the largest sense, stands for external-determination.*

An exaggerated distinction

The Self-Making Person model implies a basic contrast between two causal stories: The person can be determined by either Circumstances or by Self. In cognitive terms, these two stories have the tendency to become exaggeratedly polarized, and further, to become associated with Black and White. According to this cognitive and cultural division of roles, Whites are seen as exaggeratedly autonomous and self-determining, while the view of Blacks as subject to their Circumstances is also exaggerated. In itself, the tendency to draw polarizing distinctions is a common cognitive process – think, for example, of the elaborate symbolic significance of the basic contrast between the political “left” and “right.” In this context, however, the consequences for thinking about race are anything but constructive. They create a false (and largely unconscious) contrast between Self-Making Whites and externally-determined minorities, which seem to account for disparities in the world, while also not feeling like racism.

Immigration as an illustration of the Self-Making Person

The issue of immigration and immigrants seems to be very distinct from the issue of race in people’s minds: While the two areas do of course interact, there are narratives about immigration that have relatively little to do with race, and vice versa. One common (positive) understanding of immigrants is that they are on a path to success. In this view, immigrants are seen as reliving the central American story of self-determination. They have come to this country to pursue the American dream not only of financial self-improvement, but freedom from various limitations on autonomy and identity. The old story is played out in millions of lives every day:

A: I guess in a sense I kind of shunned my own ethnicity, and in a sense they[my community] kind of shunned me because we weren’t / we didn’t see eye to eye on many topics.

Q: What were some of those topics?

A: Remember in college, the whole drinking and partying? I was in a sorority and that was very untraditional, you know. They had the whole thing where girls are very timid, very quaint, very submissive, and I was very stubborn, very / I’ll speak my mind, things like that, and it just clashed. (Asian lib female, CA)

Minority immigrants are sometimes assumed to be on a journey that minorities who are established in the U.S. are not taking, for whatever reason (in some sense, a journey “towards Whiteness”). Because of their different history, African-Americans, American Indians, and sometimes Mexican-Americans, are not easily fit into this narrative, and can instead be seen as unchanging groups “caught” in their constraining ethnic identities, not engaged in the journey toward individual self-determination.

Note, though, that this picture can look very different to a non-White American. In the following exchange, an Asian-American suggests that Blacks are “further” along the path:

Q: What does it say about our country that there are many African-Americans in positions of power—the Secretary of State, the National Security Advisor, the CEOs of Time-Warner, Avis and American Express?

A: I think it's a positive thing, because African-Americans have been in this country for a long, long time, and with the Asian culture, we haven't been here as long. And to see African-Americans progress like that, one day you'll see Asian-Americans on TV, you'll see them in politics, things like that. (Asian cons. fem, CA)

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AS A COGNITIVE TEST-CASE

It is well known that Americans are divided about Affirmative Action. Minorities, who stand to benefit, are naturally more inclined to support proactive efforts to improve their status.

Truthfully I think the worst thing they could have did was when they tried to eliminate [affirmative action]. And the reason I believe that way is that you have to be that person and walk in those shoes before you can knock it. (Black lib. male, OR)

Polling data suggests that many Whites, on the other hand, are ambivalent or unsympathetic, and the elicitation data suggests that Whites have trouble with the reasoning behind affirmative action.

While it would be easy to attribute this difference to simple self-interest, a cognitive perspective, and the analysis above, suggests that there are more subtle factors at work, relating to what people can and cannot perceive about the world due to the cognitive and cultural models which guide their thinking. If views about Affirmative Action were merely the products of simple calculations of self-interest, then all minorities should be for it and all Whites (or at least all White men) should be against it, which is clearly not the case. And the self-interest explanation also cannot account for why many Whites who are liberal and racially progressive still have trouble accepting the logic of Affirmative Action. The comment cited earlier from a liberal woman married to a black man illustrates the point. If anything, she would stand to personally *benefit* from any race-based Affirmative Action that helped her husband:

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

The cognitive and cultural models above help explain why Affirmative Action is “hard to think,” especially, but not exclusively, for Whites:

- It is incompatible with the model of Personal Responsibility, since it “gives” something that the recipient apparently didn’t earn.
- It is incompatible with Everyday Action Scenario thinking, since it is based on righting a wrong that did not befall the individual. Rather, it is based on understandings of what we have called Statistical Racism, which can be a challenge even for minorities who stand to benefit, let alone Whites:

Q: What advantages would people have based on their race?

A: To get jobs. Yeah, to get jobs, to get housing, to start businesses.

Q: You have an advantage if you’re a minority or if you’re White?

A: A minority.

Q: Because of Affirmative Action?

A: Because of Affirmative Action. (Hispanic lib. fem, CA)

- Most subtly, it is incompatible with understandings of Success, as seen through the Self-Making Person model. If anything, a quota system seems to reaffirm the fact that minorities are not self-

determining – to suggest that their lives are determined by their ethnicity rather than their autonomous Self.

A black person doesn't want to get this job that he's not qualified for because he's black but then he gets there and he can't do a good job at it. Everyone wants to feel at work that they're succeeding in something. (White lib. fem, RI)

People who support Affirmative Action either understand Statistical Racism, or have a model of Covert Racism (an understanding that many Whites continue to hold racist views and to enact racist agendas, even if they are not as obvious about it as in previous generations). And minorities are much more likely than Whites to hold this last model.

In short, affirmative action is “hard to think,” even for people who are generally sympathetic, because of the default patterns of reasoning working against it. Any given story of Affirmative Action, reduced to the level of the individuals involved, seems misguided. For this reason, even Whites who generally hold racially progressive outlooks find it difficult to explain or accept the reasoning behind affirmative action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The counterproductive patterns of reasoning outlined in this report can be countered indirectly, but probably not directly. Their cognitive and cultural roots – in particular in Everyday-Action-Scenario thinking, and in the American model of the Self-Making Person – are so deep and strong that it is unlikely they can be displaced entirely.

Other directions which might feel natural to advocates – including a renewed campaign to remind the public about disparities of wealth and power, or to establish the worth of particular cultural traditions – might be as misdirected as they are well-intentioned. If they are not addressing the most important currently active patterns of reasoning, they could amount to “fighting the last war,” or worse, reinforcing unhelpful patterns of reasoning.

Instead, the research reported in here suggests several different avenues for improving American discourse and thinking around racial topics.

Moving Away From Narratives of Personal Racism

It is clear that personal racism dominates public thinking about racism – a media story about Black customers not being seated at a Denny’s restaurant (with its echoes of pre-Civil Rights era segregation) is much more vivid and morally clear than a story about low test-scores or the closure of hospitals in minority neighborhoods. For this reason it is tempting for advocates to continue to wield the powerful club of personal racism.

At the same time, however, communicators should keep in mind two consequences of the Personal Racism model:

First, by its very nature Personal Racism is open to a symmetry: If the prototypical story is reduced to a confrontation between two people, it is easy in today’s context to reverse the direction of the racism and to call to mind instances of Black racism against Whites, Asians, or Hispanics. Muggings, name-calling, rude clerks can all be perceived as racism on a par with not getting a seat at Denny’s.

Second, it is cognitively tempting to try to wedge statistical disparities into the box of Personal Responsibility – by invoking, as minorities regularly do, hidden intentions on the part of Whites. While such covert agendas clearly exist, they cannot account for the bulk of the disparities. That is to say, the case that disparities can be chalked up to Personal Racism is easily challenged and dismissed.

The practical result of these patterns is a version of White backlash, in the form of references to reverse discrimination and Black paranoia.⁵

Shifting to a Focus on Material Conditions

One potential way of navigating around the problems inherent in the public’s reasoning about racial disparities is to avoid, as much as possible, questions about the *nature* of the individuals and groups involved. A direction worth exploring further – as an alternative to focusing on oppression by covert racists, for example – is oppression by Material Circumstances. To take an example, as hard a time as many people have articulating a rationale for affirmative action, they have no problem acknowledging and discussing the unfairness of Minority children being given inadequate school facilities.

Moving the discussion away from the (inadequate) “Self” of minority individuals may help to block a number of unhelpful avenues of reasoning, without forcing us to give up talking about race altogether. It also has the advantage of lending itself to helping the public understand the statistical nature of disparities.

⁵ See Frank Gilliam’s “White Whine.”

Helping People “See” Statistical Racism

Given the cognitive impediments in the way of (White) people recognizing the forces acting against minorities – forces subtler than overt, personal racism, and which might not even be recognizable as “racism” per se – one of the clear contributions advocates might make would be to provide explanations that help the public see these forces and recognize their reality. Simply asserting that they exist is not likely to be compelling, and neither are individual anecdotes (which are likely to backfire by reinforcing thinking at the individual level), nor numbers demonstrating their effects. As we have seen, these facts can too easily be explained away based on common and default patterns of reasoning.

Instead, advocates’ best chance of making headway would be to provide the public with explanations that capture the “big picture” of the problem in simple, easily graspable, causal terms. In short, this topic is one that might be well suited to a “simplifying models” approach, which involves promoting vivid and concrete analogies that capture the essence of expert understandings by translating them into EAS terms.

(For example, the mechanism responsible for global warming can helpfully be described as a “blanket of carbon dioxide which is accumulating in the atmosphere and trapping in heat,” and the effects of early childhood experiences can be discussed in terms of how they strengthen or weaken the “developing architecture of the child’s brain.” These approaches have been shown to help lay people gain a new appreciation and understanding of topics where education had previously proven difficult.)

An example of a simplifying model direction related to race would be the idea that there is a “Weak, Pervasive, Physical Force” (something like gravity, or the effects of winds or tides), which leads invisibly but inexorably to disparities between the conditions which Whites and minorities live in. Even though the force can’t be observed “in action,” it leads to devastating and dramatic – and objective – consequences that can be measured with instruments like statistics. Dealing with this force is as much a matter of Responsible Management as Justice or Altruism, and involves setting up practical protective barriers.

An advantage of this type of approach – which we offer only as an example of a simplifying model direction that could in principle be tested and refined – is that it might redirect attention from moral judgements and rhetoric to material and practical perspectives.

Providing Specific Causal Models For Disparities

Since the elicitation demonstrated clearly that most people have trouble articulating, or even seeing, the current causes of racial disparities, another contribution advocates could make would be to promote effective causal explanations, and establish them as new understandings with currency in public discourse. For example, it is a simple fact that most people currently in a position to make hiring decisions are White. Even with the best of intentions, these individuals may have a closer affinity with people more like themselves, and this is a means by which power and privilege are self-perpetuating, even in the absence of any thinking most people would recognize as “racism.” This is only one of many examples of a causal story on which communications might be based. The keys to establishing these stories as effective communications tools would be (1) to avoid reliance on any appreciation of history, and (2) to condense the stories to a vividly rendered essence, expressed in a way that allows people to easily remember and repeat them.

Like all aspects of effective communications on challenging topics, developing these explanations might require empirical testing and refinement.

Providing Specific Causal Models for the Reduction of Disparities

Most Americans are clearly aware of the vast difference between the situation of today and that which existed before the Civil Rights Movement. Whites in particular tend to exaggerate the difference between then and now, sometimes wanting to relegate racism to the dustbin of history.

At the same time, the research demonstrates quite clearly that most (White) people lack any clear understanding of *how* we got from “there” to “here.” One promising direction for communication would be to remind the public, as clearly and concretely as possible of the kinds of effort it has taken to improve the reality on the ground – from the

high-profile leadership and struggles of the Civil Rights movement, to the much less dramatic, but powerfully significant integration of the U.S. military in the preceding decades, to sustained efforts aimed at persuading the entertainment industry to portray a more inclusive picture of society.

The goal of this exercise would be to give people a clear causal picture that helps them engage more effectively and productively with the issue of racial disparities, and disrupts unhelpful cognitive routines, including people's tendency to see "then" and "now" as disconnected. The *risk of the strategy* would be that it reinforces the sense that the problem has been solved, so communicators would need to frame such a message carefully, in part by finding effective ways of reinforcing the *need* for further attention to the issue.

Moving Away From Essentialism

Perhaps the most controversial direction among the recommendations that follow from the research concerns the dangers of reinforcing the polarizing distinction between Whites and non-Whites (especially African-Americans). Once a zero-sum game is introduced between these categories, powerful implications for the cultural roles of Blacks and Whites follow naturally: Whiteness can become more closely associated with self-determination and success, while minority identity (and Blackness) become more strongly associated with Circumstantial determination and Failure. Advocates must think very carefully about the consequences of *essentializing* minority identities, even when this essentialization is done for the right reasons, as in the exercise of Black pride.

The alternative, in cognitive terms, is to help clarify how *everyone's* life is partially determined by dynamic external forces – including oppressive material conditions in the case of many Blacks, and inherited privilege in the case of Whites.

APPENDIX: THE COGNITIVE APPROACH

This appendix discusses the assumptions and principles that form the basis for the “cognitive approach” taken by Cultural Logic.

Frames

Researchers who study cognition and culture have established that people understand all concepts in terms of related networks of ideas, also known as *frames*. For example, the concept of a “father” is not understood in isolation, but in connection with understandings of mothers, children, families, biology, responsibility, and so forth. People are usually unaware of the frames they are using, and the frames themselves are usually expressed indirectly. They are revealed most clearly in the language and reasoning a person uses in connection with a concept. Seeming contradictions in the way a person discusses a topic can be particularly enlightening, because they may reveal conflicting frames at work. It should be noted as well that “frame” is a general term — used somewhat differently in different disciplines — to refer to more specific concepts such as *cognitive model*, *cultural model*, and *cultural theory*, discussed below.

Cultural models vs. cultural theories

A cultural theory is a set of explicit propositions that describe the nature of some general phenomenon (*The Development of Cognitive Anthropology*, D'Andrade 1995). Cultural theories are typically the most apparent and immediately coherent structures of knowledge — the ones that are volunteered by focus group participants for example, and the ones that lend themselves to direct description and summary by the analyst. Cultural theories are closely related to public discourse and, because they are explicit understandings, to rhetorical positions adopted for purposes of argument.

A cultural model, by contrast, consists of a set of largely implicit assumptions that allows a person to reason about and solve a problem. A cultural model specifies relationships between a given concept and others — specific domains (e.g., School) are typically connected to broader cultural assumptions (e.g., understandings about Achievement or Growth). Cultural models are associated with private understanding and individual reasoning.

A classic example of the difference between cultural models and cultural theories is provided by Strauss's study of blue-collar workers in Rhode Island (1992). Her informants clearly understood, and explicitly articulated to the interviewer, the American model of self-made Success. In some cases, they even claimed that this style of success was important to them. Close analysis of discourse, however, revealed that these men were actually basing their behavior on an implicit model of a Breadwinner, which is more strongly related to ideals of husband and father than to wealth and status.

Cultural models, while less explicit and more challenging to identify than cultural theories, typically have more directive force — i.e., they are more relevant to understanding what people actually do.

Cognitive Analysis

An important assumption of this view of human motivation is that a variety of cultural models typically compete for expression in a given defined situation. Putting it simply, people often have conflicts about basic issues. For example, many Americans believe that a woman should work outside the home; a contradictory assumption, held by many of these same people, is that women should stay in the home and nurture children. Though contradictions such as this one often find partial resolution (e.g., through the contemporary American notion of the “Supermom”), typically such deeply held beliefs are compartmentalized; i.e., only one will be invoked in a given context.

Cognitive analysis first identifies the relevant deeply held models to which a given subject such as “School” is connected (literally or through metaphor). Second, it attempts to map the fault lines that predict which of the models will be expressed as action in a given situation, often triggered by particular

cues. Third, it suggests a picture of the dynamic relationship between public messages, cultural models, and individual action around a given topic.

Metaphors

It is a universal finding of cognitive linguistics that people use metaphors to think, speak and reason about the world, even on topics as familiar as “weather” — i.e., some of the cultural models used to reason about any given topic are metaphoric models. For example, teenagers are sometimes metaphorically understood as unfinished objects, materials that haven't been formed into their final shape. The metaphors people use to think and talk about teenagers contribute to guiding adults' behavior towards adolescents, including whether and how they choose to nurture, ignore, discipline, or otherwise engage with adolescents.

Subjects and sample size

Because a culture is defined by a set of broadly shared understandings and assumptions, studying cultural models is analogous to studying the structure of a natural language. One does not need a large group of speakers to determine the basics of a language's grammar and syntax — a few speakers will typically suffice. Similarly, working with only a relative few subjects, one can identify the commonly held belief system typical of those subjects' culture. In-depth work with a relatively small group of informants has been the norm in cognitive anthropology, allowing researchers to work more closely with subjects than is possible using large-scale methodologies. Findings from cognitive interviews may subsequently be expanded upon and refined through quantitative methods, which may establish, for example, how strongly particular models are held in different segments of the population. Where the cognitive approach identifies the nature of the models, carefully devised quantitative research, using fixed-form surveys for example, can establish the distribution of the models (see Kempton et al 1995).

About the Author

Cultural Logic, directed by anthropologist Axel Aubrun and linguist Joseph Grady, is an applied cognitive and social science research group that helps organizations frame their messages for maximum effect. Working with a network of experts and partner organizations including the FrameWorks Institute, Cultural Logic focuses on research relating to public interest issues. Topics have included global warming, violence reduction in communities, conserving the Chesapeake Bay, global interdependence, gender equity in schools, and toxins in the domestic environment. Axel Aubrun, Ph.D. is a psychological anthropologist whose research and publications take an interdisciplinary approach to problems of communication and motivation. Joseph Grady, Ph.D. is a linguist whose research and publications focus on the relationship between metaphor and other aspects of thought and communication.