



Creating a Unified Voice for Opportunity:  
An Analysis of Qualitative Research Exploring Perceptions of Race

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February 2005

## Strategic Overview

On many social problems – such as poverty, crime and education – public assumptions concerning the population that is affected, including racial characteristics, ethnic characteristics, and immigration status, influence public perceptions of the problem and its solution. While advocates have often surmised that public prejudice underlies this dynamic, this research suggests that the role of prejudice in creating public resistance is limited. The bigger obstacles to building public support for policies to address racial disparities are the same obstacles that plague other social issues: the public's belief in individual responsibility, its inability to think systemically, and the invisibility of effective solutions, among others. These obstacles are even more apparent on this topic because race and ethnicity are inherently individual characteristics. A conversation about race forces people to think of individuals, not systems, throwing people back on a series of highly available American tropes about individual effort, success and hard work. Frames matter intensely for discussions about race.<sup>1</sup>

One communications approach that advocates frequently rely upon to build public support for policies to address racial disparities is the Race Frame, which this author defines as communications that emphasizes that *the problem to be solved* is race. For example, communications about racial disparities often implies that the problem to be solved is the performance difference between racial groups, rather than flaws in the health, education, or some other system in which the disparity appears.

The Race Frame is ineffective in building support for policies to address racial disparities, not due to prejudicial thinking (though stereotypes play a role in undermining support) but because this frame causes people to think of separate groups of individuals rather than one system in which all people co-exist. If the frame is Race, the public is reminded of differences between groups of people. This thinking then creates divisions and “us vs. them” comparisons as well as placing responsibility on those who are struggling to overcome the effects of racism. Even mentioning that a problem affects one minority group causes people to separate into racial identities, rather than draw together as Americans or human beings. This author does not intend to suggest that the topic of race should be eliminated from communications on social issues. Of course race can and should be used as a descriptor, but race or racism should not be identified as the focus of the problem. Effective communications needs to shift the focus away from individuals and divisions and instead use language that unites people in common cause against

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<sup>1</sup> The FrameWorks Institute defines framing as referring to “the way a story is told -- its selective use of particular symbols, metaphors, and messengers, for example – and to the way these cues, in turn, trigger the shared and durable cultural models that people use to make sense of their world” (Bales and Gilliam, 2002). Research on how people think demonstrates that people use mental shortcuts to make sense of the world, and that new information provides cues to help people determine how to connect the new information to what they already know. This lens on the issue then quickly defines issue understanding, priority, consequences, solutions and responsibility for fixing the problem. This is framing. Frames incorporate a number of communications elements including values, messengers, metaphors, visuals, numbers, context, and so on. (Note: For more information on frames and framing, see the FrameWorks Institute web site at [www.frameworksinstitute.org](http://www.frameworksinstitute.org).)

anything that impedes opportunity, reminding people that all Americans are linked in a common fate.

This research strongly suggests that people need to have a broader understanding of the social systems that are broken and the consequences of those broken systems for various groups and communities, not just minority groups. “Opportunity for All” is the relevant value. When confronted with systemic problems, such as the structural barriers that block opportunity, people understand that those who are poor and/or minority are the most likely to be affected. They are willing to devote energy and resources toward fixing the broken system, knowing that the poor and/or minority are most likely to benefit, because they are committed to a fair and functional social ladder.

Communications about racial disparities frequently fails to mobilize this energy because the Race Frame, by focusing inadvertently on individuals, suggests that resources need to be transferred from the majority to the minority. The public is unwilling to harm one group to help another, but they are absolutely willing to provide more resources to fix the system so that everyone has a chance to succeed. This is a fault line in public opinion on racial disparities. Communications will be most effective if it draws attention to the system that is failing and the consequences for many groups, rather than center attention on the groups that are affected.

One of the most significant communications obstacles on this issue is the public’s perception of the role of government in addressing the problem. The Race Frame suggests to the public that either race or racism is the problem. If race is the “problem” then there is no public understanding that government can do anything to address it. Furthermore, the public understands racism as being embedded in individuals and resulting in individual acts. If the issue is about individuals and their behavior, then there is no role for collective action in solving the problem -- other than outlawing prejudicial acts, which the public believes to have already been accomplished. In either case, the role for government is limited.

Even if the frame shifts to systemic problems rather than individuals, solutions need to be prominent so that people understand that effective solutions to those problems exist. Too often public support for policies is undermined by the assumption that nothing can be done, that no solutions exist. On this issue, it is critical that government work in partnership with people and communities and provide an active role for people and communities in their own advancement; otherwise the public will assume that government is doing too much and promoting passivity in people and communities.

Finally, the research design allowed for a number of conversations among individual racial and ethnic groups to determine the unique perspectives of various groups on this issue. While there were some differences, what is most notable is the commonality. Focus group participants, regardless of race and locale, were far more alike than different in their views and reactions to the test materials.

## Method

This phase of qualitative research was designed to explore a series of hypothetical reframes intended to build public support for policies to address racial disparities. Importantly, the goal of this project was to elevate understanding of race as a social construct and racial disparities as the outcome of systemic racism. The goal was not to advance the particular issue – whether health care or education – and, in this respect, readers may find differences between these findings and other FrameWorks research that sought to advance public support for particular policies, whether or not they appreciated the contribution of race to the problem. Specifically, this research was designed to explore answers to the following questions:

- When people think about racial disparities, what associations come to mind?
- What do people believe is the current state of racism in America?
- What are the barriers to people’s support for policies to address racial disparities?
- What frames advance support for beneficial policies?

To explore answers to these questions, 14 focus groups were conducted with engaged citizens across the country (defined as people who say they are registered to vote, read the newspaper frequently, are involved in community organizations, and have recently contacted a public official or spoken out on behalf of an issue.) Some of the focus groups were divided by race to allow participants of a racial group to more freely express their views of race and racism. Other groups included participants of several races to illustrate the communications dynamic between members of different racial groups. Finally, because some advocates and scholars have suggested that racism may diminish with education, some of the groups were separated by educational achievement. The groups were conducted in the following order:

- Baltimore, MD (July 7, 2004)
  - Mixed race
  - African American
- Minneapolis, MN (August 5, 2004)
  - European American, non-college educated
  - European American, college educated
- Albuquerque, NM (August 18, 2004)
  - European American, non-college educated
  - Latino
- Newark, NJ (October 4, 2004)
  - European American, college educated
  - Chinese American
- San Francisco, CA (October 19, 2004)
  - European American, college educated
  - Korean American
- Los Angeles, CA (October 20, 2004)

- Mixed race
- Latino
- Nashville, TN (December 16, 2004)
  - European American, non-college educated
  - African American

Throughout the report, focus group participants are noted by their location and gender. In addition, participants in racially segregated groups are noted by race and those in class segregated groups are noted by education level. Please note that assertions in the text are characterizations of public attitudes and not the author's own views.

The guide used in these groups to direct the conversation was iterative. That is, as each set of groups was completed, the guide was revised to incorporate new learning, improving the narratives and dropping those that had little success in reframing the discussion. All guides were developed to test specific hypotheses generated by the FrameWorks research team and summarized in other documents that comprise the Framing Race in America Project.

## Obstacles and Opportunities in Public Perception

Since the main objective of this phase of research was to understand how different communications approaches influence public perceptions of policies to address racial disparities, focus group participants were exposed to a series of fictional news articles, each incorporating different framing approaches. In contrast, participants were not asked to engage in a conversation about race and racism prior to reviewing the articles, because the researchers believe such a conversation would have influenced their perceptions of the test articles. However, in reviewing the test articles several consistent themes about race emerged in the focus group discussions that allow us to better understand why certain communications approaches are more effective than others. This section reviews these themes and offers recommendations for future communications. The second section of this report provides a step-by-step discussion of the hypotheses, test articles, and decisions made by the research team at each stage of the focus group research.

### Consistent Themes

**The language of race discrimination that was instrumental in altering public perceptions and advancing significant civil rights reforms throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is not effective in building support for the policies needed to address today's racial disparities.**

A conversation about race discrimination is immediately divisive. Rather than unite people in addressing a common problem, the topic of racism sets up “us versus them” thinking by highlighting the differences among people. European Americans feel they are being blamed for minority disadvantages, and that they are being asked to sacrifice to advantage minorities. African Americans are more likely to point to racism as a reason for disparities. In both instances, however, each group feels resentment toward the other, making it more difficult to heal racial divides and address problems as one.

It is clear that references to past injustices do not advance learning. Many reject that past injustices matter today. “I just think when does it end?” a woman in the Baltimore mixed race group asked. “When do we decide okay, we've heard of it and we have to accept that responsibility. Where it says ‘previous generations were not covered by the G.I. bill.’ Well, they are now.” Some believe that minorities are too quick to cite discrimination. “A lot of times they throw the race card in your face. ‘Oh, he twisted my arm. I'm suing, \$3 million.’ I mean an African American person immediately throws up that card. I'm telling you now. That is exactly what happens,” complained one Hispanic American woman from Los Angeles.

Some question whether the common definition of “minority” continues to be relevant. As people of color become an increasingly significant percentage of the American population, people of European descent will no longer represent the majority of the population. A non-college-educated European American woman in Minneapolis

suggested, “I don't think we have a dominant white culture. . . I think it's African American and Mexican and Latinos. We're getting to be the minority.” Furthermore, a few state that it does not make sense that disparities would be due to population proportions. “Because I teach in a school where in my classroom I have six white children out of 25. So who is the minority then? And why are they less likely to get a quality education?” asked a college-educated European American woman from Newark.

It is important to note that these discussions of the “majority minority” are more about population and consumer power than they are about economic and political power. There is an assumption that the latter automatically accompanies the former, further obscuring the structural barriers to full participation.

A conversation about race discrimination has the unintended consequence of placing sole responsibility for addressing disparities with the minority group struggling with the problem. In reminding the reader that there are distinct and separate groups of people, communications about race discrimination works against interdependent thinking. It tends to make the reader assign responsibility narrowly: those who have the problem fix the problem. Note the following comments from a mix of focus groups:

- “Two words. Bill Cosby. If you ever read the hot water he got himself into but he didn't care a bit, was personal responsibility. Everybody at some point has to realize that they are responsible for themselves.” (Baltimore woman, mixed race group)
- “I think sometimes we hold each other down, whether it's jealousy or whatever. We need to stop stepping on our own people and start lifting ourselves up.” (Hispanic American woman from Albuquerque)
- “So it's not just your environment, but it's what you do with it after you get it. What you've been educated to do, who you met, who you know. Do you know where to go? Don't just stay in your community to get things and wait for things to come to your community to lift you up. You've got to go outside of your community a lot of times and bring things back.” (African American man from Baltimore)
- “If the people [in a community] want to make a difference, they're going to have to get their community together and talk to the right people and get the right people to talk to who can make a difference.” (College-educated European American woman from Minneapolis)

Most people recognize that racism still exists, but most people tend to think of racism as a mindset that persists within individuals, not institutions. Racism persists because one generation passes racist attitudes to the next generation. “I really strongly believe that children are not born to discriminate to anybody when they are one, two, three. They include everybody. They don't care what color you are. But it is the environment that makes it change,” explained a Chinese American woman from Newark.

If racism is embedded in individuals, it follows that the only solution to racism is individual behavior change. Policies are unable to make a difference. In discussing racial profiling, a college-educated European American woman from Newark remarked, “I don't know how you can stop racial profiling. I think it's something that has to come from within the police

officers, the people that are doing it, not necessarily something that we're telling them you can't do it. Because if that's how you feel inside, then you're not going to be able to stop it no matter what." Discriminatory practices have already been outlawed and racist attitudes are not socially acceptable, so people do not know what else could be done to eliminate racist attitudes or acts. This creates an obstacle to policy support, because no policy can change racist attitudes held by individuals, informants believe.

Furthermore, if people think of racism as individual perceptions and acts, then all racial groups are affected, because all racial groups harbor negative stereotypes of other groups. Indeed, people of all racial groups can relate stories of social interactions between races that exemplify racist attitudes. European Americans in the focus groups agreed that racist attitudes continue, but across races. A college-educated European American man from Newark shared, "I've actually seen it from both sides. When I went to college in Florida, I was out in a bar one night and a couple of Afro-Americans came in and they wanted beer. They wanted it to go and they wanted a glass at the bar. The lady said, 'You can take it to go, but I'm not serving you at the bar'... Then maybe 10 years later... we walked into a bar and it was an Afro-American bar and they wouldn't serve us... I've seen it from both sides."

**Though most people decry racist attitudes and insist that skin color does not matter, racial stereotypes lie just under the surface and are easily triggered.**

There are certain cues that immediately trigger racial stereotypes. For example:

- The crime issue causes people to think of black perpetrators.  
"I have a friend that is a policeman and he told me that 90 percent of your crimes comes out of the black neighborhoods." (Non-college-educated European American woman from Nashville)
- Immigration causes people to think of illegal immigrants, Hispanics, and people who do not speak English. In fact, when people hear "Latino" or "Hispanic" they immediately think of people who cannot speak English.  
"It's frustrating for me when I'm driving down the street and I see signs that are in Spanish or in Korean or whatever... It makes me feel like I'm going to have to go and learn." (Non-college-educated woman from Nashville)
- "Education" and "race" trigger thinking about quotas.  
"As long as they're not giving these people real preferential treatment that would eliminate some other person's opportunity to experience the same thing, I wouldn't have a problem with it. But if all of a sudden somebody who has the qualifications now has to give up a position for this person to take advantage of this, then I guess it would bother me." (Non-college-educated European American man from Minneapolis)

In fact, the topic of race is so confrontational that some people feel uncomfortable talking about it. "Just knowing how to talk and bring up issues or talk about issues of race. Our neighbor is African American and he's an attorney... because he wanted to get into race



relations. It was a topic that I don't think I could have introduced until he had. It would be nice if it was a little bit more comfortable,” a college-educated European American woman from Minneapolis shared. Focus group participants talked about “comfort” and wanting to be in schools or neighborhoods where they can be comfortable. “We're taking ourselves out of the diverse communities, and I'm saying us people of all colors, all backgrounds. We're kind of moving where other people like us are. We feel more comfortable,” stated an African American man from Baltimore.

At first, most focus group participants, particularly those of European descent, assert that diversity is something that needs to be overcome to reach a common understanding, rather than seeing it as an asset. This is a common default understanding of diversity. However, when confronted with the distinction, most focus group participants asserted that diversity is an asset, not an obstacle. “If everybody sees something the same way, it's not as good as if you have a lot of people seeing it different ways and they get together and they pull different good ideas from everybody,” noted one Hispanic American woman from Albuquerque. Overall, however, the dialogue throughout most of the focus groups suggested that racial differences are unfortunate. “They threw a whole bunch of us in Southeast Asia and pretty soon it didn't matter if you were black, white, yellow, green or whatever you were, you were all together. Then you worked together; you overcame your differences real quick,” stated a non-college-educated European American man from Albuquerque.

**Race is an insufficient explanation for disparities among racial groups. Most Americans will default to an assessment of an individual's strength of will and determination to explain success or failure. In this mindset, government intervention is simply a handout for those who do not want to work for success.**

People have learned that the color of one's skin should not matter, so when they are confronted with a discussion of differences in economic status, education level, health, etc., they reject race as a relevant factor. While this makes it difficult to have a conversation about racial disparities, it is in many ways a positive public perception. People reject and are appalled by indications that race should be a distinguishing factor in any way. “I'm really okay with the cream rising to the top no matter what color the cream is,” stated a Chinese American man from Newark. “It's how talented are the people who are in your group and who are working for you. Not what color they are, not what their religious background is, but what is their ability,” asserted a college-educated European American woman from Newark.

Relatedly, Americans firmly believe that success or failure in life is due to an individual's own determination to achieve, a cognitive model that Cultural Logic refers to as the “Self-Making Person.”<sup>2</sup> Focus group participants of all races would discuss their ability to achieve in life as being due solely to their own hard work. “It's up to the individual to make your own expectations in life. You set your own goals -- yellow, orange, purple or blue, you know. I came from dirt poor. I made sure I was the valedictorian in my high

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<sup>2</sup> For more on the Self-Making Person and other cognitive models, see “Thinking about Race: Findings from Cognitive Elicitations” by Cultural Logic.

school; I graduated college at 21. I got out of the ghetto. It's up to the individual. I don't think it's color,” stated a college-educated European American woman from Newark. “Everybody's fate is in their hand. You can work towards it. You have your destiny and you have your limitation, but you have to work,” insisted a Chinese American woman from Newark.

Consequently, people struggle with an appropriate role for government in addressing racial disparities. If success is determined by an individual's will, then government assistance to address disparities is either irrelevant or amounts to handouts for the lazy. “My dad made us work for what we wanted and then you appreciate it. I don't want to give them anything. I don't care what color they are. I could care less. If they work and earn their way, what's the difference...I'm a firm believer in unearned is unappreciated,” argued a non-college-educated man from Minneapolis. Government assistance is then seen as promoting long-term dependence. “Maybe the hands have been out so long they just need somebody to put it there all the time,” remarked a Chinese American man from Newark. “I think many programs have been put forth to help minorities, to help themselves basically. The thing is you can lead the horse to water, but you can't force it to eat,” asserted one Hispanic American man from Los Angeles.

The public understands that government programs exist to address racial disparities. Since the public believes success is based on individual determination, these programs are viewed as giving minorities an extra advantage. “We do a lot of Section 8 housing...the government is paying for their houses but they are driving Cadillac Escalades...We're paying their rent. They've got digital cable with everything. I have basic cable,” a non-college-educated European American man from Nashville complained. Another added, “If somebody is hiring for a job, they are encouraged to hire the minority if they are even remotely close to equal as far as the qualification goes...it has basically been handed to them on a silver platter and all they have to do is accept and try.”

**Though the Self-Making Person is a dominant way of thinking about achievement, the public can also see the systemic influences that can play a role in racial disparities.**

The most frequently mentioned reason for disparities among races was economic status. Minorities are more likely to be poor, suggested focus group participants, and with poverty comes a variety of struggles. “It's more about your status now, economic status. I think the lines are getting blurred. If you don't have that money, you just don't got the healthcare,” stated an African American man from Baltimore. “If you go for a loan and you're going for a \$2 million house and you can only afford \$100,000, they are not going to approve you. So what do you say? You are being discriminated against because of your ethnic background?” asked a college-educated European American woman from Newark.

Another common explanation for racial disparities is lack of information or education. To explain why a minority neighborhood would be less likely to have amenities for youth, a non-college-educated European American woman from Minneapolis suggested, “You don't have the culture there that is educated enough to say, ‘You know what? We

should have a ball field. Why don't we?' And get this ground swell going." "To me it's lack of information by minorities because if a typical white family has \$120,000 in net worth, and the minority family has only got \$17,000 in net worth, obviously they're not doing something right," explained an African American man from Baltimore.

On the one hand, the public is led to thinking about these particular systemic influences because they hold stereotypes of minorities as poor and uneducated. On the other hand, people are searching for a way to explain disparities that does not blame minorities for the disparities. Since they think of racism as embedded in individuals, not institutions, they cannot turn to racism as an explanation for disparities – a few individuals cannot oppress an entire race, they reason, particularly when acting upon racist attitudes has already been outlawed in hiring practices, educational institutions, housing, etc. Ideally, effective communications would take the public's understanding of systemic influences a step further to illuminate a system that does not rely on reinforcing negative stereotypes.

Several African American respondents also suggested the need for more personal responsibility to address racial disparities, but their call for responsibility was on behalf of the African American community, not on behalf of individuals left to struggle with their own problems. "It's our responsibility... We're not doing what we need to do, and until we take responsibility and make the politicians do what we want them to do rather than give them no direction, we're not going to change. I'm not going to wait for them to come and change things in our community. We're going to change it and we're going to make them help us," explained an African American woman from Baltimore.

### **Changing the Conversation**

**The objective of the research was to determine an approach that will unite people in supporting policies to address racial disparities. Problematically, once the word "race" is mentioned, people move into opposing camps. The conversation needs to identify the social problem to be solved as something other than race or racism.**

In this phase of research, three approaches were investigated:

- Discuss racial disparities as a warning that the system needs fixing,
- Identify structural barriers that block opportunity for more than just minorities, and
- Use race as a descriptor but without implying that race or racism is the cause of the problem.

#### ***A warning that a system is broken***

Instead of implying that minorities need extra assistance or that race is a cause of a disparity, some of the test materials described a disparity between groups as a warning that the system needs fixing for everyone.<sup>3</sup> In this way, the approach was intended to

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<sup>3</sup> This "canary in the coal mine" approach is adapted from strategies suggested by Guinier, Lani and Gerald Torres. *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy*. Harvard University Press, 2002.

create a sense of interdependence among all racial groups and to unite groups around preventive policies. This approach was tested in relationship to the nation's economic problems and its healthcare system. Conceptually, this approach had promise. In practice, however, it was ineffective because focus group participants argued that people of all races are struggling in this economy and have difficulty affording healthcare. Minorities are not viewed as any more adversely affected than anyone else. "I work with bankruptcy every day and I think that it's not just the minorities that I see every day. I see all races of people having to file bankruptcy because of the decline of income and the downsize of jobs," noted an African American woman from Nashville.

### ***Structural barriers that block opportunity***

Identifying the structural barriers that block opportunity is an approach that shows promise in building support for policies to address disparities. As noted earlier, one barrier to action is people's assumption of the Self-Making Person and an inability to see the systemic influences on an individual's success or failure. By drawing attention to the role of systems, and community in particular, people can begin to understand why it takes more than individual resolve to overcome adversity. For example, one economic development test story allowed people to see how a community's infrastructure can block or enhance opportunity. People could quickly see that communities erode when jobs leave. While they assumed that the community in question was minority or rural, focus group participants did not blame the individuals in the community, because they were focused on the erosion of the community. "It's something necessary to do for people in certain communities. I don't think they are given opportunities other people are and it is hard to break out of that. They say you can work really hard and get out of it, but I don't know if that is necessarily true," explained a college-educated European American woman from San Francisco.

### ***Race as a descriptor without discrimination***

Finally, some of the test materials included race as a descriptor but avoided suggesting that race or racism was the cause of the problem. Instead, this approach focused on solutions to the problem, which effectively advances focus group participants' willingness to work toward policy solutions to address disparities. For example, one of the test articles featured the work being done in a Latino community to close the education gap. People were generally supportive of acting to address the problem, because they saw the combined forces of government, business and community coming together in a solution. In addition, they were able to see how the fate of society is tied to the success of all groups in society. "Education is the beginning. All the studies show that children are the future. If you don't put the money into them, you're not putting money back into your own resource," stated a college-educated European American woman from San Francisco.

**Instead of dividing people into opposing camps vying for the same limited resources, the central value to be communicated is "Opportunity for All."**

Those approaches that did not divide people into "us" and "them" were more effective in advancing policy support. The communications objective should be "Opportunity for

All,” not pitting two groups against each other or taking from one group to give to another. “Opportunity for All” lifts the floor by helping those who are struggling without bringing resentment against or punishing those who are succeeding. The public is willing to spend more energy and resources to lift the floor, but they do not want to take away from others to make that happen. Even those who had expressed negative perceptions of minorities were strongly supportive of policies to provide minorities with more opportunity. “I think it's to our advantage to get these kids into colleges. Do we want to support them for the rest of our life? No. Let's give them an education,” argued a non-college-educated European American woman from Minneapolis.

**One of the most significant barriers to public action on these issues is a clear understanding of an appropriate, effective role for government. If racism is an individual issue, little can be accomplished through public policies. Even when a problem is described systemically, the public assumes that effective solutions do not exist, because the same, recurring problems continue to surface. Furthermore, people worry that government acts too much for people, rather than empowering people to act on their own behalves. Effective solutions that empower people and communities need to be prominent in communications.**

When people can see an effective solution to a problem, they are willing to address it, and they assume that people who are poor and/or minority will be those who need the most assistance. For example, when presented with an effective program to close the education gap, focus group participants wanted to see the program continue and spread. “We always hear about all these different programs and it's so hard to know if it really is going to help out. All you hear about is these programs and it just seems like putting more and more and more money into programs. So I like that they include that this is getting results for them,” stated a Korean American woman from San Francisco.

Since Americans want people to take responsibility for addressing their own fates, it is important that any kind of intervention empower people to solve their own problems. Unless the role of community is explicit in the solution, people assume that government policy promotes passivity. “I think whatever the program is, it has to empower the people with training, tools, education. They can't be babysat by these officials who are starting this program. It has to be the people who can take this program and take it to where it needs to go,” noted a Korean American woman from San Francisco.

The public's assumption that government promotes passivity is a problem that crosses populations and social issues. However, it seems to be particularly detrimental for public perceptions of minority communities. “A lot of neighborhoods, you can give them a lot of things and, because of lack of education, they don't appreciate it and it doesn't take long, they tear it apart. You see it all the time,” stated a non college educated European American man from Minneapolis. For the long-term, this research strongly suggests that advocates should consider ways to encourage news coverage of the hard work being done by minority communities.

## Framing Hypotheses and the Iterative Research Process

Effective framing relies upon knowing which frame elements to invigorate, as well as which traps to avoid. During the course of the focus group sessions, the research team gained a great deal of learning about what should and should not be communicated to build public support for policies to address racial disparities. While the central findings are summarized in the first section of this report, much can be learned about race communications by following the evolution in research hypotheses and test materials that occurred as this phase of research unfolded. The thinking and decisions at each stage of the focus group project are documented here to provide as much insight as possible to the reader.

As noted in the Introduction, the objective of this research is to develop a communications framework that will build public support for policies to address racial disparities. To that end, focus group participants reacted to a series of “news articles” that were designed to represent different frames to advance the discussion.<sup>4</sup> Importantly, the recommended reframes would need to effectively communicate across issue areas and specific policies. Therefore, the test materials included communications about crime, health, education and community development, with specific policy references in each area. The mark of success was not which frame focus group participants *liked* best. Rather, the objective was to determine how focus group participants’ dialogue and understanding of the issue changed as they considered each frame, and whether the frames moved them to consider policy solutions. By comparing the strengths and weaknesses of each frame, it is possible to determine the mix of frame elements that will advance the conversation.

### First Test Series

After the elicitation research conducted by Cultural Logic,<sup>5</sup> the FrameWorks Institute research team met to discuss the hypothetical reframes that could result in effective communications. The team agreed on the following concepts for testing:

- *Defining the problem as a system that is broken:* While race is included in the test article to demonstrate that the system is broken, it is not the focus of the reframe.
- *Describing diversity as a valuable asset:* Culture is the focus of this reframe, to suggest that diversity in experiences and outlook is beneficial.
- *Explaining racism as a force embedded in institutions, not people:* Structural racism is the emphasis of this approach, but the concept of racism is carefully developed as a blameless situation to engage all races in the solution. Racism exists and needs to be fixed.
- *Reinforcing interdependence among people:* Racial disparities are used to explain why problems in a system affect everyone in the system.

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<sup>4</sup> The articles are fictional and were developed by the FrameWorks Institute and Public Knowledge and adapted from numerous unverified sources. They should not be used as a source for factual information.

<sup>5</sup> “Thinking about Race: Findings from Cognitive Elicitations” by Cultural Logic, 2004.

The resulting test materials included the four hypothetical reframes, each matched to a specific issue area. The test materials consisted of fictional news articles and editorials. Focus group participants reviewed and discussed each article.

<b>First Test Series (Baltimore)</b>		
<b>Article Title</b>	<b>Frame</b>	<b>Issue</b>
Prevention Over Detention	Broken Systems, race is not a focus	Crime
Unity and Opportunity	Valuing Diversity, culture is the focus	Education
Lifting Up Communities	Discrimination as a Force/ Structural Racism	Community Transformation/Economic Development
We're All in it Together	Interdependence	Health Care

## Prevention Over Detention

***Prevention over Detention* profiles some of the ways in which the criminal justice system is broken. While race is not a focus, both race and class are used in the article to discuss how the system’s priorities change for different groups of people. This approach is effective in causing focus group participants to reconsider the objectives of the criminal justice system, but it does little to advance a conversation about race.**

Focus group participants expressed strong belief in the power of early intervention and prevention, and supported more emphasis in these areas. Importantly, the topic of race and racism was never mentioned in the mixed race group, and was only a brief topic of conversation in the African-American group. Both groups centered more attention on the issue of class. At first, focus group participants in the mixed race group assumed that the population in consideration was low income, but they quickly reconsidered that notion as they thought about higher income drug use and the violence at Columbine conducted by middle-class young people. Participants in the African American group reported that class is the distinguishing factor. “I looked at the kids in Baltimore city and I looked at the kids in Cumberland. The only difference was the location... You've got these young, white kids on the corner selling drugs getting caught. It blows my mind because I think minorities we're a target, but a lot of these young whites who are lower class, they see them just like they see us now... If you don't have money, they don't care about you,” remarked an African American man from Baltimore.

Participants in the African American group mentioned racism as a factor in determining harsher punishments for African American drug users than for European American drug users. However, they spent more energy discussing the system’s shortsighted lack of emphasis on rehabilitation and how that lack harms communities, particularly minority communities, for the long term. “What are you going to do if you get out of jail and you

### Prevention Over Detention: Fixing Criminal Justice

Over the past 20 years, the criminal justice system has expanded and transformed in ways that clearly demonstrate a shift away from society’s goals for addressing crime. The criminal justice system should have three main goals: to prevent crime, to rehabilitate those who can be reformed, and to restrain those who are a danger to society. But increasingly, the priority has shifted away from prevention and rehabilitation and toward locking up more and more people.

The number of people in a correctional facility has quadrupled over the past 20 years even though the number of violent crimes committed each year has consistently dropped and is now at its lowest rate in over 30 years. About half the people in a correctional facility are non-violent offenders and a significant percentage are drug offenders. The simple reality is if you are wealthy and drug addicted you go to treatment, but if you are poor and drug addicted you go to jail. At this rate, one of every three minority men will have spent time in jail at some point in life.

The priorities are all wrong. The amount of money spent on the justice system grew from under \$36 billion in 1982, to over \$167 billion in 2001, and it is being used to lock away more and more people. In the long term, society would be better off if those funds were used to prevent young people from getting involved in crime in the first place, to provide drug treatment for everyone who needs it, and to make a genuine effort to reform an offender the first time he commits a crime rather than wait for three strikes that put him out for good.

It’s time we reformed criminal justice, and that means being willing to take a hard look at the injustices embedded in the system.



can't get a job? You don't have a degree. You don't have any skills. You are going to wind up right back on the corner,” an African American woman from Baltimore insisted.

African American respondents were more likely to blame the profit motive than racism for what needs fixing in the criminal justice system. “That whole area -- Cumberland, Hagerstown -- that whole area, it's big business. You have whole families working for the system...It's got like a corporation now and it's become big business and they know who to target. They just lay back and they can justify building even more in anticipation of their arrival,” noted an African American man from Baltimore.

### Unity and Opportunity

**This article argues for cultural diversity as a core American strength that enhances the country's ability to innovate. It suggests that the country is moving backward in encouraging diversity and in providing opportunity for all racial groups. This article resulted in a more explicit conversation about race, but both the mixed race and the African American groups were more likely to blame class and a lack of parental involvement for disparities in education. Among participants in the mixed race group, this article resulted in division and rejection that race is a factor in education policy.**

The diversity message was received differently in each of the groups. For participants in the mixed race group, this article triggered significant discussion about what is wrong with policies to address disparities. They quickly shifted to a racially-charged conversation over busing/neighborhood schools, and bilingual education. The African American respondents, however, agreed with the sentiment that people should avoid conformity and celebrate diversity.

The mixed race group and the African American group agreed that people separate themselves racially. According to a European American woman in Baltimore, “My kids went to school in a pretty diverse environment. The interesting thing that they told me was that, when it came to lunch

#### Unity and Opportunity: Promoting Diversity in Education

In America, ethnic and religious uniqueness permeate our daily lives, in both obvious and subtle ways. We can all point to cultural traditions such as holidays, music and foods. But the benefits of culture go beyond our interest in holidays such as Christmas, Kwanzaa, Cinco de Mayo, Chinese New Year, or Hanukkah. Cultural differences allow us to see problems from a variety of perspectives, leading to an ability to innovate, adapt and grow. Indeed, America is strongest not when all cultures melt into one pot. Rather, by respecting and celebrating what is unique about our ethnic and religious differences, we can transcend beyond any one narrow viewpoint.

However, in recent years we have taken major steps backward in encouraging diversity. Take education, for example. In the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of Brown v. Board of Education, re-segregation is rampant. After more than 30 years of increasing diversity in schools, the past 12 years have noted a strong trend backward, further separating schools into black and white. In some states there are efforts to eliminate bilingual education in public schools which adversely affects Latino and Asian immigrants. And there have even been efforts to prohibit Muslim girls from wearing head scarves.

Furthermore, school funding patterns demonstrate continuing racial bias. In most states, the school districts with the most minority students have less funding than districts with the fewest minority students. The nationwide gap is \$1,030 per student, which translates into a gap of \$412,000 for the average elementary school.

Unless we act, we are likely to face a future based on racial division and distrust, rather than unity and opportunity. We need to encourage and celebrate diversity by investing in education for all children, promoting access to college, and supporting affirmative action policies that result in diverse universities and, ultimately, workforces that have many perspectives to draw on.

time all the black kids sat together by themselves at a table... so from my kids' perspective they said there really isn't diversity. They are here and we are here but there really is no mixing." An African American man from Baltimore made a similar point: "We are taking ourselves out of the diverse communities, and I'm saying us people of all colors, all backgrounds. We're kind of moving where other people like us are. We feel more comfortable."

At the same time, participants in the mixed race group generally rejected the idea that race is the cause of disparities in education. They blame class – schools in white areas have more funding because those areas are wealthier, and that is an acceptable practice. Respondents in the African-American group also blame class for disparities in funding, but believe that racism is also a factor. Both groups blame parents for not taking more responsibility for education. In fact, the mixed race group pointed to the reluctance of African-American parents in Baltimore City to complain (when it was discovered that funds were stolen from the Baltimore City education system) as proof that African American parents do not care about education.

## Lifting Up Communities

**This article was designed to make white privilege more visible to focus group participants by communicating the importance of one's environment to future achievement. *Lifting up Communities* explains the influence of community environment and policy decisions in determining family income potential. However, rather than building understanding of the systemic influences on individual achievement, this approach creates a backlash. Across races, focus group participants insisted that success is determined by the individual alone.**

In reaction to this article, focus group participants in both groups rejected the importance of environment and emphasized the role of personal responsibility in determining future success. Participants in the mixed race group rejected the idea that race is a factor in economic development decisions and insisted that safety or poverty are at fault. Finally, references to past injustices frustrated respondents in the mixed race group who stated that the past has no bearing on current circumstances.

Clearly, this approach clashes with focus group participants' ethic of personal responsibility. Participants in both the mixed race and African American group rejected the environment argument and insisted that more individual responsibility is the answer to the problems plaguing struggling communities. An African American man from Baltimore explained why individual responsibility is the key to success or failure: "We got two people who were in my class that are millionaires now. I also got some people who didn't make it, some people in my class now who are living on the streets who are bums, and I'm doing

### Lifting Up Communities

The phrase, "we are the product of our environment," is common, but how many of us understand how the forces in our environment have shaped us? For most of us, the forces that provide opportunity or raise barriers blend into the background of our lives: the ability to attend a quality school, walk safe streets, pay for college, or get a loan to buy a home or start a business. We take these opportunities for granted. In many communities, however, these opportunities are hard to find. There is a weight on these communities that is ever-present, consistently pulling them back. These are the communities that have failing schools, unsafe streets, and little economic opportunity. Try to start a business in these communities, and you'll find few banks willing to provide a loan. Talk to a bright kid who gets good grades, and discover that her parents can't afford to send her to college.

There are many reasons for persistent poverty that are built into government policies and business practices. For example, renters do not get the advantage of the mortgage interest deduction that homeowners get. Previous generations of blacks were not covered under the GI bill to pay for a college education and many were not eligible for Social Security. This means that financial responsibility falls on their children and grandchildren, which limits the ability of families to grow financially over generations. Banks are less willing to provide loans in minority communities, and corporations are less likely to open businesses.

The end result is that minority families continue to lag far behind white families. In 2001, the typical white family had \$120,000 in net worth (assets minus debts), seven times as much as the \$17,000 net worth of the typical family of color, according to new Federal Reserve data.

We can take major steps toward transforming communities and providing economic opportunity, but we have to be willing to stop blaming individuals and instead recognize the invisible forces that weigh down communities. This means opening up access to capital in minority communities, increasing home ownership, creating affordable housing, and encouraging the growth of good jobs.

pretty good. So it's not just your environment, but it's what you do with it after you get it.”

Interestingly, African Americans also discussed personal responsibility as a call to collective action for community improvement, rather than just for individual gain. As an African American man from Baltimore explained, “I think we should be getting together as a people ourselves and doing these things, not waiting for the government to educate our children but educating them ourselves, not waiting for the government to give us money, but to get the money from ourselves, not to be dependent upon the government and big businesses for things, but dependent upon ourselves. That's the solution, but how do you get people to do that? That's the problem.”

Participants in the mixed race group noted that safety and poverty, not race, are the reasons businesses are reluctant to invest in some communities. Businesspeople are driven by profit and they will go where their business will thrive. “You go to an area like just outside of Bowie or something,” a male participant in the Baltimore mixed race group explained. “It's primarily a minority community, wealthy minority community. Tons of businesses down there and the point is it's not who lives in the community. It's safety in the community.”

Finally, it is clear that references to past injustice do not advance learning. Participants in the mixed race group rejected that past injustices matter today. “I just think when does it end?” a woman in the Baltimore mixed race group asked. “When do we decide okay, we've heard of it and we have to accept that responsibility. Where it says previous generations were not covered by the G.I. bill. Well, they are now.”

## We're All in it Together

**This article was designed to create a sense of interdependence between races. *We're All in it Together* discusses the effect of minorities' lack of healthcare on the health of people in the entire system. Focus group participants rejected the message of this article because the healthcare system is so broken that people of all races are affected – the minority is no different than the majority.**

Participants in both the mixed race and African American groups cited the same reason for dismissing this message: they stated that the flaws in the healthcare system affect everyone and have nothing to do with race. They assert that the problem in healthcare is about class and cost, not race. An African American man from Baltimore explained why discrimination is not relevant in the healthcare issue: "I know plenty of white folks or Asian, Latino who go through the same b.s. that my grandmother is going through right now."

Instead of creating a new lens on racial disparities, this article resulted in the typical focus group conversation concerning the problems in the nation's healthcare system: costs are too high, there is too much waste, insurance companies are greedy, socialized medicine is/is not the answer, etc.

### **We're All in it Together: Reforming Health Care**

We all have a stake in making sure that every American has good quality health care because when one of us is without good care, it affects us all. Our nation's productivity and ability to progress is hampered whenever a sizeable portion of our workforce is shut out of the healthcare system. Access to primary and preventive care can help state and local governments by bringing about significant savings in emergency room costs for treating non-urgent conditions, by improving the overall health of communities and by increasing student and worker productivity.

Take California, for example, where one of every three residents is Latino. Latinos are disproportionately likely to work in low wage jobs that do not offer insurance, resulting in more than one in four Latinos being without regular health care. Fewer Latino children are reported to be in excellent or very good health compared to children in other racial and ethnic groups. The problem extends beyond insurance. Health care services are less available in minority communities --- like dentists, for example, who are in short supply nationally. And recent budget decisions in California cut health care services to these groups that will further impair their ability to access health and human service programs that their taxes support, and will make them sicker and less productive in the long run.

Maryland has similar challenges, with a growing population of Asian and Latino immigrants and a significant portion of African Americans. Minorities in Maryland are particularly likely to be without good quality health care for a variety of reasons. Minorities are disproportionately among the working poor who are far less likely to receive insurance coverage from their employers. Even when they have insurance, minorities frequently have less access to quality care because it is unavailable in the community – from flu shots to breast cancer screening. Or transportation to care is difficult as is securing time off from work. This means that certain health conditions, like asthma, diabetes, and mental health issues, are far less likely to be treated in minority communities.

Ironically, the more people are thrown out of the health care system, the less stable it becomes. With fewer people to shoulder the burden of costs that are built into the system – from hospital infrastructure to doctor and nursing salaries – those costs escalate as the support system shrinks. When everyone is in the system, you can do a better job of preventing costly illnesses and spread the costs across a wider pool of people. When everyone is healthier, the workforce reflects that increased productivity as well. As we work toward reforming health care, we need to keep in mind that the challenges facing minorities' health affect everyone's well-being.

**Second Test Series**

Baltimore focus group participants resisted the idea that race or racism are factors that explain the state of social problems like crime, education, healthcare and economic development. The second test series continued with the same hypotheses, but intensified the level of attention to race in each of the articles to strengthen the case for race. Specifically, the intent of the articles changed in the following ways:

- *Describing diversity as a valuable asset:* In this phase of testing, the benefits of diversity in experiences and outlook continued to be the focus but with more attention to race than culture.
- *Defining the problem as a system that is broken:* In the second phase, the article discussed the system of local representation in Frederick, MD as broken. According to the article, flaws in representation affected two lower-income minority communities (class and race) that do not have amenities for youth.
- *Reinforcing interdependence among people:* Unfair commercial practices toward minorities are used to explain the rising costs of healthcare that affect everyone.
- *Explaining racism as a force embedded in institutions, not people:* Structural racism continued to be the emphasis of this approach. In this phase, the example of racism was very vivid and was clearly caused by systemic issues even though the racist act was carried out by an individual.

<b>Second Test Series (Minneapolis)</b>		
<b>Article Title</b>	<b>Frame</b>	<b>Issue</b>
Latinos Expand College Hopes	Valuing Diversity, race is the focus	Education
Frederick’s Minority Youth May Finally Share in the City’s Prosperity	Broken Systems, race and class are profiled	Community Transformation and Political Representation
Health Groups Charge Alcohol Advertising is Addictive and Costly	Interdependence and Fairness, race is the focus	Health Care Advertising
Declining Trust in Law Enforcement	Discrimination as a Force/ Structural Racism	Crime

**Latinos Expand College Hopes**

***Latinos Expand College Hopes* describes diversity as a valued asset on college campuses. Students benefit from a more diverse learning environment, according to the article. Importantly, the inability of Latinos to enter Ivy League colleges in great numbers is explained in this article as being due to the application process, not grades. In this way, the article sought to overcome the assumption that minority youth are not able to perform at high enough levels for college admission. This approach was not effective because people are so accustomed to hearing stories about enrollment quotas for minorities that they are unable to hear how this story**

**differs. As soon as a racial group is identified as a unique population for consideration, people assume the article is recommending quotas.**

When exposed to this article, focus group participants immediately began to talk about quotas and preferential treatment for minorities. They assumed that the educational playing field is level therefore qualifications for higher education should be the same for all races. They determined that if the Latino population is not being accepted into elite colleges in high enough percentages, then the Latino population must be deficient in some way such as language barriers, socioeconomic status, or immigration status.

In addition, most focus group participants had difficulty seeing the benefits of diversity for an educational institution. They assumed that colleges want diversity because they are forced to accept a certain percentage of minorities or because the population overall is becoming more diverse and colleges want to be able to meet future needs. The idea that colleges should adapt for minority populations was unacceptable to most. "My parents were German and my grandma spoke German and she learned how to speak English," argued a college-educated European American man from Minneapolis. "It's like, are you catering to the Mexican, the Hispanic students to the point where you're -- like you're saying changing things to favor them?"

**Latinos Expand College Hopes: Elite Colleges Trade Exclusivity for Diversity**

Going to a good college makes a difference, say sociologists such as G. William Domhoff whose classic, *Who Rules America Now?* traced the backgrounds of those in leadership positions in society to such gatekeeping forces as elite colleges which open up networks of connected people able to advance a young person's prospects. Now the ivy gates of these colleges are the goals of Latinos from parts of the country where ivy does not grow, young people eager to boost their chances for success. At the same time, elite institutions from Amherst to Washington University are looking to a new generation of Latino students as a potentially diversifying influence on institutions criticized for their homogeneity. "College isn't just what happens in the classroom," says Pomona College Admissions Director Sue Perkins. "It's also about who is sitting next to you and what life experiences they bring to challenge your status quo and your sense of entitlement. When you open the doors wider, you enhance the educational experiences for everyone."

But first Latino students have to make the grade – and that means more than good grades, say admissions directors at a handful of elite institutions interviewed for this article. They need to learn many of the tricks of the application process that white students get in after-school and weekend college prep sessions, or that helpful teachers provide gratis. One way the Latino kids catch up is through a new series of college crash courses, designed to make them competitive on paper with their white peers. One such program is College Horizons, held in Northfield, MN where students spent the past week polishing college entrance essays and heard an assistant director in Yale's admissions office describe the touches that can make a dull application sparkle.

What's the attraction of the elites? Getting access to an elite college – the Yales, Harvards, Dukes, Stanfords, and Carletons of the country – can have an edifying effect on the life income of a young person, say economists. While a college degree alone will boost annual income 64% over a high school degree, an elite college will virtually double that. In the early 1970s, researcher Elizabeth Tidball examined the baccalaureate origins of women who appeared in *Who's Who in America* and concluded that women's colleges produced significantly more women achievers than most coeducational colleges. Both the Ivies and the nation's pre-eminent women's colleges have done relatively little to bring minority students into the club.

"Increasing the numbers of Hispanic students means making changes in the structures of these institutions," says Alva Lopez, assistant director of the Hispanic College Center in Albuquerque. "It means valuing the traditions of the students who apply, their bilingualism, their participation in ethnic and neighborhood rituals and service, and figuring out how to help them preserve that identity and sense of themselves in the face of a dominant white culture. That challenge is the challenge for educators but, if they get it right, they enrich everyone's future."

For some, it will be a challenge to lift their horizons. Gabrielle Moore, whose parents emigrated from Guatemala a decade ago, says she hopes to break into advertising. "What about creative writing?" asks the visiting admissions director from Dartmouth. "I'd love to, but I don't want to be living in a Dumpster behind McDonald's," Ms. Moore replied. "I've lived without money and don't want to do it again." Ms. Moore has her eyes squarely on the prize – Princeton and then the Pepsi Cola account.

Importantly, focus group participants were opposed to the idea that one race would get preferential treatment over another, but they were not opposed to increasing opportunities for minorities. In fact, focus group participants voiced support for taking steps to make sure that students of every race have an opportunity to get the best education possible. "It should be the goal of the nation to make sure that everybody is educated, not just the whites or not just a certain elite class," stated a college educated European American man from Minneapolis. Another added, "I think it always comes down to the same situation. How do we create equal opportunity without also creating reverse discrimination?"

### **Frederick's Minority Youth May Finally Share in the City's Prosperity**

**This article explains the situation facing two minority neighborhoods in a midsize town. According to this article, political representation in the town is biased against the minority neighborhoods because little has been spent on amenities for youth in those neighborhoods. Focus group participants universally agreed that the system had failed these residents. At the same time, this article triggers a number of racial stereotypes and places much of the responsibility for fixing the problem on minorities.**

Focus group participants insisted that Frederick's city fathers have not been representing the people of the city very well. The politicians should be replaced and the developer should be sued for negligence, they asserted.

At the same time, focus group participants assumed that residents in this neighborhood are also at fault. They suggested that neighborhoods like the one profiled in the article do not get the same amenities as more affluent areas because they do not have political clout and they are unwilling or unable to advocate for the community.

The most significant difference between the two focus groups in Minnesota concerning this article was the intensity with which they discussed inner-city stereotypes and whether or not the stereotypes caused the groups to support or oppose funding for these neighborhoods. In the less educated group, several focus group participants discussed how lower income minority neighborhoods "tear things up," and "unearned is unappreciated." The participants in the more educated focus group did not have an overt anti-minority conversation, but stereotypes of inner-city minorities did emerge. These stereotypes did not appear to undermine support for more investment in minority neighborhoods, however. For example, they discussed the importance of prevention and paying now or paying later in prisons, which is a stereotype of minorities as criminals that did not undermine support for additional investment in minority neighborhoods.



### Frederick's Minority Youth May Finally Share in the City's Prosperity

For decades, Frederick's two heavily minority neighborhoods have been political footballs, as officials blamed one another for the lack of recreational options for the children of Mayfield and Bragg Hill. No playing fields. No swimming pool. No youth center. Just an unlighted basketball court and a ballfield that has never been opened because of concrete and other debris found in the soil.

But in a matter of two weeks, a new city resident has rewritten the rules of an old debate. Sally Sorkin, a philanthropist who moved to Frederick last year, has challenged the city to make good on its promise by donating more than \$3 million for youth centers in Mayfield and Bragg Hill – needy neighborhoods with the city's highest percentages of black and Hispanic youth.

The gift has triggered a new round of recrimination over the lack of public spending on the Bragg Hill and Mayfield neighborhoods. After talking about it since the 1980s, the city purchased some land in 2000 across from Mayfield and plans to build a community center with indoor and outdoor pools, but the money hasn't been appropriated, and even optimists say it won't be done until after 2006. Bragg Hill has no general public space or activities for youth.

The symbol of the city's disregard, says Rebecca Currie who teaches in a local elementary school, is Bragg Hill where there is no stoplight to help children get out of the complex and cross the street through heavy traffic. "The city doesn't do anything for those kids – it's pitiful," Currie said.

Some residents say city officials purposely ignored the less affluent, minority neighborhoods in favor of the quaint downtown. Others note that Frederick has come out of tough economic times only in the last decade and hasn't been in the position to spend much money at all until recently. Still others say there is no problem. "Nothing's been stalled. Everything is pretty much on schedule," said Joe Wilson, who just ended a four-year term on the City Council. He thinks the issue of amenities has been politicized, including the ballfields across the busy road from Bragg Hill.

The Silver Cos., a locally based developer, donated land in the 1990s for playing fields – as long as the company could use dirt from the fields for a mall project and replace it with dirt from its construction site. Soon after, the ballfields weren't settling, and residents found wire, wood and concrete in the ground. The fields remain closed.

The gift from Sorkin is contingent on the city's finding matching funds to complete the two youth centers. The city's outgoing mayor, Bill Beck, said his predecessors had the authority to do projects in both neighborhoods but simply didn't move on it. Xavier Richardson, head of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Frederick, said he thinks there is simply a competition for resources in Frederick, as growth creates more demands for services. The city council will meet soon to discuss the Sorkin gift.

### Health Groups Charge Alcohol Advertising is Addictive and Costly

**This article sought to create a sense of interdependence between races by suggesting that the situation faced by one group can affect a broader system. It describes the health consequences of alcohol consumption on the healthcare system, and makes the case that alcohol advertisers exacerbate the situation by targeting minorities with alcohol advertising. However, focus group participants are unable to assess the larger consequences and discuss the dynamics of race, because they center their attention on advertisers' rights.**

Minneapolis focus group participants were not familiar with alcohol advertisers targeting low-income minorities, but they were not surprised that advertisers would do this. They suggested that less educated, lower income people are vulnerable to this kind of manipulation. While the practice may be unfair or unethical, focus group participants rejected that a person could be such a victim of advertising and incapable of free will. "This is a great country. They don't have to buy it, but they do," noted a non-college-educated European American man from Minneapolis.

The right of business to sell products trumps the right of individuals to protection from manipulation, according to focus group participants. "That's who you market to and why not? This is America, capitalistic society. That's what we do. It's not right maybe in a lot of our thinking that that's what they do," stated a non-college-educated European American woman from Minneapolis. Participants in the college-educated focus group were more willing to protect vulnerable people from advertising. "Have a class in the high school, what it means to live in a consumer society," recommended a college-educated European American woman from Minneapolis. "They have a right to target certain groups. However, in this case, they are targeting a vulnerable group in a destructive way. So there could very well be some limits placed on that," remarked a

### **Health Groups Charge Alcohol Advertising is Addictive and Costly**

A new push among health-oriented groups is being organized, linking excessive and unfair marketing practices to the rising costs of premiums that most Americans have been experiencing. The group is headed by the Stop Unfair Alcohol Advertising Coalition, based in Kansas City, MO.

The alcoholic beverage industry claims that advertising is aimed at encouraging people who already drink to switch brands and to support moderate drinking – that is the message of numerous industry websites. Given the demographics of alcohol consumption, however, industry support for moderate consumption is unlikely, say critics. Robert Hammond, director of the Alcohol Research Information Service estimates that if all 105 million American drinkers of legal age consumed the official "moderate amount of alcohol, the equivalent of about two drinks per day, the industry would suffer "a whopping 40-percent decrease in the sale of beer, wine, and distilled spirits." Alcohol-related trauma and addiction are now responsible for a whopping 18% of America's rising health care costs, according to a recent report from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation – and they take their toll on some communities more than others.

African Americans have become an important market for the alcoholic beverage industry and a major target for pro-drinking marketing messages. According to a recent report on the state of minority health in America, African Americans "suffer disproportionately from the health consequences of alcohol. . . . [and] appear to be at a disproportionately high risk for certain alcohol-related problems." Regrettably, federal and state governments have made very few expenditures to address alcohol problems in the African American community. According to the Center for Science in the Public Interest, "the lion's share of what is being said and done about alcohol in the African American community consists of a steady diet of alluring commercial marketing campaigns designed to promote alcohol consumption among African Americans."

Many television ads for alcoholic beverages utilize African American spokespersons, says George Jonas, a professor of advertising at the University of Minnesota, and the association of alcohol consumption with machismo and economic opportunity are frequent themes. "It is cruelly ironic that an addictive and potentially enslaving drug should be offered as a replacement for the success and economic stability that so frequently elude African-Americans as a result of poverty and circumscribed opportunity," says Elmore P. Gallant, MD, vice-president of the National Medical Association, which represents 17,000 minority physicians.

Advertising data reveals that high alcohol content malt liquors are marketed almost exclusively to African Americans and Latinos. These products generally contain as much as 20 percent more alcohol than regular beers, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Billboard advertising for alcoholic beverages is ubiquitous in many low-income minority neighborhoods, with tobacco or alcoholic beverage companies comprising nine of ten leading billboard advertisers in 1985, the last date for which data is available.

college-educated European American woman from Minneapolis.

### **Declining Trust in Law Enforcement**

This article was included in 10 of the fourteen groups. It is discussed with the results of the fifth and final test series.

### **Third Test Series**

Like Baltimore participants, Minneapolis focus group participants resisted the idea that race or racism are factors that explain the state of social problems in this country. The third test series continued with the same hypotheses, but added even further intensity to the attention to race in each of the articles. Specifically:

- *Describing the effect of diversity in decision making:* In this phase of testing, both the benefits and the difficulties of diversity were described in a news article about the actions of a racially diverse metropolitan council.
- *Defining the problem as a system that is broken while reinforcing interdependence among people:* In this phase, participants were asked to review an article concerning flaws in the healthcare system and the consequences for all Americans. This is similar to the health article tested in Baltimore, but it incorporated more interdependence in the description of the system.
- *Explaining racism as a force embedded in institutions, not people:* The racial profiling article from phase two was slightly adapted to avoid focusing on the individual’s actions and instead bring more attention to the systemic issues. This article is discussed in the fifth test series.
- *Explaining racism as a force embedded in institutions, not people:* In this instance, race and class discrimination were both explained as being embedded in institutions in the hope that focus group participants’ sensitivity to class issues might make them more willing to see issues of race.

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#### **Third Test Series (Albuquerque)**

Article Title	Frame	Issue
Metropolitan Governing Council	Diversity – overcoming cultural misunderstandings and prejudices by all races	Community
We’re All in it Together	Interdependence/Broken System	Health Care
Declining Trust in Law Enforcement	Structural Racism, racism primary	Criminal Justice
New Report on Flawed Admission Procedures	Structural Racism/Discrimination as a Force for low-income white and minority	Education

## Metropolitan Governing Council Puts Diversity to Work for Region

**Focus group participants read an article about cultural misunderstandings and prejudices among a diverse group of people working together to improve their community. The objective was to demonstrate how 1) well-meaning people can misunderstand each other, and 2) diverse experiences create a better end result. The article was able to convey the idea that stereotypes and assumptions are damaging. However, the blatant discussion of racial misunderstandings caused focus group participants to see the Council as argumentative and divisive. Talking about race feels racist to some focus group participants.**

While the article itself talks about the positive steps council members took to understand each others' cultural differences, many focus group participants found the article to reflect divisiveness among council members. Diversity is an obstacle to overcome, not an asset, they asserted. "It seems to communicate how fractioned this community is and that they actually had to build a bridge with each other in order to even just understand how one another was communicating," noted one Hispanic American man from Albuquerque.

They are not accustomed to seeing race discussed with the blatant terms used in this article. Since most have come to believe that

### Metropolitan Governing Council Puts Diversity to Work for Region

In the mid-1990s, citizen leaders across the Springfield metro area came to a sudden realization. The economic boom was creating rampant growth in some areas while others were continuing to decline. Education, health care, and the economy were in good shape in some places -- disastrous in others. "We realized that the only way we could create a better quality of life across the metropolitan area was to work together," stated Mayor Chris Simpson. "Otherwise we were competing with each other for limited resources."

So local governments across the metropolitan area came to a unique arrangement -- a joint Citizens Council that shares experiences and makes recommendations for the region as a whole. Because Council representatives are appointed from communities across the metropolitan area, they represent a mix of cultural backgrounds. "We were forced to recognize different cultural styles of communications and respect them," stated Council member Pat Green. "For example, an Asian-American member of the Council might be soft-spoken during the heat of the debate, but that doesn't mean that he is any less passionate about the issue. It is just a cultural distinction."

The Council also had to confront individual biases and subconscious assumptions. The debate over public housing is a good example. "Several white Council members, who were all committed to improving public housing, assumed that the solution was teaching poor black people how to take better care of their homes," shared Council member Alice Wilson. "Members representing those neighborhoods explained to them that the maintenance budget for public housing had been cut in half over the past 10 years. The problem was leaking plumbing, cracked walls, and broken lights, not graffiti and weeds in the yard. The funding for building maintenance that any landlord would have to provide was not being provided by the city's public housing authority. The white Council members had to confront their assumptions that were leading them to the wrong conclusion."

Bilingual education was another hot issue. "At first, we thought non-Latino Council members were being racist by wanting to eliminate bilingual education," stated Anthony Romero. "But then we figured out that they thought kids would be better off in school if they learned English first. Once that assumption was out on the table, we could address it and come to recommendations based on science and experience, not prejudice and assumptions."

Though disagreements arise, the Council members remain committed because they know that every member has the same goal -- a better quality of life for the region. "Diversity is hard, because we all see things differently. But diversity also makes us stronger. The region will be better off because of the issues we are confronting," stated Green.

race shouldn't matter, focus group participants felt there was something wrong with such overt consciousness of race as described in this article. "I think the only problem that anybody had with it was the wording of 'poor black' and 'rich white.' That kind of got me that we just don't talk like that. It's just not written in the paper. 'The poor black people,' it was just kind of harsh to take," remarked one Hispanic-American woman from Albuquerque.

To some, this article was an example of overzealous political correctness. These focus group participants worried that council members were more concerned about hurting each others' feelings than about working on the issues at hand. "If I say Latino, but you'd rather be called Spanish. If I say you're white, you'd rather be called Caucasian and you spend most of that time figuring out what everybody wants to be called, then the issues on the table aren't being addressed," argued a non-college-educated European American man from Albuquerque.

One very powerful idea in this article was the concept that assumptions can be very dangerous. Focus group participants generally agreed that assumptions and stereotypes can inhibit progress.

### **We're All in it Together**

**This article was significantly revised to incorporate new learning about how to communicate more effectively about the healthcare system. Based on research conducted by FrameWorks Institute research partner Cultural Logic, the research team decided to incorporate the Missing Pillars<sup>6</sup> simplifying model to explain risk pools in healthcare. While the Missing Pillars model did indeed help focus group participants see healthcare as a system, it did not advance a conversation about race. All racial groups are similarly affected by this broken system, according to focus group participants.**

The Missing Pillars simplifying model helps focus group participants understand how the insured and uninsured are linked in the healthcare system. "So if less people can afford it, there is less money in the system to take care of everyone," explained a non-college-educated European American woman from Albuquerque. However, this proved an ineffective approach in promoting a discussion of racial disparities, because people firmly believe that the system is so broken that everyone is affected, not just minorities. "Whether it's Latinos or Caucasians, African-Americans, anything you think of, it's not good quality healthcare," argued a non-college-educated European American man from Albuquerque.

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<sup>6</sup> In the test article the simplifying model was written as: "Ironically, the more people that are thrown out of the healthcare system, the less stable it becomes. With fewer people to shoulder the burden of costs that are built into the system – from hospital infrastructure to doctor and nursing salaries – those costs escalate as the support system shrinks. When everyone is in the system, we can do a better job of preventing costly illnesses and spread the costs across a wider pool of people."

In addition, instead of creating common cause with Hispanic Americans, this article causes European Americans to think about illegal immigrants who are breaking the system, causing a few to advocate for closing the borders. Hispanic American focus group participants were also reminded of illegal immigration, but rather than close the borders, some asserted that the true solution for the uninsured is improved public education, resulting in better jobs with benefits. They recognize that cultural barriers may inhibit that solution. "My Grandpa says all the time," one Hispanic-American woman from Albuquerque explained, "'just because you can speak better than me doesn't mean that you are better than me.' Like it's not a good thing to better yourself. They didn't want me to go to school."

### **We're All in it Together: Reforming Health Care**

We all have a stake in making sure that every American has good quality health care because when a significant number of the population is without healthcare, it puts the whole system in jeopardy. Ironically, the more people that are thrown out of the health care system, the less stable it becomes. With fewer people to shoulder the burden of costs that are built into the system – from hospital infrastructure to doctor and nursing salaries – those costs escalate as the support system shrinks. When everyone is in the system, we can do a better job of preventing costly illnesses and spread the costs across a wider pool of people.

California is a good example of what can happen when the system is unstable. In California one of every three residents is Latino. Latinos are disproportionately likely to work in low wage jobs that do not offer insurance, resulting in more than one in four Latinos being without regular health care. But the problem extends beyond insurance. Health care services are less available in minority communities --- like dentists, for example, who are in short supply nationally. And recent budget decisions in California cut health care services to these groups that will further impair their ability to access health and human service programs that their taxes support.

Latinos are disproportionately underrepresented in the state legislature, so their concerns are frequently ignored. "Too many state representatives think their constituents' needs are in competition with Latinos' needs," stated Representative Arturo Gonzalez. "They fight to weaken requirements for business to provide insurance, cut Medicaid funding, and close clinics, not realizing these actions hurt their constituents as much as mine. Without a regular source of healthcare people rely on emergency rooms or go without care, which makes communities less healthy, costs more in the long run, and weakens the entire healthcare system. As we work toward reforming health care, we need to keep in mind that the challenges facing minorities' health affect everyone's well-being."

As the healthcare crisis in California worsens, the question becomes whether or not the state can set aside narrow self-interest, and work toward the needs of the state as a whole.

### **Declining Trust in Law Enforcement**

This article was included in 10 of the fourteen groups. It is discussed with the results of the fifth and final test series.

## New Report on Flawed Admission Procedures at State University

**This article was designed to make structural racism visible. In discussing the statistical advantages given to students from white wealthy suburbs in the college admission process, this article sought to demonstrate systemic biases in race and class. This approach was very effective in highlighting class bias, but only somewhat effective in highlighting race bias.**

Focus group participants saw the college admission procedures discussed in the article as a violation of the American value of opportunity for all. They argued that every child should have an opportunity to go to college. At the same time, they cautioned that there should be no quotas to limit other students' opportunity.

While they recognized that public schools vary in quality, they did not understand why that is the case. "This one gets an A; but this one means a lot more than that one does. That shouldn't keep them from getting to go to higher education. That's wrong, definitely wrong so they've got to do something," remarked a non-college-educated European American man from Albuquerque. "I'd like to see that all the schools have the same curriculum and teaching available for all," stated a non-college-educated European American woman from Albuquerque.

This article caused focus group participants to attend to class issues more than race issues. They

### New Report on Flawed Admission Procedures at State University

Education is supposed to be the great equalizer in society, but what happens when the opportunity to get a good education is unequal? State University, well regarded as the highest quality educational institution in the state, has an enrollment that is 5% minority while 25% of state residents are minority. "Most people assume that minority kids aren't qualified and the only way to get a diverse enrollment is to lower criteria for minorities. This report demonstrates that those assumptions are wrong. The enrollment criteria are biased in favor of kids from wealthy, predominantly white, suburbs," stated Jess Jones, Executive Director of the Multicultural Education Project which recently completed a review of State University's admissions criteria.

State University relies primarily upon three criteria for admissions: SAT tests, an individual's class rank, and the performance of the student's school on state tests. Critics have complained for years about the heavy reliance on the SAT for college admissions. According to Professor Taylor Chancellor, "Colleges use admissions criteria to predict which kids will be the most successful students. But studies have repeatedly shown that the SAT is a very poor predictor of future success in college. Poor test takers are not necessarily poor students."

High school class rank is a better predictor, say critics, but the way State University uses class rank creates a bias in favor of students from wealthy, predominantly white, suburbs. "In the admissions process, State University takes a student's class rank and adds a weight based on that student's *school's* performance on state assessments," explained Jones. "The theory is that an "A" at a high performing school is worth more than an "A" at a school that tests lower on state assessments. The effect is that students from the wealthy suburban parts of the state are given an enormous advantage over areas that score lower on state assessments. Schools that score lower are clustered in lower income rural and inner-city areas. That means that lower income white students and minorities are at a disadvantage in getting accepted to State University."

One solution, according to Professor Chancellor, is to guarantee admission to every student in the state who ranks in the top 10% of the senior class. "This system has 3 benefits: 1) it results in a high performing student body since any student that achieves in the top 10% of the class has already proven he or she will succeed in education; 2) it removes all racial and class prejudice in admissions; and 3) it guarantees a diverse student body which will create a multicultural learning environment that benefits everyone."

State University is scheduled to consider the report and its recommendations next month.

assumed that more money means better education and that nicer looking neighborhoods result in better schools. "Like it says there inner, rural as opposed to white suburbs. Less money in the city or in the rural areas than there is in the suburb areas," explained a non-college-educated European American man from Albuquerque. Their assessment of school quality was influenced to some extent by the architecture of the school, i.e., nicer looking schools are better schools. "There are no windows in the West Mesa. It's like you're in a small prison. You go over to this other school, and it's got beautiful tile floors," explained a non-college-educated man from Albuquerque.

Importantly, focus group participants do not believe that opportunity for a quality education should be limited in any way. Even the article's recommendation to automatically enroll the top ten percent of each school's graduating class was not good enough for most participants. "I don't even think they should base college admission on the top 10 percent because I have kids who are in the lower 30 percent who are completely capable of going to college," remarked one Hispanic American woman from Albuquerque.



**Fourth Test Series**

As the focus groups progressed, some patterns became apparent. First, focus group participants’ pre-existing perceptions of specific issues (education, healthcare, crime, community development) dominated the conversation, making it difficult to determine if the various characterizations of race and racism were able to alter perceptions. Second, the test materials frequently conflicted with focus group participants’ deeply held views of the world. They want a colorblind society, yet the test materials forced them to focus on racial differences. They want practical solutions to problems, yet the test materials sometimes caused them to view the problems as overwhelming and unsolvable.

In the fourth test series, the research team decided to alter the structure of the test materials to address these concerns. The revised test articles:

- Incorporated several issues to avoid triggering a conversation narrowly focused on just one policy area (education, healthcare, etc.).
- Sought to work with pre-existing public perceptions rather than against the grain of public reasoning by:
  - incorporating a pragmatic tone seeking efficiencies and solutions,
  - including the vision of a colorblind society,
  - suggesting that remnants of racism exist while not seeking to place blame for historical racism, and
  - defining diversity as including many factors (race, class, religion, experiences).

<b>Fourth Test Series (Newark)</b>	
<b>Article Title</b>	<b>Frame</b>
Diversity is Strength	Diversity – the experiences that make us different (race, class, religion, etc.) enhance human problem solving; it is practical and efficient to strive for diversity
Achieving a Colorblind Society	The society we want is free of stereotypes; need to remove remnants of racism to get to this society
We’re All Connected	Interdependence – when all of society is in good shape everyone benefits, therefore we should address problems wherever they occur
A Centuries Old Virus	Racism from prior generations still affects institutions, need to clean it up
College Diversity: Fix the Pipeline First	Broken System – policies that are focused on the wrong solution

## Diversity is Strength

***Diversity is Strength* continues an earlier theme that diversity enhances problem solving, but it adds a practical dimension to the argument. People agree that a diversity of experiences benefits a company. However, most are unable to keep the corporate perspective in mind. Instead, they quickly switch to the perspective of the individual and insist that the most skilled individuals should get the jobs – ignoring that a mix of skills makes the strongest team.**

The word “diversity” is so closely associated with race that focus group participants cannot see the broader definition that is suggested by this article. In the abstract, they agree that a company or organization is better served by a mix of perspectives, but they become stuck in a conversation centered on hiring the individual with the best skills. They focus on individual skills, not the mix of skills needed for a company to function well. “I almost think it's like reverse discrimination though,” explained a college-educated European American woman from Newark. “People talk about discrimination so much that, like for example people getting into colleges. It's always been the minorities, so now they're getting in and they're taking places of people that perhaps belong in that school.” The sports metaphor is ineffective because it reinforces focus group participants’ belief that only the best should make the team (a perspective based on individual skill) rather than the intended meaning that a strong team needs different skills (a perspective based on what the system needs).

Chinese Americans are keenly aware that they continue to experience discrimination. Several discussed the glass ceiling for Asians at their place of work. At the same time, they expressed resentment of African American workers who are promoted ahead of them and asserted that many African Americans get special treatment.

Focus group participants rejected that there is current discrimination in home lending. Banks are driven by profits and will provide any loan that is profitable, they assert. If neighborhoods are separated by race, it is because people want to feel comfortable.

Finally, the article sounds idealistic, not practical and not realistic. “If they write this it will make them feel better, but in practice it doesn’t really happen,” asserted a Chinese man from Newark.

## Diversity is Strength

Scientists have found that bringing diverse experiences, perspectives, and talents to bear on a particular problem results in better answers. This means that the experiences that make us different – race, class, religion, and other experiences – enhance human problem-solving. As long as differences are respected and valued, they are strengths, not weaknesses for society.

Corporate America gets this – many of America’s most forward thinking managers understand that diversity is important for innovation, creative problem-solving and for the efficiency of the company as a whole. In fact, in some situations, you simply cannot get the job done without a mix of people. Just like a sports team needs athletes with different skills, the agile and competitive firm realizes that in today’s environment talent comes in all shapes, sizes, and colors. Indeed, America is strongest not when all cultures melt into one pot. By respecting and celebrating our differences, we get beyond any one narrow viewpoint.

But our policies have not caught up with what business has learned. Discrimination in home lending policies, for example, prevents people of different races from living, playing and being together. This means that people are stuck in crumbling neighborhoods with few services, poor schools and the inability to make the contribution that they could to the society. We need to make sure communities and businesses can draw from a diverse pool, and we can do that by taking out barriers to participation in our society, wherever we find them.

## Achieving a Colorblind Society

**This article recognizes the desire to achieve a society in which race no longer matters, and suggests that, while progress has been made, structural racism continues. This approach does not help focus group participants overcome their assumption that racism is individual, not structural.**

Focus group participants agreed with the vision of a colorblind society, but the examples of institutional changes did not help them overcome their assumption that racism is embedded in individuals. Government can write laws, but change happens through people, they asserted. "I think it's the same thing that you see in Iraq," a college-educated European American man from Newark remarked. "It's embedded in the children. The kids, they are burning American flags at three years old and dancing in the streets when our soldiers are getting killed. It's just passed from generation to generation." Another college-educated European American man added, "I guess like we were talking about before, the home, the parents -- it just keeps promulgating over and over again, generation after generation." When the problem is understood in this way, solutions are invisible.

### Achieving a Colorblind Society

Most Americans would like to live in a society where the color of one's skin does not matter – a society in which negative stereotypes based on race, ethnicity, economic class, or religion have been retired, removed from society and its institutions. We've come a very long way in dealing with these problems, but there is still work to be done.

Remnants of racism remain in many institutions. For example, research shows that bilingual education results in far more educational success over the long term than forcing immigrant children into English-only classrooms before they are fluent, but many school districts refuse to incorporate bi-lingual education. Racial profiling has been proven to be a completely inaccurate and inefficient approach to crime prevention, but many police departments continue to practice profiling. Pre-existing assumptions about race and ethnicity keep these kinds of out-dated practices alive.

It's time to clean up these outdated practices once and for all. That means attacking the remnants of discrimination that remain built into the education and criminal justice systems, to name just a couple of examples.

## We're All Connected

**This article makes the case that society as a whole succeeds or fails based on the success of each part of society. A society can only progress when all parts of society are working well. Directly addressing the model of the Self-Making Person, as this article does, creates a backlash. People insist that individual determination is all that matters.**

Focus group participants strongly disagreed with this article because they firmly believe that each individual is solely responsible for his or her own success. "It's up to the individual to make your own expectations in life," argued a college-educated European American woman from Newark. "You set your own goals, yellow, orange, purple or blue, you know. I came from dirt poor. I made sure I was the valedictorian in my high school; I graduated college at 21. I got out of the ghetto. It's up to the individual. I don't think it's color." "I believe it depends on the person," stated a Chinese American woman from Newark. "America has enough good schools you can go to and you have to work hard, of course. If you don't work hard, don't blame it on other people."

Several voiced strong resentment of the advantages they believe minorities and lower income citizens receive. "I think the minorities can get better college education than a white student. I know for a fact. I've seen it happen," stated a college-educated European American woman from Newark. Another added, "And get free healthcare."

## We're All Connected

History demonstrates that in societies where minorities are treated equally, everyone has a better quality of life and a longer life expectancy. In other words, when all parts of a society are in good shape – a good public education system, quality health care for all, a low level of poverty – all citizens benefit.

Today, minority Americans are far less likely to get a quality education and to have health care coverage, and they are more likely to be poor. If a significant number of citizens are in poverty, then economic prosperity for the entire country is limited. Expensive and wasteful problems – from alcoholism to violence – plague the society. If many are without a regular source of healthcare, care is delayed and emergency rooms get clogged, care costs more in the long run, and the entire health care system weakens. And if only a few have access to a quality education, the country's ability to grow, adapt and innovate in the future is limited.

To remain competitive, America cannot afford to have weak links and, as the saying goes, you are only as strong as your weakest link. If you want to know where to start, shouldn't we make sure that the high rates of uninsured in minority communities is reduced?

## A Centuries Old Virus

***A Centuries Old Virus* discusses racism as a holdover from prior generations that needs to be cleansed from our institutions. This approach does not help focus group participants see racism as structural, and the metaphor is confusing to many.**

After reading this article, focus group participants continued to think about racism as internal to a person, and to wonder what can be done to address it. A college-educated European American woman from Newark insisted, "All the things that are going on against Jews in France. You can't stop this. You can't stop people like this."

They struggled to explain the virus metaphor. In fact, this metaphor may reinforce that it is not possible to get rid of racism, just as it is not possible to wipe out viruses. "This prejudice is rooted deeply and that is why it's not going away and it is probably -- I don't know if it ever will go away," a college educated European American woman from Newark stated. "I don't think it makes sense," explained a college-educated European American man from Newark, "because we're saying and I think we've all acknowledged that these things have been occurring and the system hasn't shut down. The system is still functioning. It may not be functioning perfectly but it is still functioning. You get a decent virus in your system and it shuts down."

### A Centuries Old Virus

Have you ever gotten a virus on your computer? The system gets infected and it corrupts the whole network, both the original computer and everyone else's. If you want to fix it, you don't decide that everybody should build their own firewall. Instead, it is more efficient and effective to protect the integrity of the entire system.

Well, racism in America is much like a computer virus. Decisions based on racist assumptions left over from prior generations continue to corrupt entire systems. For example, public education continues to be funded by property taxes which results in different educational opportunities based on where one lives. States have the ability to determine restrictions on voting for those convicted of a crime, and those states with the most restrictive laws are the states that historically have had the highest proportions of minority prisoners.

Do we build firewalls around these corrupted systems, or do we take care of the virus? Just like we vigilantly guard and defend the integrity of our computer systems, we must also protect the integrity of all of America's institutions. This means removing blockages, re-routing traffic, and putting in virus protection programs. This means stopping racial profiling by highway patrol officers, repealing laws that send a person to prison for 25 years for minor offenses, and making sure that children have enough books, papers and pencils by changing school funding equations. It is time to clean out the last vestiges of a virus that has lasted far too long.

## College Diversity: Fix the Pipeline First

**This was the only article tested in the Newark focus groups that emphasized one issue area – education. It attempted to turn the conversation away from quotas and toward improving public education by insisting that policymakers were bringing attention to the wrong problem. This approach could not overcome focus group participants’ pre-existing perceptions about what is wrong with public education.**

Focus group participants’ response to this article reinforced the challenge of translating a conversation about race into communications about one issue area. Their perceptions of the issue (education) overrode the conversation about race. Focus group participants were quick to point out that parents are the problem in education. “It goes beyond the school system as to why they’re dropping out,” a college-educated European American woman from Newark stated. “It goes back into the home and the family and the lack of the family structure. No school is going to change that. I don’t care whether it’s black, white, orange. We could give them the best educational opportunities. If the basic home and the structure is not there, you can’t force them to be good students and to take advantage of all these wonderful opportunities we have.” When forced to talk about the role of race in educational achievement, focus group participants discussed affirmative action policies at colleges as unfair to non-minorities.

Chinese American focus group participants asserted that this example does not fit the Asian experience, because Asians traditionally do very well in school. While both groups stated the same level of opposition to quotas in higher education, Chinese American focus group participants were more open to the idea that funding mechanisms for public education may unfairly limit minority advancement. European American focus group participants stated that funding disparities matter, but that minority districts get quite a lot of additional funding from the federal government, indicating that minority districts may have some funding advantages.

### College Diversity: Fix the Pipeline First

Affirmative action in college admissions is among the most controversial issues in education, but both sides in the debate overestimate its importance. The truth is that affirmative action is largely irrelevant to increasing minority representation in higher education. The primary obstacle to getting more minority students into college is that only one in five of such students graduate from high school with the bare minimum qualifications needed to even apply to four-year colleges.

Think of the K-12 educational system as a pipeline: Students enter the pipe in preschool and, if all goes well, flow all the way through and out the other end into college. But some students “leak” out of the pipeline by dropping out of school or failing to acquire college-ready skills. And when it comes to minority students, the pipe is currently so leaky that only a trickle of those students flow into college. Expanding affirmative action policies and financial assistance is like opening the spigot at the end of the pipe wider: It’s beside the point if the pipe is leaking badly. We can beef up affirmative action all we like and it won’t increase the flow of minority students into college, because the K-12 system just doesn’t produce enough college-ready high school graduates.

### **Fifth Test Series**

At the mid-point of the focus group research, the research team compared the findings with the initial hypotheses. Based on the cognitive elicitations and first half of the focus group research, the following public perceptions consistently emerged:

- Racism is seen as embedded in individuals of all races.
- A conversation about race is immediately confrontational. It is an uncomfortable conversation for most.
- Focus group participants noted that skin color does not matter, but when it does matter it is more likely to provide an advantage to minorities, i.e., preferences in hiring or college admission, federal dollars to minority schools, etc.
- A conversation about disparities that hinges on racism as the causal story creates an “us versus them” dynamic. Whites feel as though they are being blamed for minority disadvantages, and they feel as though they are being asked to give something up to advantage minorities.
- If there are disparities between blacks and whites, it is not due to skin color. It is due to economics, family, community, or values.
- If the problem is lodged in the individual or the family, there are few solutions available other than to “fix” the individual via internal stamina that allows them to triumph over adversity.

These findings caused the research team to re-evaluate what communications had to achieve to be effective. The initial hypotheses suggested that racism would have to be explained in order to build support for policies to address racial disparities. In other words, if people understood that racial differences in education, income, health, etc., were due to institutional racism, the public would be more receptive to addressing those institutional practices.

By contrast, the focus group research up to this point suggested that a conversation about racism might actually undermine support for policies. Indeed, the focus group conversations were making it increasingly apparent that a discussion of racism or racial disparities caused people to become more resistant to policies to address disparities. They rejected that race could be a relevant factor and placed blame elsewhere, frequently on individuals or families. Often, focus group participants became defensive and angry, which caused them to closely embrace their existing worldviews. Even when focus group participants accepted the contribution of racism to racial disparities, they could not see a solution to the problem, particularly if the solution involved government. Solutions rely on individuals, not government, they asserted.

Given these findings, the research team decided to pursue a strategy that builds support for policies to address racial disparities without trying first to convince people that racism exists. In addition, the new articles placed more emphasis on policy solutions and a specific role for government engagement in addressing the problem. Finally, one article from the earlier phases was included in this last test series to allow us to determine if the

reactions we saw were due to the new articles, not to more progressive focus group participants.

<b>Fifth Test Series (San Francisco, LA, Nashville)</b>		
<b>Article Title</b>	<b>Frame</b>	<b>Issue</b>
Local Development Initiative Showing Progress	Join the interests of minorities and lower income whites to create opportunity and position government as assisting citizens to achieve a common vision.	Community
Rungs on the Economic Ladder Break From the Bottom Up	Problems in minority communities are an early warning for problems in society overall; the role for government is to identify and solve problems.	Economy
Closing the Education Gap	Reasons don't matter – this is a problem that needs fixing. Government, business, parents and citizens need to work together to solve it.	Education
Declining Trust in Law Enforcement	Structural Racism, racism primary	Criminal Justice

### **Local Development Initiative Showing Progress**

**This story describes community decay in both urban and rural areas. Since the same situation is occurring in different kinds of communities, people are less likely to blame minorities for what is happening in minority communities. Instead, they focus on the systemic issues. In addition, this story features a government solution that provides the resources for people within the community to solve the problems facing the community, so it is not perceived as a government handout for the undeserving. This approach is generally effective in building support for policies to address struggling communities, particularly minority communities.**

This approach allows focus group participants to see the root causes of problems and the impact on communities. Instead of blaming individuals, people begin to understand the role of environment in individual success or failure. “It seems like it's needed,” stated a college-educated European American woman from San Francisco. “It's something necessary to do [for] people in certain communities. I don't think they're given opportunities other people are and it is hard to break out of that. They say you can work really hard and get out of it, but I don't know if that is necessarily true.”

This article is effective because it features the systemic forces that create barriers for all different kinds of people. Focus group participants quickly understand how any community would begin to decline when jobs leave. The people are not morally deficient; the economy has changed, they respond.

However, if people begin to focus on individuals or specific groups of individuals, the conversation can easily turn to moral values as the problem. “The bigger issue here which also affects the African American community to a large extent as well is the irresponsibility,” asserted one Hispanic American man from Los Angeles. “My wife is a nurse... You see the person come in and they're dressed like they just got out of bed. It



doesn't really matter what time of day or night. For the most part they are pregnant. Their boyfriend or husband is dealing drugs, and they have so many kids already that even if the husband had a good job they could never take care of all these kids.” Once a lack of moral values becomes the cause of a community’s decline, focus group participants then want to limit the grants to just those communities that prove worthy.

### Local Development Initiative Showing Progress

State governments across the nation are eyeing a five-year-old (San Francisco wording: *Kentucky*; all others: *Illinois*) initiative that is re-shaping opportunity in the state. A number of urban and rural communities (All but San Francisco heard: *from Chicago to the farm towns of Southern Illinois*) were experiencing rising crime, declining school test scores, and disappearing economies. Faced with this situation, state legislators knew that dramatic action was needed to keep the state from dividing along class and race lines.

“We are the product of our environment,” stated Mayor Cyrus Blackwell. “For most of us, the forces that provide opportunity or raise barriers blend into the background of our lives: the ability to attend a quality school, walk safe streets, pay for college, or get a loan to buy a home or start a business. We take these opportunities for granted. In many communities, however, these opportunities are hard to find, making success in life more difficult.”

In the 1990s economic analysts began to notice growing disparities across the state. “Business incentives were concentrated in white, wealthy suburbs,” stated economist Jean Harrison. “That drew resources away from low-income rural and urban areas and created a number of impoverished communities. These communities became increasingly likely to have failing schools, unsafe streets, and little economic opportunity. Try to start a business in these communities, and you’d find few banks willing to provide a loan. Talk to a bright kid who gets good grades, and you’d discover that her parents can’t afford to send her to college.”

To address the growing disparities, the state worked with citizens to create a development plan for their community, replicating the process with citizens in 30 communities around the state. Citizens provided the energy and vision while the state provided technical assistance and \$100,000 grants to help communities get started implementing their common vision. One inner city community used a portion of the grant to provide low-interest business loans to residents. A rural community used a portion of the grant to attract a child care center to the area.

The Governor is committed to the program and officials in other states are watching closely to see if it will be successful and able to be replicated in other states.

This approach triggers understanding of a chain of events that determine how communities decline and are rebuilt. One man from Los Angeles explained how this initiative would rebuild a community in decline:

“It's trying to attract the businesses back to help raise the test scores and bring people back and reduce the crime level. The crime will be reduced because more jobs will be available for the people who live in the community. The test scores would go up because the schools will attract better students or families of students who have a vested interest in the community. And if your parents are working and if they have a meaningful job, the kids will see that and see that there is an interest in school and that school will take me to the next place and that place will probably be college or a good job, or college which will lead to a good job.” (Los Angeles man, mixed race group)

Focus group participants assume that inner city, poor, and minority communities are the target for this initiative, though it does not emphasize minority communities. They believe this kind of initiative is most likely to be successful in communities that are recently in decline because a “work ethic” is still in place and the community is likely to be a safe community. Those communities that are in too much disarray need more help than these grants could provide.

Focus group participants support this type of intervention because it empowers communities to create their own change. Government is not doing the work for communities nor is it treating minorities as helpless victims. It is providing the tools to allow minority communities to help themselves. “I think whatever the program is it has to empower the people with training, tools, education,” suggested a Korean American woman from San Francisco. “They can't be babysat by these officials who are starting this program. It has to be the people who can take this program and take it to where it needs to go.”

In fact, empowerment is an important image for minority communities to develop in mass media, because people assume that minority communities are not willing to take steps to improve their own communities. “My first impression is the communities that need this kind of thing the most are the ones that don't react to trying to solve any of their problems,” noted a Los Angeles man in the mixed race group. “The mentality is just not there. The people are not involved...okay. South Central where there is iron gates on every door and every window and people just aren't involved. They're too concerned about survival and the things that go down in the street.”

In response to this article, African American focus group respondents call on other African Americans to act on behalf of the broader community. “If we think within our circle, if we always do what we always done, we are always going to get what we've already got,” noted an African American man from Nashville. “We know there is a better opportunity out there but we've got to go get it. What we do as a minority is stay within that circle and instead of us going to get it, we want to stay there.”

According to the focus group participants, whether or not this kind of initiative works depends upon the people in the community. “It depends on the community itself and whether they have people that really want to invest in it,” stated a non-college-educated European American woman from Nashville. “It's not just the money. It's going to take time and getting people together to figure out what the community wants. It depends on how active the people in the community would be.”

While there is clearly work to be done in perfecting this frame, at the very least it gets people to thinking systemically, rather than individually. Community moves them in the right direction.

## Rungs on the Economic Ladder Break From the Bottom Up

**This story describes problems in minority communities as an early warning of future problems in society overall and suggests that the role for government is to identify and solve economic problems. This approach creates a sense of interdependence, but people reject the assertion that race matters. People of all races, education levels, professions, etc., are hurting in this economy, they note. Since the article identified a racial group as the group in consideration and had no immediately apparent solution, it was less effective than the prior article, which discussed situations in common across demographic groups and a specific solution.**

Focus group participants could relate personally to the situation described in this article. Several focus group participants had been

hurt directly by the weakening economy, and everyone knew of people who are struggling or unemployed. They believe that outsourcing is undermining the nation's economy. "When you outsource things and take it out of the country or even out of the state of California, the jobs remaining primarily are those low paying, low sector service jobs," explained one Hispanic American woman from Los Angeles.

This approach successfully creates interdependent thinking, linking the fate of different populations in the economy. Focus group participants were eloquent in discussing the struggles that any family would face in this economy rather than blaming individuals for a lack of initiative in trying to get a better job. "I think nobody can really feel safe in a job any more. You really don't know if you are going to have benefits tomorrow or if they're going to send out your work to somebody overseas," asserted a non-college-educated European American woman from Nashville.

At the same time, focus group participants rejected the assertion that the state of vulnerable populations provides a warning about what will happen to the rest of society. They accept the idea conceptually, but believe the economy is in such poor shape that

### Rungs on the Economic Ladder Break From the Bottom Up

The nation's economic landscape has shifted over the past 30 years. Low-paying service jobs with no benefits have replaced manufacturing jobs with good pay and benefits. To understand what is likely to occur in the future economy, one only need look at the most vulnerable populations in our society.

Historically, minorities and immigrants are the first to be hit in an economic downturn, and the last to recover. What happens to minorities and immigrants can serve as an early warning system for the economy overall. And the warning lights that are going off in this current economy should give the nation cause to worry.

The percentage of minorities employed in low wage service jobs has increased steadily over the past two decades while their per capita income has declined precipitously. Five years ago Robert Chen had a good-paying job as an electrical engineer. Now, he takes temp jobs during the day and waits tables at night. "I worry all the time," he says. "I worry about paying the bills, about not having health insurance for my family, and about whether or not the public school district in the city is capable of giving my kids a good enough education to prepare them for the future. I keep sending out resumes, but it feels like all the jobs are gone." Now the same trend is appearing among the white middle class, which is relying increasingly upon service sector jobs to pay the bills.

We need to pay attention to what is happening to vulnerable populations, and work to understand and address problems before they become widespread.

everyone is hurting, not just vulnerable populations. "I work with bankruptcy every day and I think that it's not just the minorities that I see every day. I see all races of people having to file bankruptcy because of the decline of income and the downsizing of jobs," explained an African American woman from Nashville.

They asserted that education level would normally be a better indicator of economic vulnerability than race, but, currently, the worsening economy affects all education and income levels. "I went to USC and I paid through the nose to go there, let me tell you. Now I'm a crossing guard. I had a better job. Then you know what happened? Northrop went down the tubes here. I lost my job," asserted one Hispanic American woman from Los Angeles.

In addition to outsourcing, some suggest that increased immigration is part of the problem. Immigrants are willing to take jobs for low pay, which undercuts wages for citizens. Others, however, admire immigrants for demonstrating a strong work ethic. "It seems like a lot of immigrants are willing to take work, multiple jobs to support their families. I don't see that the Caucasian people that I know that are out of work are willing to step down from what they feel is what they should be doing. They'll continue to look for work for years," remarked a woman from Los Angeles in a mixed race group.

### **Closing the Education Gap**

**In *Closing the Education Gap*, an elementary school in Texas that is heavily Hispanic is working to improve educational achievement. This article mentions the possible reasons for racial disparities in education but states that the reasons don't matter – this is a problem that needs fixing. While it features one minority group, it never pits minority against majority. Rather than trigger the "us vs. them" mentality that undercut the effectiveness of many other approaches, this article caused some focus group participants to discuss the benefit to the broader community when all students are well-educated. In addition, the solution is based on broad-based efforts by government, the school, parents, and the community. Government is assisting, but people are working to address the problem. This approach is effective in building support for policies to address racial disparities.**

All focus group participants are very concerned about the status of public education in the United States. They are distressed that some schools and school districts are failing to educate children well. They believe it is important to the nation's future for all children to get a good education. "Education is the beginning. All the studies show that children are the future. If you don't put the money into them, you're not putting money back into your own resource," remarked a college-educated European American woman from San Francisco.

At the same time, not everyone agrees that money is the problem. Some focus group participants understand funding disparities, and they are frustrated that this system is allowed to continue. "It's completely segregated where the money goes. It's so racially defined... you can just walk into some of these schools and just see the difference of the

quality of books and the facilities, it's just so run down," argued a college-educated European American woman from San Francisco.

Many others, however, do not understand disparities in educational funding. They noted that most school districts have equivalent amounts of money (though cost-of-living may be different), but that well-off neighborhoods have additional resources due to engaged and active PTAs. Those who dismissed the role of money were particularly likely to talk about the importance of high expectations by teachers and parents. "I think a lot of it comes back to expectations. What do the parents expect? What does the community expect? What do the teachers expect? There was a movie... they had no resources whatsoever, but he raised the standards, he raised expectations and the performance followed," stated a man from Los Angeles in a mixed race group.

### Closing the Education Gap

A unique initiative in a public school in Houston is demonstrating that children can achieve even when the odds are against them.

National assessment tests consistently demonstrate that urban, poor, heavily minority school districts test far below the national average. "Dwelling on the possible reasons for the achievement gap doesn't matter to us," stated Juan Morales, principal of Washington Elementary where the initiative started. "All that matters is that this was a problem that needed fixing and we are making great strides in closing the achievement gap."

Still, there have been a lot of theories about why the gap exists. Some point to a lack of resources as the cause. In most states, the school districts with the most minority students have less funding than districts with the fewest minority students. The nationwide gap is \$1,030 per student, which translates into a gap of \$412,000 for the average elementary school. Others say family and community dynamics are to blame – single income families, crime-ridden streets, a permissive society. Still others say that racism is the cause – society accepts failure among minority children that it would never permit among white children.

No matter the causes behind the national achievement gap, it is clear that Washington Elementary had an additional hurdle to overcome. One out of three children at the school started kindergarten unable to speak English. "Traditional approaches like bi-lingual education, and English-intensive tutoring could only go so far," noted Morales. "We decided to offer English as a Second Language classes to the parents as well, so that language proficiency is reinforced at home."

The initiative is truly a community-wide undertaking. Local businesses provide computers, community members volunteer to tutor and run after school enrichment programs, and the state government provides funding for a Headstart program and for small class sizes in the early grades. "We haven't closed the gap yet, but each of the three years since the program started has shown a dramatic increase in achievement on the assessment tests," said Morales.

Program evaluations for similar programs across the nation have shown that the children who get these early services go on to do better in middle and high school, they are more likely to stay in school, and they have twice as good a chance at securing financial aid and work study grants from colleges than do those not enrolled in the program.

While the principal and community are dedicated to the program, its future is in question. The recession is leading to education budget cuts, and state lawmakers say that this initiative may be a luxury that the state cannot afford.

For many focus group participants, the most powerful element of this article was the level of community involvement. They suggested that parents and communities have a great influence on educational achievement. While bilingual education is typically a hot button subject, the ESL programs for parents were widely supported by focus group participants. The real benefit, they insisted, is that parents can then be more active in their child's education. Over the long-term, this strengthens the community. "As the children and the parents learn the language, then they become better citizens and are more able to get jobs and make money and put back into the community," explained a non-college-educated European American man from Nashville.

Finally, the demonstrated effectiveness of this program is a very compelling element of the story. Focus group participants complained that too often they only hear about problems, not solutions. "I like how they mention the program and evaluations and talk about actually getting results from it because basically we always hear about all these different programs and it's so hard to know if it is really going to help or not," mentioned a Korean American woman from San Francisco.

For the most part, this approach was able to create a dialogue among focus group participants centered on solutions for public schools, particularly minority schools. However, a few focus group participants voiced concern about immigrant children depressing educational opportunity for other children. "The government is going to spend more money teaching them how to speak our language. That's taking away from our children," complained a non-college-educated European American woman from Nashville. Another suggested that separate schools for new immigrants might be an appropriate solution: "They shouldn't let them into our schools until they're ready for our schools."

## Declining Trust in Law Enforcement

**This story presents a fairly typical racial profiling narrative. Along with a profile of an innocent victim, the article includes a discussion of research that demonstrates that racial profiling is inefficient. While many people voice strong disapproval of racial profiling, this approach does not advance a new conversation on race. In fact, it frequently reinforces existing prejudices.**

Focus group participants indicated that they know that racial profiling is a common practice. "I think the running joke is for males if you're going to go somewhere in one of those areas, you've got to leave an hour early so you can allow for [being stopped by police]," explained one Hispanic woman from Los Angeles.

Most believe the practice is due to racial prejudices by individual cops, and are surprised to learn that it is sanctioned by some police departments. "I knew, of course, that it goes on but I didn't know that it was actually police department policy to train police to do this. That is new to me. That's outrageous," stated a college-educated European American woman from San Francisco.

At the same time, focus group participants assumed that the victim must have been doing something wrong to be stopped in the first place. "There has to be some reason why this is happening. These black men are being searched and harassed more often for them to be arrested.

Apparently, there was something that they were doing that was illegal," stated a Korean

### Declining Trust in Law Enforcement

A new survey released today indicates that public trust in the law enforcement system has dropped substantially among minorities, undermining the legitimacy of the criminal justice system, and hindering effective policing in minority communities. Only 20% of Latino and African American survey respondents say they have "a lot of faith" in local law enforcement, compared to 85% of white respondents.

One reason for declining trust is the continuing practice of racial profiling, according to civil rights activists. Reginald Wilson, executive director of the Black Ministers Council stated, "Policymakers underestimate the burden placed on innocent people stopped by law enforcement officers because of racial profiling. These incidents lead to a reasonable fear of police officers, and risk alienating communities while doing little to serve law enforcement."

Daniel Nelson is a typical example of how trust is undermined by racial profiling. Nelson is a well-dressed young African American man who works as an accountant. Last month he was stopped by state troopers: "It was early in the morning and I was driving my Ford Explorer when I saw the blue lights of a patrol car. My heart sank because I was worried about being late for a job interview, but I thought it wouldn't take long. *MN wording: Instead of simply asking for a driver's license and writing a ticket, the trooper called for backup. 'Hey, where did you get the money for something like this?' he asked me as he started to go through every inch...* *NM wording: Instead of simply asking for a driver's license, the trooper called for backup and started to go through every inch of the Explorer, pulling off door panels and looking under the carpet. They said they were looking for drugs, but of course they found nothing. Afterwards, sitting in my trashed SUV, I wept in anger and humiliation.*"

Though publicly decried, police departments across the country continue to train police officers to profile based on race, ethnicity, and religion. In fact, the Drug Enforcement Administration's Operation Pipeline, which was intended to disrupt the shipment of cocaine on highways, emphasized the correlation between drug trafficking and racial characteristics. According to Jim Davis, a New Jersey state trooper, "Our supervisors trained us to focus on black- and brown-skinned drivers because we were told they were more likely to be drug traffickers."

The reality, however, is that the "hit rate" – the percentage of searches in which contraband is found – is the same for black and white drivers according to studies conducted in Maryland, New Jersey, and California. But African American and Latino drivers are far more likely to be stopped and searched, according to a new U.S. Department of Justice report. Even when all factors are taken into account, such as the neighborhood's ethnic makeup, crime rate, etc., African American and Latino drivers are 2-3 times as likely to be stopped and searched as white drivers. "Racial profiling not only constitutes discrimination; it is also an unsound, inefficient method of policing," noted trooper Davis. And the impact, according to Wilson, "Extends beyond direct victims to negatively affect all persons of color, because we all lose faith in law enforcement when we hear about these injustices."

American woman from San Francisco. One Hispanic woman from Los Angeles added, "There has got to be a reason. They don't just pull you over for the hell of it." Furthermore, an innocent person would not mind being inconvenienced for the greater good. "If you're not really doing anything wrong you don't mind seeing cops and you don't mind being pulled over," noted a Los Angeles woman in a mixed race group.

A few recognized that media stereotypes may contribute to the problem. "I think maybe the white people, they don't hear about other white people getting caught. We hear every time one of us gets caught. It's always splattered all over the newspaper, the TV and everything," remarked an African American woman from Nashville.

Furthermore, the events of September 11 caused many to remark that racial profiling may be necessary. "We're living in a different world now. If profiling means profiling Arabs boarding an airplane, I'm for it," stated a college-educated European American man from Minneapolis. "It's a reality for minorities," stated an African American man from Los Angeles in the mixed race group, "...But it's an issue of safety and I'd rather be safe than sorry. Whenever I get stopped by the police I tell them 'thank you' because I'd rather you stop me and go through me and be safe that I'm not the one out there with the guns or the drugs as opposed to just letting everyone else go because it upsets a few."

Most problematically, this example cues racist attitudes among some focus group participants. "The blacks have hollered discrimination for so long that if you scratch your head wrong in front of them, they are going to holler you discriminated against them for some reason," stated a non-college-educated European American man from Nashville. "I have a friend that is a policeman and he told me that 90% of your crimes comes out of the black neighborhoods," noted a non-college-educated European American woman from Nashville.

The statistics don't help. In fact, several focus group participants twisted the statistics to fit their existing worldview. "Maybe 10 white people were stopped and two people had drugs on them, that's 20 percent. Say 100 black people were stopped and 20 of them had drugs, it's the same percentage and there were more hits, more stops on black people. That's what I'm saying. So 20 is still a far greater number than 2," asserted a non-college-educated European American woman from New Mexico. In fact, when people are confronted with factual information that does not conform to their existing worldview, they are more likely to question the facts than discard their existing frame of understanding. Note the following conversation from the mixed race group in Los Angeles in which focus group participants question whether or not the statistic in this article is true:

Woman: It says the hit rate is the same for black and white. It has to be that there is a stereotype going on in their mind, which in their mind it may be an -- I had this discussion with my own son before about the racial profiling. He says it is a numbers thing. If you look at the statistics, the percentages in the prison system are higher for minorities whether they be Latin or black. He feels the cops, based on that, got it figured their odds are pretty good of busting somebody for something because they are the ones that are in the prison. That is what he thinks.



Man: If you look at the last paragraph here it says the hit rate is the same. Is it one in 100? Whatever it is but then it says, when all factors are taken into account, African American and Latino drivers are two to three times as likely to be stopped and searched. If they are searching them two to three times as often but they're still coming up with the same hit rate, then maybe there is a reason. Maybe that is justifying. Maybe they're saying yeah, these people unfortunately, maybe they're the ones that are just as likely as anyone else. We stop 300 minorities and 100 non-minorities and the 300 minorities we got the same percentage of people. Even though we're stopping more minorities as a part of the percentage of the population, we're getting hits. We're getting people who are [talkover]. So I don't know. It's kind of a quirky -- I don't understand what that last paragraph is saying. I don't know if I misunderstood it or. . .

Woman: That's where reading stuff like that where they talk about percentages, you don't know really because you are saying if the hit rate -- if they are pulling over 600 blacks versus 300 whites but their hit rate is the same, what does that mean really? Are they arresting or finding crime at a same percentage? But it's based on what? I don't know whether that is a fair assessment. I don't know. I'm confused.

## Summary of Communications Recommendations

- Avoid the language of race discrimination which is immediately divisive and does not yield support for policy remedies. Instead, use language that unites people in a common cause and reminds people that all Americans are linked in a common fate.
- “Opportunity for All” is the relevant value. People are willing to devote energy and resources to improving the fate of those who are struggling, but not if they believe the resources will be taken from others.
- Effective solutions need to be prominent and should come early in communications. In this way, solutions can help to define the systemic problem to be solved before the reader determines that no solution exists for what he or she may perceive to be an intractable social problem.
- In addition, when government is part of the solution, the role for people and communities needs to be explicit or people will assume that government is promoting passivity.
- Define the systemic problem that needs to be solved, such as the structural barriers that block opportunity. Explain the consequences for different groups and communities, not just for minorities. Use race as a descriptor, but do not imply that race or racism is the cause of the problem.
- To avoid dividing people into “us” and “them,” discuss places, not people; communities, not demographic groups.

Some communicators may find it difficult to embrace these recommendations at first since many of the recommendations may seem counterintuitive. For example: the most effective way to define the problem is to start with the solution; support for government programs will only be solidified if there is an explicit role for people and communities; and the most compelling approach to build support for policies to address racial disparities is to define the problem as a system that is broken, rather than individuals or groups of individuals that are falling behind.

While this research provides the starting point for a new conversation on race, there is clearly much work that remains to be done. These recommendations need further refinement and translation for a broader issue agenda. Furthermore, additional research is necessary to understand the dynamics of other elements of the frame including messengers, simplifying models, visuals, context, tone, and so on.