Research Update: Findings and Reflections from our Second Year Studying Culture Change

SPRING 2023

FRAMEWORKS
Culture Change
Project

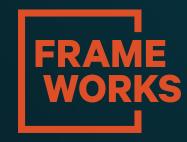# About the FrameWorks Institute's *Culture Change Project*

The Culture Change Project is an ongoing investigation designed to uncover whether and how the current period of social, economic, and political turmoil—starting in 2020 and continuing through present-day—has led to shifts in the ways that Americans think about the world. We're also exploring communications openings and challenges those cultural shifts create for those working for progressive change.

In our June 2022 research report, we outlined 11 trends in how Americans were thinking about important social issues—things like race, health, and the economy.

A major theme of that report was that individualistic thinking (i.e., we all have what we have as a function of how hard we try) was slowly being balanced by a more systemic mindset (i.e., what surrounds us shapes us) in American culture.

Although individualistic thinking was still dominant, we were seeing a slightly more balanced understanding of the ways in which systems, institutions, and environments affect our lives.

Read Findings from June 2022 ↗

How Is Culture Changing in This Time of Social Upheaval?

Findings from the Culture Change Project

May 2022

FrameWorks Culture Change Project · FRAME WORKS

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What's in this Update?

PART ONE

Update on Key Cultural Trends

An exploration of how mindsets have evolved over the past year on key issues we've been tracking, specifically: health, racism, the economy, and recognition that the "system is rigged."

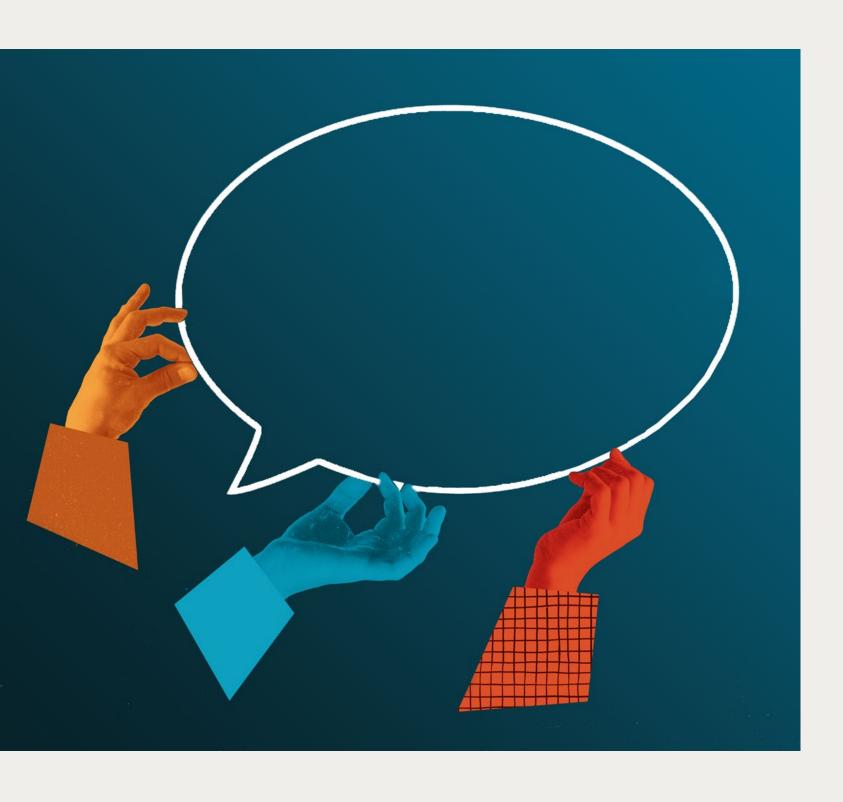## PART TWO

New Issues We're Tracking

New findings related to how people are thinking about issues like gender, trans rights, and our political system.

PART THREE

Lingering Questions + Future Research

Our lingering questions and plans for future research.

For a more in-depth analysis of these and other findings, as well as details on the methods we use, we invite you to explore the full findings report: Culture Change Project Findings and Methods: Spring 2023 ↗

What Are Cultural Mindsets?

Cultural mindsets **(or mindsets for short) are deep, shared patterns of thinking that shape how we understand the world and how we make decisions.** For example, a mindset rooted in individualism makes public policies that support the community good seem off base, unnecessary, and misguided. Individualism focuses our attention on measures that help individual people make better decisions (e.g., health education) and takes our attention off of the ways that broader structures and systems (e.g., the ways that housing affordability, toxins in our water, or access to quality food) affect our health.

Cultural mindsets are highly durable. They emerge from and are tied to cultural and social practices and institutions with deep historical roots. At the same time, in moments of social upheaval, mindsets can be pushed into flux and become destabilized, leading to fairly rapid changes in thinking.

We all have multiple mindsets that we can use to think about a given issue. For example, while Americans often think individualistically, we also have access to more contextual and systemic mindsets. When these mindsets are active, they bring into view social systems and the ways that environments shape outcomes alongside individual choices.
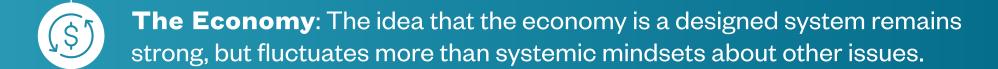
Update on Key Cultural Trends

At-A-Glance

Since the onset of the Culture Change Project, we've been monitoring Americans' shared mindsets about how systems affect our lives. We now have several more months of data on these topics and it looks like some things look a little bit different than they did in June of 2022.

Here's what we're finding →

1 **The increases we've seen in systemic thinking since 2020 appear to be plateauing, but the picture varies by issue:**

The Economy: The idea that the economy is a designed system remains strong, but fluctuates more than systemic mindsets about other issues.

Racism: Gains in systemic thinking about racism appear to be fading to some extent.

Health: Systemic thinking about health remains weak—and might be getting weaker.

2 **"System is rigged" thinking is being applied across a wider range of social and political issues.**

1 The balance between individualistic and systemic thinking

Because individualistic thinking has long been Americans' dominant mechanism for explaining the world, the alternative, systemic mindset—the sense that what surrounds us shapes us—is, for most people, most of the time, less top-of-mind. In other words, "our systems and structures have created this situation" is not the go-to explanation for most people when they look at things like racism or health disparities.

QUOTES FROM OUR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS:

Individualistic thinking looks like:

"It's up to every individual to dictate where their life is going to go."

"Failures are those that choose to fail."

"Ultimately, how we pick ourselves up and live our days is a choice in our hands."

Systemic thinking looks like:

"We have put systems in place that undermine even those who play by the rules, even those who do all the right things."

"I feel like in many ways the system is set up...to make it possible for those who have to get more and those who have less to keep getting less."

Overall, the increase we've seen in systemic thinking since 2020 appears to be plateauing, but the picture varies by issue.

Where We Started:

We launched the Culture Change Project three years ago as the COVID-19 pandemic began and millions of Americans were rising up to protest highly-publicized police violence. Since then, we've continued to experience social and political unrest, including an insurrection at the Capitol in January 2021 and landmark Supreme Court cases that have undone decades of precedent. One of the most interesting early findings was that, although individualism remained dominant, we were seeing signs in both qualitative and quantitative research that systemic thinking was gaining ground, as more and more of the participants in our research were focused on how the environments that surround us help explain what happens in the world.

Where We Are Now:

Survey data from 2022 suggest that the increases we've been seeing in systemic thinking have generally steadied, and we seem to have reached a new balance point —at least for now—in the ways in which individualistic and systemic thinking are shaping Americans' perspectives on social issues.

However, the balance between individualistic and systemic thinking varies considerably across social issues.

What It Means:

On the one hand, this is encouraging for those working to change systems to advance justice, equity, and inclusion. A few years after the beginning of the pandemic, gains in systems thinking have established a cultural terrain that is more conducive to the changes in systems and structures at the center of the progressive movement.

On the other hand, the fact that systemic thinking isn't continuing to strengthen and that individualism remains dominant means that, unless progressives can find ways to catalyze further shifts in this balance, arguing for systemic change will remain an uphill battle.
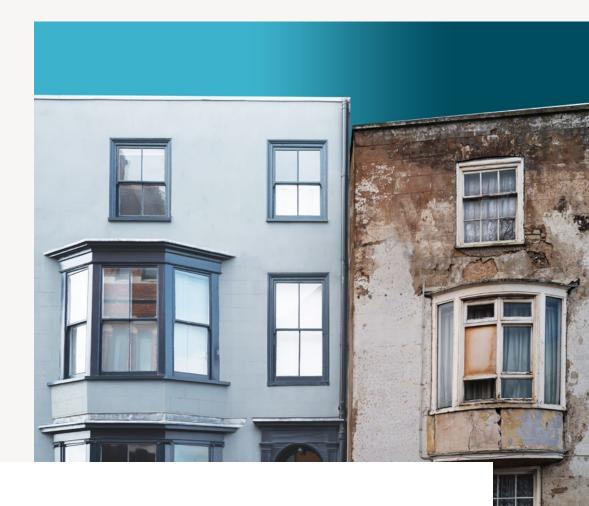
Mindsets About the Economy

Finding: The idea that the economy is a designed system remains strong, but fluctuates more than systemic mindsets about other issues.

As we reported last summer, people widely understand that the economy is something that is designed and shaped by policy, as opposed to something that just exists naturally. People don't always understand *how* policies affect the economy, and tend to assume that a significant degree of inequality is inevitable and natural, but we still see that people generally think at a more systemic level about the economy than they do about other issues, like racism and health.

Our survey data from 2022 indicate that this understanding of the economy as a designed system remains strong. In our 2022 surveys, when asked to choose between this mindset and "market naturalism" —the idea that the economy is a natural force—the majority of research participants (between 57% and 63%) consistently endorsed the systemic, "economic design" mindset. This level of endorsement is similar to results from 2020 and 2021.

While this economic design mindset remains strong, we've seen considerable fluctuation over time. Over the two-and-a-half years we have been conducting the survey, the percent of research participants endorsing this mindset (versus a "market naturalist" mindset) has been as low as 50.3% and as high as 64.3%. We don't see this level of fluctuation when it comes to thinking about other issue areas.

PARTICIPANTS ARE GIVEN THE FOLLOWING TWO OPTIONS IN THE TRACKING SURVEY:

Market Naturalism

Who benefits in our economy is determined naturally by the free market.

Economic Design (Systemic Thinking)

Policy choices determine how the economy works and who it benefits.

Mindsets About the Economy

Implications: What does this mean for those working toward systemic change?

Economic issues directly and indirectly affect all members of the public, and in the last several years the economy itself has fluctuated substantially—in employment, wages, the price of goods, etc. Over the past year we've also seen repeated government interventions in the economy—things like the Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act, both of which shaped industry, strengthened labor power, and reoriented the focus of economic activity.

It seems that this rapidly changing news and policy environment has created conditions in which economic mindsets are less well-anchored than mindsets in other areas. For progressives, this suggests that the economy is an area in which clear and effective communication—and policy wins—can have meaningful effects on the ways that people think. In conversations about inflation, jobs, and industry, it's important for those advocating for systemic change to emphasize that the economy is designed and that it can and must be redesigned to advance equity and justice.

🖐 Mindsets About Racism

Finding: Previous gains in systemic thinking about racism appear to be fading to some extent.

Last summer, we reported that systemic thinking about racism had increased in the wake of widely publicized police violence against Black people and the subsequent racial justice uprisings of 2020. Our survey research found that the strength of systemic thinking about racism persisted and even seemed to gain ground from August 2020 to August 2021.

Survey data from 2022, however, suggest that systemic thinking about racism is slightly weakening relative to a more individualistic or interpersonal understanding of racism, which remains the dominant way of thinking about racism. It is important to note, though, that these survey results do not suggest that the balance of individualistic and systemic thinking about racism has returned to pre-uprising levels. People are still thinking about racism in more systemic ways than they were pre-2020—just not as much as they were in 2021, when it looks like systemic thinking peaked.

PARTICIPANTS ARE GIVEN THE FOLLOWING TWO OPTIONS IN THE TRACKING SURVEY:

Individualistic Thinking	Systemic Thinking
Racial discrimination is the result of individuals' bias and prejudice.	*Racial discrimination is the result of how our laws, policies, and*

Mindsets About Racism

Implications: What does this mean for those working toward systemic change?

History shows us that advances toward social justice are often met with increased attempts at social control. In some ways, it is not surprising that the increase in systemic thinking we saw in 2020 and 2021 has partially faded, particularly as conservatives' strategic rhetoric about "wokeness" has stoked feelings of fear and resentment, especially among white people and conservatives.

Additionally, we know that mass mobilization affects public thinking. The nationwide protests that happened in 2020 brought widespread attention to systemic racism. Recently, the push from right-wing groups and leaders against "critical race theory" (CRT) has grabbed headlines in mainstream and conservative media. This, among other things, has likely moved some energy and attention away from highly-visible protests on the streets and toward the right-wing protests that are happening in towns and school districts across the country—protests that often directly challenge the idea that systemic racism even exists.

The good news is that people are still thinking more systemically about racism than they were pre-2020. This signals an openness to this mindset among a larger group of people than before the uprisings.

STRATEGIES FOR TALKING ABOUT RACISM

In work outside of this project, we have developed a set of strategies for talking about racism that can be used to help cement and build on the gains in systemic thinking that we've seen and, importantly, translate this systemic thinking about the problem into support for systemic solutions. These recommendations include, for example:

— Talk about racism consistently (do not shy away from the topic).

— Expand people's understanding of what racism means.

— Build the sense that change is possible.

Mindsets About Health

Finding: Systemic thinking about health remains weak—and might be getting weaker.

In summer 2022, we noted that the general increase in systemic thinking did not apply to people's understanding of health issues. Research from 2022 doesn't change this picture. In focus groups, we have found individualistic thinking about health to be overwhelmingly dominant, with relatively little talk about how social systems and environments shape people's health.

When we look at the past two-and-a-half years of survey data, we see that endorsement of systemic thinking about health peaked in the winter of 2021-22, although even at this point it was quite recessive. Since that time, systemic thinking has dropped back down to earlier levels and in our more recent surveys looks to be dropping even below 2020 levels. Survey data from December of 2022 show that only about 18% of respondents endorsed a systemic view of health over a more individualistic one—the lowest number we've seen since we started the tracking survey in August 2020.

PARTICIPANTS ARE GIVEN THE FOLLOWING TWO OPTIONS IN THE TRACKING SURVEY:

Individualistic Thinking

Individuals' lifestyle choices, including diet and exercise, determine how healthy they are.

Systemic Thinking

The neighborhood people live in determines how healthy they are.

Mindsets About Health

Implications: What does this mean for those working toward systemic change?

For those looking to increase understanding of the effects that social systems have on our collective health, this finding is a challenging one. It indicates that, despite an unprecedented health crisis that illustrated and amplified existing health disparities and the importance of strong public health systems, Americans continue to see health as a product of personal choices and individual behaviors. Unfortunately, if the dominant mindset is that our health is mostly or exclusively a function of our choices, the idea and value of "public health" is weakened in public consciousness, undermining support for systemic public health solutions.

For advocates, policy professionals, and community activists fighting to change systems to advance health equity, this suggests that leading conversations with "health" may be likely to trigger individualistic thinking and, thus, stymie support for systems-level changes. For instance, saying things like "the environment is a public health issue" or "housing is a public health issue" may, somewhat counterintuitively, make people less inclined to think systemically and to support systemic solutions, as the topic of health is generally thought of as a personal rather than public issue.

(2) Evolution of the "system is rigged" mindset

Finding: "System is rigged" thinking is being applied across a wider range of social and political issues.

Where We Started

As we previously reported, the "system is rigged" mindset has become an increasingly dominant explanation for social problems. At the core of this mindset is the idea that the system is being rigged by those in power at the expense of ordinary people—essentially, that the few at the top are manipulating how society works to benefit themselves and hurt the rest of us. We see this mindset applied by people of all political ideologies—but in very different ways. Despite the dominance of this mindset, people are often fuzzy on details, leaving unclear what "the system" is, who is rigging it, why or how they're doing it, who is benefitting, and who is being harmed.

Where We Are Now

Traditionally, people have applied this mindset to make sense of economic inequalities and unfairness. Now, we are seeing people apply this mindset to make sense of a broad range of political and cultural issues. For example, we're seeing the "system is rigged" mindset applied to elections—from "Stop the Steal" claims on the right to criticisms of gerrymandering and voter suppression on the left. This mindset is being cued to make the point that elections are being manipulated so that (alternately) Democrats or Republicans can help their constituencies at the expense of the other side.

We're also seeing "system is rigged" thinking applied to the Dobbs v. Jackson decision—and the Supreme Court in general. In July-August 2022, when we asked focus group participants to reflect on the decision, a common sentiment was:

— **People in power ("they") are able to manipulate Supreme Court decisions, just as they manipulate other aspects of the "system," and**

— **They manipulated the Dobbs decision to serve their own interests at the expense of ordinary people—interests that have nothing to do with abortion.**

Implications: What does this mean for those working toward systemic change?

The most significant thing about this mindset is its ubiquity and strength for people across the ideological spectrum. Given the salience of this mindset and its potential to be mobilized in very different ideological directions, it is arguably the central terrain on which our politics will be contested in coming years. This mindset is simply too powerful and pervasive in American culture for progressives to ignore or shy away from.

A challenge and opportunity for progressive communicators will be to acknowledge our country's problematic and harmful systems in a way that inoculates against racism and xenophobia while fueling action toward systemic change. It's critical to avoid activating a sense of fatalism about the problem being too big to solve.

It's also important to tell a full and complete story about who is rigging which systems, why, and how. Talking about rigged systems without explaining these slots in the story is likely not enough to elicit productive thinking about systemic solutions. Telling a full story and linking that story to solutions can help avoid triggering the fatalistic notion that nothing can be done, or risking the story being co-opted by those inclined to advance a very different "system is rigged" narrative.

Given the salience of this mindset and its potential to be mobilized in very different ideological directions, it is arguably the central terrain on which our politics will be contested in coming years.

UPCOMING RESEARCH

We are currently conducting focus groups and an experimental study in order to develop recommendations for how to frame conversations about "the system" in ways that advance progressive arguments for systemic change and guard against the racist and xenophobic directions in which this narrative is sometimes deployed. By summer 2023, we will be able to share findings and recommendations for how to frame "system is rigged" stories to help build support for meaningful systems change.

New Issues
We're Tracking

At-A-Glance

In addition to continuing to monitor Americans' foundational mindsets about how systems affect our lives, we've been examining how people are thinking about other key issues in light of more recent national events (e.g., the June 2022 Dobbs vs. Jackson decision; various state policies limiting access to abortion and the rights of trans people). Our latest research aims to shed light on how people are thinking about our political institutions, like the Supreme Court and the Constitution, as well as how people are thinking about gender.

Here's what we're finding →

1. **People see the Constitution as outdated.**

2. **Supreme Court justices are assumed to be political actors.**

3. **Gender essentialism is often disavowed when talking about domestic responsibilities, but affirmed when talking about work outside the home.**

4. **The term "gender" has become tightly linked with transgender issues and transphobia in public consciousness.**

1. People see the Constitution as outdated.

Recent focus group research suggests that there may be cracks forming in Americans' longstanding faith in the Constitution.
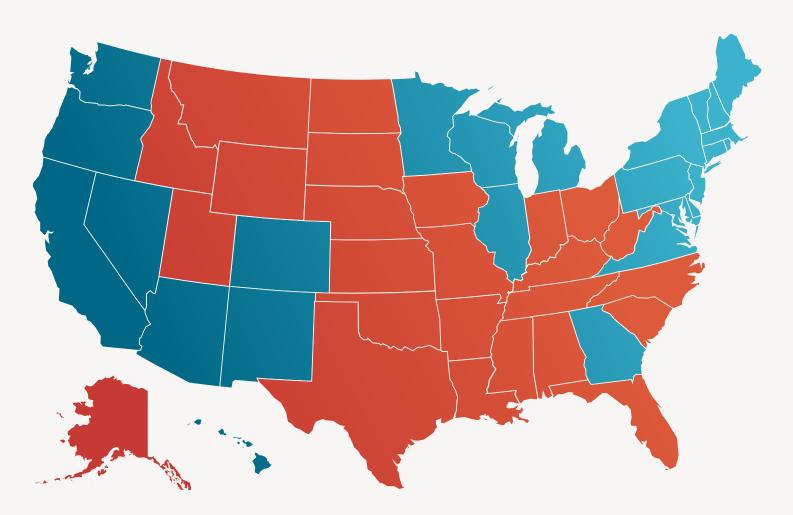
Some Context

For much of the past century, Americans have venerated the Constitution as a sacred document. The most recent amendment to the Constitution (regarding Congressional salaries) was in 1992—more than 30 years ago—and the last major period of debate about the American Constitution was around the Equal Rights Amendment more than 50 years ago. However, we're finding that the Constitutional faith that has long prevailed may be fading.

New insights from Culture Change research

Research participants recognized the Constitution as foundational to American society, but generally did not treat it as a sacred object of veneration. To the contrary, we detected—somewhat to our surprise—an alternative understanding of the Constitution as outdated. This mindset is thin on details—participants expressed a relatively hazy sense of what is in the Constitution and, in turn, what might be outdated about it. However, there was an assumed mismatch between the time in which the Constitution was created and our current context...

New insights from Culture Change research (cont.)

Many people recognized that the Constitution was created at a time when women and Black people lacked basic rights, and that the Constitution reflects that context in important ways. While most participants did not specify *how* the Constitution is undemocratic (e.g., malapportionment in the Senate), the understanding that it is outdated provides a framework for making sense of such details. Importantly, however, despite the growing sense that the Constitution has major shortcomings, our research did not indicate that people see Constitutional change as a possibility.

Implications: What does this mean for those working toward systemic change?

The mental model of the Constitution as outdated opens space for people to consider shortcomings with our basic institutions and—in principle if not yet in practice—can lead to productive discussion about how the Constitution should be updated. This is an idea we will continue to track and explore in greater depth going forward.

The emergence of this mindset demonstrates an opportunity for communicators to frame conversations about our political system and the Constitution by using examples of how it affects us. For instance, sharing examples that connect the Constitution to problematic trends in representation—such as the way that the electoral college overcounts votes in small rural states, leading to situations in which the candidate with the most votes does not become president—can help strengthen the call for updating the Constitution to foster a more fair democratic system. It also points to the potential power of sharing examples of how the Constitution has been amended in the past to help make visible the reality that it is changeable.

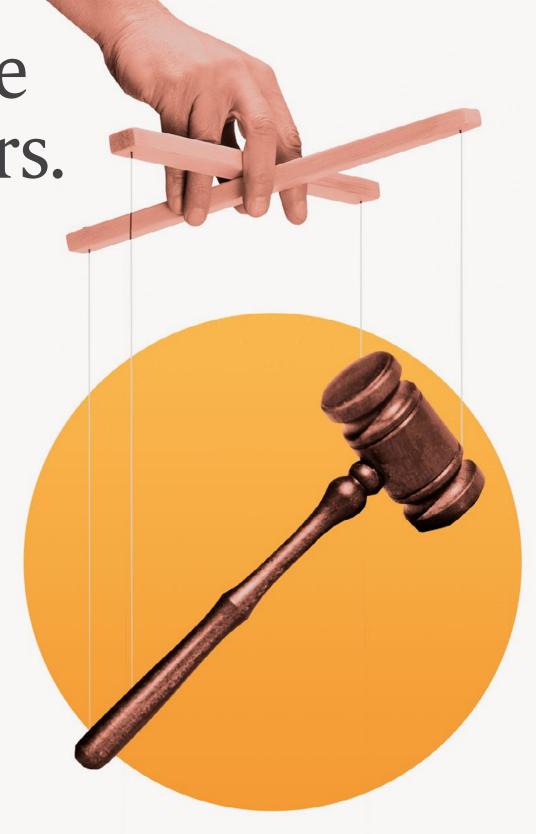# 2. Supreme Court justices are assumed to be political actors.

People lump Supreme Court justices together with elected officials as untrustworthy politicians.

Some Context

Political discourse has long centered on the idea that the Supreme Court is an impartial party in the political system— to use Justice Roberts' phrase: disinterested umpires calling "balls and strikes" to ensure a fair outcome of the game. However, in our recent focus groups, this idea was simply missing from conversation.

New Insights from Culture Change Research

In focus group conversations, participants assumed that the court's actions could be explained by the same motives as elected officials'—moving an agenda for personal financial or political gain. They sometimes thought that the court's strings were being pulled by elected officials, and sometimes treated them more like politicians with their own agendas, but in either case, the assumption that justices are political actors rather than "neutral" legal ones was readily apparent in participants' discussions...

New insights from Culture Change research (cont.)

The current lack of an impartial understanding of the court was evidenced by the complete absence of this idea in sessions. Participants did not deny the idea that the court is impartial—it simply never came up.

This pattern in our recent sessions aligns with polls showing that confidence in the Supreme Court is at an all-time low. In one June 2022 poll, only 25 percent of respondents said they had a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in the Supreme Court, compared to 50 percent twenty years ago.

Implications: What does this mean for those working toward systemic change?

The "system is rigged" mindset is likely at play here. This lumping of the court with elected officials helps explain why "system is rigged" thinking can so readily be applied to decisions like Dobbs v. Jackson: if justices are playing politics just like elected officials, it makes sense that they are complicit in rigging the system.

This way of thinking about the court could be a potential opening for more explicit conversations about the court as a problematic institution in need of reform. People seeing the court as political—the antithesis of what it was designed to be—is an important foothold for advocates to change it.

However, this view of the court is highly person-centric and, without careful framing, could push people's thinking toward getting the "bad apples" off the court rather than fundamentally changing the rules that govern the court as a body.

3. Gender essentialism is often disavowed when talking about domestic responsibilities, but affirmed when talking about work outside the home.

People generally still see gender as a natural predictor of what people will do for a living and what people will earn.

Some Context

Gender essentialism is not a new idea. The view of gender as "a dichotomous social category [that] is inborn, biologically determined, immutable, and informative of categorical properties" has been a basic feature of human social categorization for centuries. Over the past many decades, activists and advocates have worked to build a broader and more accurate understanding of gender as a set of ascribed characteristics that are socially constructed and distinct from biological markers of sex.

New insights from Culture Change research

When asked to talk about gender roles, research participants almost universally insisted that labor in the home should be divided equally and that it is, in fact, relatively evenly divided. Given the reality of unequal domestic division of labor, we understand this proclamation of egalitarianism in the home to be an indication of a social norm. In other words, social desirability may lead many people to feel like they need to express affirmation of gender egalitarianism in the home even if it conflicts with their own thoughts or the reality of how labor is currently divided within American homes...

New insights from Culture Change research (cont.)

By contrast, when discussing work outside the home, participants widely, frequently, and explicitly applied gender essentialism, explaining that men and women are suited for different types of work. For example, many people were comfortable expressing that women naturally gravitate toward caring professions because they are more caring.

While there seems to be a social norm that constrains the explicit expression of essentialist ideas in relation to domestic labor, such norms do not seem to extend to labor outside of the home, where gender essentialism continues to be explicitly expressed in talk about work. Although more egalitarian discourse in relation to domestic labor may seem promising, the social norm bias active in these sessions and the clear expression of essentialism regarding work outside of the home should temper optimism to some degree.

Implications: What does this mean for those working toward systemic change?

"Work" seems to be a site for particularly regressive thinking and talk about gender. The idea that sex (which is conflated with gender) determines characteristics that make people more or less suited for certain roles affirms ideas that things like pay inequality are the natural result of gender differences.

This tendency to think that men and women are naturally inclined to do different types of jobs is consistent with how people seem to think about work in general—in a very naturalistic manner. As we previously reported, although people recognize that public policy shapes the economy as a whole, this thinking is generally not applied when people think more specifically about work and jobs. Instead, people see work and pay as determined by a naturally functioning market that's outside of government control.

This naturalistic thinking seems to go hand in hand with gender essentialism to justify the status quo of exploitation and oppression: people have the jobs they have because that's their natural place.

FUTURE RESEARCH

In the coming months, we will have more research on how people think about work through a forthcoming project on Reframing Work and Labor, which will allow us to identify framing strategies that help activate more systemic ways of thinking and talking about work that move us toward economic justice.

4. The term "gender" has become tightly linked with transgender issues and transphobia in public consciousness.

In recent focus groups, open-ended discussions of gender came to focus overwhelmingly on transgender identity.

Some Context

Transgender identity directly challenges the assumption that gender = sex—a core part of gender essentialism, as discussed above. When people draw on essentialist ideas, they equate gender with biological sex. They also typically assume that biological sex is binary and, in turn, treat gender as binary.

New insights from Culture Change research

When focus group participants were asked what comes to mind when they think about gender, people quickly raised debates over transgender rights, even without being explicitly asked about the topic. This was true regardless of ideology (some participants expressed transphobic views, while others argued for transgender rights).

Among participants who drew on the assumption that gender = sex, some treated transgender identity as reflecting a nefarious attempt to undermine important social roles, while others shared softer sentiments of confusion over things like the need to specify pronouns. Both strident and more delicate responses assume that gender is a biological fact, treating denial of that fact as dangerous or nonsensical...

ALL GENDER RESTROOM

New insights from Culture Change research (cont.)

Additionally, many participants suggested that recognizing transgender identity or the rights of transgender people would come at the expense of others i.e., cisgender people. This zero-sum thinking is bound up with gender essentialist thinking: existing gender identities are a source of status and recognition, and granting transgender people rights disrupts the basis of this status.

This finding was especially striking because the sessions were conducted about a month after the Dobbs v. Jackson decision that overturned Roe v. Wade. We anticipated that open-ended questions about gender would have provoked discussion of reproductive rights and other familiar issues in the "women's rights" realm, but were surprised at the intensity with which transgender issues came to dominate general conversations about gender.

Implications: What does this mean for those working toward systemic change?

The conflation of gender, sex, and sexuality by anti-trans groups is intentional—and intentionally confusing. On the one hand, the anti-trans movement has succeeded in stoking a fear-based panic about so-called "woke" gender warriors. If understanding the nuances of gender is associated with "wokeness"—a term that has been co-opted by many critics of progressives—and has been painted in a negative light, then any talk of gender that elicits thoughts of trans people can be immediately rejected. This type of discourse also activates longstanding and firmly-held mindsets of "us vs. them" and "zero sum" thinking—the idea that the existence of trans people is somehow a threat to cisgender people.

On the other hand, lessons from moral panics in the past may be instructive when it comes to the current discourse regarding gender. Rhetoric around same-sex marriage has activated (and in some cases, still does activate) this same zero-sum thinking: that a same-sex marriage somehow invalidates or threatens a "traditional" ones. Although we don't yet have tested framing strategies for talking about trans issues, general lessons from the marriage equality movement may be helpful in reminding us to assert how progress for some benefits us all.

Lingering Questions + Future Research

Culture Change Research Overview

TWO MAJOR GOALS OF THE CULTURE CHANGE PROJECT ARE TO:

(1) conduct *descriptive* research to better understand if and how American culture is shifting during this time of social upheaval

(2) conduct *prescriptive* research to explore the most effective ways to communicate about important social issues in ways that are responsive to changes in culture

Thus far, we have presented findings from our descriptive research. In the future, we will continue pursuing this type of research to help answer questions we're still grappling with (e.g., why do mindsets about the economy fluctuate more than other mindsets?).

We have also begun prescriptive research, through which we are empirically testing different ways of framing the "system is rigged" narrative, in particular. Our hope is to continue both lines of research and, ultimately, to continuously share insights and provide recommendations for framing conversations about each of the important topics discussed in this report.

Take a look at some of the lingering questions that we will address through future research→

What's Coming Up

Prescriptive Research

How can we communicate about our economic and political systems being rigged in ways that *fuel* systemic action while *avoiding* activation of mindsets that lead to unproductive, fatalist, or even racist and xenophobic solutions? By the end of summer 2023, we plan to share findings from our prescriptive research on this topic along with recommendations for framing these important conversations.

Descriptive Research

How are people thinking about our political system—particularly American democracy? We are currently wrapping up descriptive research on how people are thinking about democracy during this particularly politically tumultuous time, and expect to report on our findings in the spring or summer of 2023.

Future Resources

Over the coming months we will be having conversations about these findings with issue-area researchers and advocates. Based on these conversations, we will be creating additional resources that provide more detail and depth on findings around how people are thinking about gender and the American political system.

QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

1. How can we talk about important social and cultural issues like racism, health, and the economy in ways that activate thinking at a systemic level?

2. Why does thinking about the economy fluctuate so much, compared to other issues?

3. Will the emerging critiques of the Constitution continue to build, and will they expand to include more discussions not just of its flaws but of the potential to change the rules? More specifically, will critiques of the Court expand and spill over into other aspects of the Constitution (e.g., the electoral college) and create space for meaningful discussions of Constitutional reform?

4. How can a better understanding of core American mindsets around work shed light on the stubbornness of gender essentialism, and potential ways to shift these ways of thinking?

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