Strengthen Communities, Educate Children and Prevent Crime:

A Communications Analysis of Peer Discourse Sessions on Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform

A FRAMEWORKS RESEARCH REPORT

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About FrameWorks Institute:

The FrameWorks Institute is an independent nonprofit research organization founded in 1999 to advance the nonprofit sector's communications capacity by identifying, translating and modeling relevant scholarly research for framing the public discourse about social problems. It has become known for its development of Strategic Frame Analysis ™, which roots communications practice in the cognitive and social sciences. FrameWorks designs, commissions, manages and publishes multi-method, multidisciplinary communications research to prepare nonprofit organizations to expand their constituency base, to build public will, and to further public understanding of specific social issues. In addition to working closely with scientists and social policy experts familiar with the specific issue, its work is informed by communications scholars and practitioners who are convened to discuss the research problem, and to work together in outlining potential strategies for advancing public understanding of remedial policies. The Institute publishes its research and recommendations at www.frameworksinstitute.org.

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MEDIA CONTENT ANALYSIS | CULTURAL MODELS | MAP THE GAPS | PEER DISCOURSE | SIMPLIFYING MODELS | VALUES | MESSAGE MEMO

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INTRODUCTION

Criminal justice experts and advocates in this country are keenly aware of the difficulty of communicating with Americans about the need for structural reform of the criminal justice system. This report constitutes the third phase of a larger, multi-method strategic communications research project by the FrameWorks Institute on public safety and criminal justice reform. The project is conducted in partnership with the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard University's Law School, and Behind the Cycle, a criminal justice advocacy group, with support from the Ford Foundation. The goal of the project is to develop more effective ways to communicate about the challenges facing America's criminal justice system and the reforms necessary to fix the system. In doing so, the project aims to identify and provide criminal justice experts and advocates with communications tools and strategic recommendations they can use to reframe the issue of public safety in ways that broaden the public's understanding of this issue and allow people to see the necessity of reform in this area.

The research discussed here builds directly upon two earlier phases of FrameWorks' research. The first phase involved a materials review of a wide body of criminal justice materials to recreate the best approximation of a "public safety" core story. Materials were gathered by advocate submissions, Internet searches, and website and literature reviews from more than 60 advocacy organizations. A draft of this "expert core story" was then presented to a convening of experts and advocates in fall 2010, who were invited to respond to the summary and suggest refinements, corrections and additions to it. The result of the meeting was a redrafting of the expert core story to include this expert feedback, culminating in an initial FrameWorks report entitled *Public Safety: Framing a Reform Agenda*. The second phase of research involved a set of qualitative, in-depth, one-on-one interviews with civically engaged members of the public. These interviews identified the cultural models — collections of implicit, but shared, understandings and patterns of reasoning — that Americans use to think about public safety and the criminal justice system. This research resulted in a second report, entitled *Caning, Context and Class*, that "mapped the gaps" between expert and public understandings of public safety and criminal justice reform.[1] The findings presented in this report confirm and expand upon the results from the cultural models interviews and move the research forward by evaluating a set of initial reframing tools that can help bridge the gap between expert knowledge and public understandings. These initial reframing explorations will be further tested and refined in subsequent research efforts.

This report details research findings from a series of six peer discourse sessions conducted by the FrameWorks Institute with groups of civically engaged Americans. As the bridge between earlier descriptive research and later prescriptive phases, peer discourse sessions are a vital component of the iterative Strategic Frame Analysis™ research process. These sessions provide an opportunity to see how cultural models function in practice by structuring conversations in settings that more closely approximate the social contexts in which discussions about public safety and the criminal justice system might naturally occur. Peer discourse sessions also allow FrameWorks to begin experimenting with reframing tools and strategic recommendations intended to redirect or create different types and patterns of group conversation. In this way, these sessions examine whether intentionally "priming" conversations with specific frame elements — such as values and metaphors (called *simplifying models*[2] in FrameWorks' taxonomy) — can create a different type of conversation than those that characterized the unprimed conversations documented in earlier descriptive parts of the research process.

For this report, the peer discourse sessions conducted were varied by race and took place in three locations in the U.S.: Tampa, FL, Los Angeles, CA, and Baltimore, MD. FrameWorks intentionally defined groups by race to examine whether and how conversations among groups diversified by race would articulate shared patterns of thinking about the criminal justice system, and provide a base to develop communications strategies effective across all racial groups.

One important finding from the last report, *Caning, Context and Class*, was the absence of discussion about race as part of the public dialogue — not just from white respondents, but from minority respondents as well. So, in this third analysis, FrameWorks examined the race issue much more closely. FrameWorks contends that the question of how to address the topic of race has been, and remains, a vexing one, as advocates recognize both the deep racial biases within the system and the fact that Americans — white Americans specifically — are typically uncomfortable talking about race and largely convinced that systemic racial discrimination against people of color is a thing of the past. While there are some in the reform movement who believe that race must play a leading role in communications efforts, others argue that such a strategy will likely be counterproductive.

Drawing on several years of research on race, the FrameWorks Institute maintains that there is a dominant racial discourse on race in America that can quickly overwhelm and/or derail communications on a progressive criminal justice policy agenda. This dominant discourse asserts that racial matters have improved dramatically in America in the last 50 years and that

racism exists primarily at the level of the individual person and not writ large in our economic, legal, educational or other systems. This discourse asserts that a person's success or failure in life is individually constructed and that some minority populations don't value that individualist ethic enough. In this view, it is those minority cultures that have to change, not the "system" itself. Finally, this discourse implicitly describes minority concerns as separate and particular from those of the nation as a whole, failing to acknowledge a shared fate among all Americans.[3]

In the face of this dominant discourse on race, there emerges the question of whether talking explicitly about disparities and discrimination furthers or undermines support for policies designed to reduce them. Previous research by FrameWorks has shown that, more often than not, such explicit talk fails to build support for progressive reform. Rather, when Americans, particularly white Americans, are presented with reform policies addressed at remedying systemic discrimination or disparities of outcome across race, they typically reject those policies and the idea that racism plays a significant part in determining life chances for minorities. Instead, they fall back on individualized explanations for those disparities and develop systemic critiques of "reverse discrimination."[4]

When advocates enter the public conversation about disparities, they also enter an ongoing conversation about race. Long-standing patterns of thinking that attach to race are evoked merely by the mention of disparities in outcomes. If advocates are not familiar with these traps and habits of thinking, they run the risk of entering public discourse unprepared. Whether discussions about disparities attach to public health or education or early child development, they inevitably are also "about" race, insofar as they draw upon learned assumptions about who lags behind, for what reason, with what available solutions.[5]

Recognizing the centrality of race as a systemic bias in the criminal justice system, the question has never been *whether* advocates should address race as a feature of their communications, but rather *how* to do so. In short, communications must be strategic if they hope to be effective. FrameWorks maintains that communications that begin with an articulation of certain core American values can indeed build public support for criminal justice reform policies, and that careful attention to the *order* in which the communications unfold — including on the topic of race — will prove to be an effective way to remind the public of the shared understandings they have in order to facilitate the interracial dialogue that is so badly needed to remediate social problems.

After a summary of the research findings and a more detailed description of the peer discourse method, we discuss the research findings in greater detail. The discussion of these findings is organized around three fundamental research questions: (1) *Confirmation* — do the findings support the results of the cultural models interviews? (2) *Experimentation* — can primes, which are the deliberate attempts to affect the content and course of group conversations, improve understanding, and facilitate a more robust discussion of policy and reform issues of criminal justice and public safety? (3) *Negotiation* — how do people work with both their default cultural models and the primes they have been provided while making decisions, both as individuals and in group settings?

The findings from these sessions fall into two categories: those that emerge from the analysis of data prior to the introduction of reframing primes, and those that emerge as a result of attempts to influence group conversations through the introduction of such primes. The pre-prime findings in this report confirm and expand upon the findings that were documented in our previous cultural models research, *Caning, Context and Class: Mapping the Gaps Between Expert and Public Understandings of Public Safety*. The findings from post-prime discussions reveal hypotheses for promising reframing directions to pursue and test in future communications research.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Section 1: Confirmation and Elaboration of Cultural Models Interviews

A. Similarities Across Sessions. Analysis of peer discourse session data confirmed and elaborated major findings from the cultural models research.

- The terms "public safety" and "community safety" invoke a broad concern with both human and non-human threats (e.g., natural disasters) to well-being, including crime. Participants deemed "safety" a core requirement and value for all communities and recognized variations and inequities in public safety across place, observations that translated into constructive talk about the need to reform the system to improve both its efficiency and fairness.

- The public bring multiple cultural models to their understandings of what causes crime, including *individualized*, *developmental* and *ecological* models. These causal models then structure both their critiques of the criminal justice system and their views about how to improve it.

- The public uses a *violence threshold* model to draw a clear distinction between violent and nonviolent crime and wants the justice system to focus more resources

on the former and less on the latter, especially drug-use crimes. This threshold model sets up one of the public's central critiques of the system — that it is currently overburdened because of misplaced priorities and focuses too heavily on nonviolent crimes that do not represent "real" threats to public safety.

- The public sees the criminal justice system as *corrupted by money* and thinks that powerful and wealthy people, unlike everyone else, are able to buy their way out of facing the consequences for their actions. Yet even as people criticize the system, with accusations of inefficiency, corruption and poor governmental criminal justice infrastructure, they continue to call for government responsibility for public safety.

- Assertions of government responsibility, however, exist side by side with frequent and emphatic calls for individuals and communities to jointly "step up" and take responsibility for their own safety, through greater *individual vigilance* and enhanced *community coordination*.

B. Complexities and Variations Across Sessions. The peer discourse analysis also revealed subtle but important variations among sessions across race.

- Ecological models of causation were evoked more frequently during conversations within the *All African American* and *Primarily Latino* groups relative to the *All White* and *Mixed Race* groups.

- In the All African American and Primarily Latino groups, the terms "public safety" and "community safety" elicited place/space-based discussions of differences between neighborhoods, unequal access to resources, and policy reforms that could address these issues, while in the All White group the conversation focused more on policing, and how individuals must take responsibility for the safety of their communities.

- In the All White and Mixed Race groups, discussions emphasized a class critique of the criminal justice system whereas conversations in the All African American and Primarily Latino groups spoke to (often implicitly) differential experiences with the system based on factors of both class *and* race.

It is worth noting that the differences identified across race are ones of emphasis, and that many of the patterns identified were evident across all of the sessions. From a communications perspective, it is clear that the bar is higher for communicating about systemic causes and solutions. It is also clear, however, that broader cultural narratives of individual responsibility can also derail attention to systemic and ecological factors even in African American and Latino communities. While communications can be sensitive to the

variations identified here, they must also stay cognizant of how productive and unproductive models are available to all Americans in their thinking and talking about these issues.

Section 2: Experimenting with Reframing Primes

The peer discourse sessions underscore the usefulness of both *simplifying models* (metaphors) and *values* in garnering support for policies that explicitly promote public safety and reduce crime, and serve to reduce biases and distortions in the system.

- The value of *Prevention* and simplifying models of *Levelness* and *Air Traffic Control* shifted group conversations away from some of the more unproductive dominant cultural models and discourses. (See Appendix B for a full description of these value and simplifying model primes). These primes also demonstrated some "stickiness,"[6] as evidenced by their reemergence in subsequent points of the peer discourse sessions — including the final negotiation exercise. These reframing tools also helped fill specific gaps in understanding between how experts and the public think about public safety.

- When the value of *Prevention* was mapped on to the simplifying models *Air Traffic Control* and *Levelness*, participants were able to connect the issues of early child development and child mental health to criminal justice. When this connection was made, participants saw the problems associated with applying practices from adult criminal justice to youth and called for a separate, developmentally appropriate system of juvenile justice. In addition, participants often connected the role of educational resources and opportunities as a possible policy solution to minimizing the causes of crime.

- As in the earlier cultural models research, the issue of immigration was largely absent across the peer discourse groups, and the primes presented were not effective at helping participants connect issues of criminal justice to immigration. One "take-away" here is the need to develop specific frame elements and reframing techniques to achieve prolonged shifts in the public's understanding of problems associated with the way that immigration and criminal justice overlap in the current system.[7]

Section 3: Policy Negotiation

The negotiation exercise separated participants into small groups tasked with employing one of the primes to compose an argument for a specific policy reform. Several key findings emerged from the analysis of these exercises:

- Among the three value primes presented to the group, *Prevention* was by far the most successful — working its way into argumentation across all small group and peer discourse sessions. Importantly, the value succeeded in addressing one of the single most pervasive challenges in communicating with Americans about dire social problems — getting them to shift from a personal to a systemic perspective. *Prevention* succeeded both in organizing conversations at a *systemic* level and in orienting those conversations around the need to make *changes* at that systems level.

- The simplifying models of *Air Traffic Control* and *Levelness* were successful in filling one of the public's major "cognitive holes" — the extent to which the juvenile justice system needs to be clearly partitioned from the adult system so that it can attend to the developmental needs and vulnerabilities of children. Across the sessions, both metaphors strongly brought the need for a developmentally appropriate juvenile justice system into the conversation. Notably, the value of *Prevention* was often employed in conjunction with both simplifying models.

- The simplifying model of *Opportunity Grid* had mixed success, often serving as a way to talk about strengthening communities by building a strong grid of relationships — both between community members and between community members and local law enforcement. However, the model in its current version largely failed to gain traction as a way to talk about the benefits of ensuring a strong grid of *resources* and *services* across communities.[8]

- Across all of the sessions, participants argued for a reallocation of funding within the system as the single most important reform to embrace. Specifically, when presented with policy reform options related to reduced sentencing for nonviolent crime, community policing, and the need for a developmentally sensitive juvenile justice system, participants argued for sentence reductions *in order to shift resources within the system* towards community policing and an improved juvenile justice system. Often, the value of preventing crime was explicitly invoked in the argumentation.

RESEARCH METHODS

Peer discourse sessions are a qualitative approach to exploring the common patterns of talking — or public discourses — that people use in social settings, and how they negotiate and move among these patterned ways of talking. These sessions begin with open-ended discussions followed by moderator-introduced framed passages — or "primes" — designed to influence the ensuing discussion in specific ways. The sessions end with a group negotiation exercise in which participants break out into smaller groups tasked with designing a plan to address some part of the larger issue. For a more detailed discussion of the specific sections of a peer discourse session, please see Appendix A.

For this project, FrameWorks employed this method with three specific research objectives. First, sessions were designed to examine whether individuals in social group settings employ the same dominant cultural models that were documented in one-on-one cultural models interviews.[9] Second, sessions were constructed to experiment with speculative reframes that emerged from either previous FrameWorks research or hypotheses of experts in the field. In particular, these sessions aimed to evaluate whether the introduction of specific frame elements could help move group conversation from individual to public policy solutions to crime, social justice and public safety issues. Finally, FrameWorks used these sessions to engage people in a negotiation process in which they assumed agency in making policy decisions on criminal justice reform.

Subjects and Data Collection

Six peer discourse sessions were conducted with U.S. citizens in March and April 2011 in three cities: Tampa, FL, Baltimore, MD, and Los Angeles, CA. FrameWorks recruited participants through a professional marketing firm using a screening process developed and employed in past research. For each of the six sessions, nine participants were selected from a recruited sample of 11 to 13 people who were screened, selected and provided with an honorarium for their time and participation. These nine individuals formed a group representing variation in ethnicity, gender, age, educational background and political ideology (as self-reported during the screening process). FrameWorks purposefully sampled individuals who reported a strong interest in current events and an active involvement in their communities, because such people are likely to have and be willing to express opinions on socio-political issues.

Previous FrameWorks research has indicated that participant responses and views on criminal justice and public safety tend to be particularly sensitive to variations in racial-ethnic background[10]. Therefore, groups were formed to represent various groupings of people by race so that analysis could examine differences in opinions expressed and responses to primes along racial-ethnic identification. The groups were formed as follows: two Mixed Race groups, with an oversampling of Latino participants (in Los Angeles); two Mixed Race groups that included a distribution of black, white and Latino participants (in Baltimore); and one All White group and one All African American group (in Tampa). All participants were given general descriptions of the research process and signed written consent forms before the session.

Peer discourse sessions lasted approximately two hours, were audio and video recorded, and were later transcribed. Quotes are provided in the report to illustrate major points, but identifying information has been excluded to ensure participant anonymity.

RESULTS

Section 1: Confirmation

The following section confirms findings from FrameWorks' previous cultural models research that identified a series of dominant cultural models that consistently influence public thinking about both public safety and the criminal justice system.[11] Many of the cultural models cited in that earlier report also emerged consistently across all six peer discourse sessions, and structured participants' discussions. Part A of this Confirmation section identifies those cultural models and describes how they informed talk about public safety and criminal justice reform across the six sessions. In addition to this description of the shared models and patterns of talk across the six sessions, Part B of this section engages some of the observed differences across the sessions, with particular attention to differences across race.

At the start of all six peer discourse sessions, participants were engaged in two "warm-up" exercises that asked them each to write down as many word associations that came to mind when they heard the terms "public safety" or "community safety" and "criminal justice system." The phrase "public safety" was used in four of the sessions and "community safety" was used in two of the sessions. Participants were given one minute for each warm-up exercise. Figures 1–3 below show the results of these warm-up exercises in the form of three word-tag clouds. Please note, the size of the word in the cloud shows its relative frequency across the sessions tested. Hence, the larger the word, the more frequently the word was cited across all sessions.
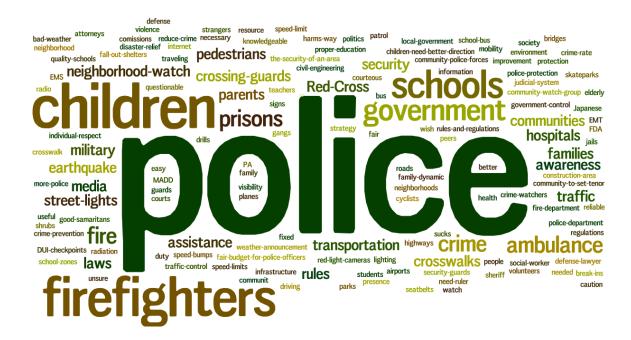
Figure 1: Participants' Top-of-Mind Associations with "Public Safety"

Figure 2: Participants' Top-of-Mind Associations with "Community Safety"
(Note: This word-tag cloud represents only the findings from the Baltimore Mixed Race session, as the Los Angeles Primarily Latino data was compromised.)

Figure 3: Participants' Top-of-Mind Associations with "Criminal Justice System"

There are several particular observations that can be made from comparing these three word-tag clouds:

- "Public safety," "community safety," and the "criminal justice system" only partially overlap as arenas in people's thinking. The concern with *crime* or *criminals* is the primary domain of overlap, and *police* are the primary agents mediating that overlap.

- "Community safety" invokes a more *localized*, *neighborhood-based* (or place-based) and *people-centered* (or space-based) set of associations than does "public safety."

- People think about *children* when thinking about "public safety" and "community safety," but not when thinking about the criminal justice system, especially about adults in the system.

- Other than *police*, the *courts* and its various actors (lawyers, judges, defendants, juries, etc.) are people's primary association with the "criminal justice system" but are largely absent from thinking about "public safety" or "community safety."

Several of these "top-of-mind" associations and their implications for communications are further elaborated in the discussion that follows. For now, it is worth noting at least four observations: the central importance of police; the absence of children in people's thinking about the criminal justice system; the absence of the courts and penal system in thinking about public safety; and how the phrase "community safety" orients people towards thinking about community as localized relationships and conditions.

A: Cultural Models in Discourse: Similarities Across Sessions

For this project and the peer discourse sessions analyzed in this report, FrameWorks chose to lead with the value of "safety" and specifically to initiate a conversation about criminal justice reform with the topics of "public safety" and "community safety." Our hypothesis was that these topics would serve as viable frames for getting people to think about the criminal justice system *as a system*, and, in so doing, to talk about reasons and means for its reform as a system.

1. Top-of-Mind Associations with "Public Safety." In line with earlier cultural models research, participants across all peer discourse groups defined public and community safety by making associations to front-line responders, including police, fire and rescue, and transportation personnel, as well as to politicians and government officials and personnel. These "top-of-mind" associations were clearly informed by a model of public safety as protecting the public from both human and non-human threats (e.g., natural disasters, fire, accidents). As such, these protections included providing transportation safety and support during incidences of natural disasters, as well as protecting people from criminals.

> *I see people protecting, like firemen, police, military …*
>
> All White group, Tampa

> *Like bridges, potholes, looking out for crime. Trying to prevent crime, and have the police have crime prevention. People who look out for our food to make sure we get untainted food so that we're healthy.*
>
> Mixed Race group (2), Baltimore

> *It's all about your personal safety, like in your home … like the neighborhood, the community, police, fire department, you know, all the things you think about with our public safety departments.*
>
> Primarily Latino group (2), Los Angeles

Notably, the concept of "safety" allowed participants across all sessions to talk about public safety as something that requires the efforts of individuals, parents and communities to shape the conditions for its realization. That said, the meta-frame of "safety" opened the door to more fluid conversation about issues, inequities and inefficiencies in public safety, and helped participants make cognitive to links to the criminal justice system.

2. Crime Has Multiple Causes. Just as in the cultural models interviews, participants across all six peer discourse sessions used *individualist, developmental* and *ecological* models in thinking and talking about what causes crime and shapes public safety.

- **Individualist models:** Individualist models attribute the causes of crime to individuals. In the peer discourse sessions, one type of individualist model was especially pronounced: a "rational actor" model, which is understood as being the result of individuals' consciously weighing the costs and benefits of criminal action and making an aware decision to commit crime. This rational actor model was particularly evident in the peer discourse sessions.

  Researcher: *What are the major factors that impact public safety?*
  Participant 1: *Laws.*
  Participant 2: *Individual actions and decisions.*
  Participant 1: *And you have to first to decide to break a law so if everybody just decided not to, we wouldn't have a large need, would we?*
  <div align="right">Mixed Race group (1), Baltimore</div>

  This is America, and the only thing you seem to not be able to do is take responsibilities as individuals. You want something done, you've got to do it yourself. You want people to stop doing crime? Then everyone needs to … be educated, and understand that you need to take the responsibility.
  <div align="right">Mixed Race group (1), Baltimore</div>

The idea that individuals ultimately have the power and responsibility to make good decisions was also used as a way to argue against more ecological and economic explanations of causation.

  It's not a "money" issue … 'cause in the poorest countries … even the people who make less than a dollar a day still make economic decisions on what they want to buy. And just this past week, there's an article out about, if you give the poor … more money, they ironically don't spend it on food. They spend it on other things. Yet, they all assume they would buy more food because they don't have enough, but … it comes down to their lives are so horrible as it is, they're just looking for something to comfort them.
  <div align="right">All White group, Tampa</div>

Similar to findings from the cultural models report, when participants thought about crime as the product of "rational actors" making calculated decisions, they saw a specific set of solutions as effective. Specifically, participants advocated for deterrence policies that would either increase the chances of getting caught (e.g., via increasing neighborhood watches or police presence) or make punishment more severe.

> Researcher: *What do you all think can be done to improve public safety?*
> Participant 1: *Faster police response time, which probably means more police.*
> Participant 2: *More awareness, maybe setting up more neighborhood watches.*
>
> Primarily Latino group (1), Los Angeles

> Participant 1: *Everybody's … not going to have a perfect family or everything like that, so over time, as far as the solution, it's probably going to be a community effort, you know, from the government down to your neighbor. It's what it all comes down to because you could have a perfect community, and somebody comes, and messes it up, and breaks in the house next door, and now all the rules have changed. So you really need everybody looking out.*
> Participant 2: *I agree just as [he] said, everybody has to look out for everybody. If someone comes into your neighborhood, and does something, everybody else is going to react a certain way.*
>
> All African American group, Tampa

While attributions of individual responsibility for crime were abundant throughout the sessions, they were notably less pronounced in the peer discourse sessions than in the one-on-one cultural models interviews. It is likely that the context of speaking in a group setting encouraged participants to take a more contextual approach to engaging the questions and topics at hand during discussions. This type of distillation effect, where some models become less pronounced in social settings as compared to one-on-one settings, is a common finding from peer discourse sessions and indicates the importance of using this method to triangulate and deepen the findings from earlier cultural models interviews.[12] This attention to the social and discursive life of cultural models — and to the messaging and framing devices that address them — must be a key factor as communicators consider how best to change the public conversation about public safety and the criminal justice system.

- **Moral Development Models.** Participants were also quick to attribute responsibility to parents, and suggest that criminal behavior itself is something of a heritable trait. For participants, their "developmental" ways of thinking tended to blame parents for

either passing on "criminal genes" or for "not guiding or teaching" children morals and ethics they need to stay out of trouble and away from criminal activity.

If the parents are criminals, the kids are going to be criminals. I have seen a succession of generations of gang members, and so when I get so and so age, I'm going to start stealing cars with my people, or whatever you want to call it ... you know, to get accepted; and it's just a way of life in certain neighborhoods.

Primarily Latino group (1), Los Angeles

Little things like after-school programs aren't always going to be the thing that solves the problem. Parents have to be able to instill some kind of advice in them, making sure that we do things a certain way every day and pointing out people who are doing things in a particular way, and telling us, this is how this person's probably going to end up, and having those examples.

All African American group, Tampa

As with individualist models, moral development models of causation that target parental responsibility also served to structure participants' thinking about solutions and reform. At times, these models emerged in parallel within the discussion, as in the following exchange, which ends with a strong affirmation of the self-made rational actor:

Participant 1: *I know parents need to get involved, but it's not always a reality for parents, you know?*
Participant 2: *But I think that it doesn't have to be — I mean, most people work, and involvement with your kid, to just sit down, even if you're exhausted and you come home and you take 45 minutes to sit down, and help them with their homework, and show your interest, they learn from that, and I think the biggest thing ...*
Participant 1: *But how do we teach that, though, to the moms?*
Participant 2: *I think that's the biggest problem.*
Participant 1: *I've been on my own since I was 12. I didn't have anybody teaching me, and I'll tell you what, it's hard for me to — I have sympathy for situations where people just ... no, you know what? I don't, because when you become an adult, you see what's around you, you see the right and wrong, and you have an opportunity to make a choice to do it the right way, or do it the wrong way. And it takes a parent — it takes somebody to break that chain, and say all right, you know what, I'm not going to suffer what my family did because they didn't make the right choices. I'm going to sit here and I'm going to do the best I can, especially by my children. And it doesn't*

mean that I spend money on them. It means that I spend time. It means that they see I'm interested and concerned and involved in their life, and in their school, and I want to guide them in the right direction. It's time.

<div align="right">Primarily Latino group (2), Los Angeles</div>

While these developmental conversations typically focused on the role of parents, they also reverted to a more generalized argument about "culture" and the generational inheritance of poverty within certain social and cultural groups. This line of reasoning represents a dramatic shift in that it locates primary responsibility not within specific families but rather within the particular moral climate of a given population. In this quote from an All White group session in Florida, the "they" in question is never named, even as it likely carries implicit racial connotations.

You were just saying though about ... poor areas and the higher crime rates; a lot of that is, honestly, it's a generational issue with income and poverty — there's a term for it that they call "generational poverty." And I think that a lot of that just holds true with social mores, too. They don't know any different. They don't know ... anybody that's actually gone past eighth grade — so it just becomes the norm.

<div align="right">All White group, Tampa</div>

- **Ecological models:** In contrast to individualistic/rational actor and moral development models of causation, there were instances when participants across all peer discourse sessions spoke to ecological conditions (e.g., economic, cultural, governmental) as key factors shaping public safety and crime in communities. Reasoning from this model of ecological causation, participants emphasized the broader societal conditions that shape and explain crime.

I do think that socioeconomics is sort of the root of the problem. If you're in a lower class kind of neighborhood, you're going to have worse schools, you're going to have a lot of parents that are uneducated — so the kids tend to be less educated, and I think that's really where the problems occur. These aren't people who can get good jobs. These aren't people who know how to succeed in life, what to do after school. And a lot of them end up, out of boredom, out of lack of things to do and so forth, they hang out with their friends. And who are their friends? People in the same boat with them.

<div align="right">Primarily Latino group (2), Los Angeles</div>

So there's a combination of factors, there's no one single focus that's going to change. But it's for the mayor and the police bureaucracy and ... with training down to the people. And then getting jobs. It's the big one in certain sections, they need jobs ... to keep people off the street, and give them an alternative to selling drugs. But once you have a felony, very few people want to hire you.

Mixed Race group (1), Baltimore

Also, there were moments from the peer discourse sessions that demonstrated how all three types of models — individualist, developmental and ecological — can intersect in people's thinking, as they toggled between and combine cultural models in the effort to make sense of what is happening in communities.

So, kids want to get that fast quick cash real quick, and you have Kanye West who said "I was a college dropout, and look at me now," you know? And the kids say, "Well I could be just like Kanye when I grow up," but that doesn't happen for everyone. So then again, that's how they get trapped in the system where they go out and they do stupid things, and like he said, it's tied up with them for the rest of their lives, and it's unfortunate for them. But I still feel like there should be an opportunity for those. I have a brother who was like that, and I used to look down at people like, well they made the decision, that's — you know, that's their business. But I no longer do that, he is a good person, just made the wrong decision, and he was in the wrong place at the wrong time, and I want him to have an opportunity when he gets out, even though I know the way things are right now, he just may not have that opportunity. So what do they really have to live for except to go out and do the same thing? And then we have parents, grandparents, family members who say, "You're going to be just like your father."

All African American group, Tampa

As in other issue areas, the toggling between individualist, moral developmental and ecological models — as demonstrated in the quote above — is a key feature of how Americans think about crime, public safety and the justice system. From a communications perspective, it raises a central task: What can be done to (re)frame the issue for Americans to bring ecological thinking to the foreground in their thinking, and to delegate individualist and moralist models to the background? What can be done so that ecological models "stick" in people's minds, and serve to structure their thinking about causation and, therefore, about solutions? FrameWorks' research across multiple issue areas has shown that values and simplifying models can serve as powerful reframing devices that can effectively shift people's perspectives in durable ways. The *Experimentation* and *Negotiation* sections of

these peer discourse sessions (described below) were designed precisely to test the reframing effects and potentials of values and simplifying models that have proven effective in other policy arenas.

3. The Criminal Justice System is Biased by Money, Not (Explicitly) by Race.
When asked how well the criminal justice system works in the U.S., conversations across peer discourse sessions turned towards the corrupting power of money. Differential outcomes in sentencing were attributed to the ability of the wealthy to "buy justice."

> *And who has the most money to buy that particular lawyer that can … you know, the best lawyer.*
>
> <div align="right">Primarily Latino group (1), Los Angeles</div>

> *It's just kind of like a joke. Everything is pretty much boiled down to who's got the most money, or who has the fanciest lawyer that knows the judge, or knows somebody within the system.*
>
> <div align="right">Primarily Latino group (1), Los Angeles</div>

> Researcher: *How's the criminal justice system doing in this country?*
> Participant 1: *If you got money, you buy good lawyers, you get off.*
> Participant 2: *Yeah, and if you're poor you go to jail.*
>
> <div align="right">All White Group, Tampa</div>

> Participant 1: *You got a good lawyer … if you got the money for a lawyer.*
> Participant 2: *Yeah and that's still not a good thing. Some people are paying them under the table and that's not fair.*
>
> <div align="right">Mixed Race group (2), Baltimore</div>

Two observations are notable with regard to this critique. First, participants consistently spoke of the system as having a bias in *favor* of wealthy people, but not as being discriminatory *against* poor people. Secondly, as the most prominent critique of the system's fairness, this focus on elite privilege served to mute attention to or talk about the core bias of the system — a racial bias. Except for a handful of brief mentions of racial bias within the All African American and Primarily Latino groups, and a more consistent use of *location* as a proxy for both *race* and *class* in those groups (see Part B below), there was almost no explicit mention of racial bias within the criminal justice system. As noted in the Introduction to this

report, it is precisely this denial of race as a factor that presents such a substantial reform and communications challenge.

4. The "Violence Threshold" Model Applies. Peer discourse sessions and previous cultural models research both identified a broadly shared model in public thinking that draws a clear distinction between violent and nonviolent crime. In addition to the class critique described above, peer discourse participants also critiqued the system as both unfair and overburdened because of misplaced priorities. Also, participants cited instances where policies unfairly punished people who committed nonviolent crimes. Specifically, they were particularly attentive to the criminal justice system's approach to nonviolent drug use and distribution offenses and identified this threshold as an area for policy change.

> *It's probably a question of prioritization of what matters, and what should be dealt with. You're absolutely right, the prisons are overcrowded, but you know, a lot of this is low-level drug offenders. And it's not doing them any favors to be there. You know, sort of "criminal college," you come out worse than you came in. And even the Three Strikes laws, which kind of sound good, make people feel good: "Oh, okay, we're being tough on repeat offenders." But you know … there are instances of guys stealing a pizza, and that's their third strike … and you're going to get a serious amount of time for that … versus other things, which are not.*
>
> Primarily Latino group (1), Los Angeles

> *They need to be dealing with people that are really committing crimes, and let public intoxication, things like that — those things need to be dealt with at a community level. And the true crimes need to be taken up at the top.*
>
> Mixed Race group (1), Baltimore

> *We're crowding our jails and prisons with a petty weed dealer, or someone who was caught with a tiny amount of marijuana, when we have violent career criminals walking the streets, and killing cops. That's a problem.*
>
> All White group, Tampa

> *Violence should be a completely different category, with mandatory sentences, versus some of these others like marijuana or drunkenness, or anything like that where you're just really hurting yourself — I mean, unless you have pounds of marijuana up here and are dealing to the local community. But I mean, there's a big difference*

between the guy that had an ounce of marijuana, and the guy that just beat some kid senseless.

Mixed Race group (1), Baltimore

As the flip side of this call for reduced sentencing for nonviolent crimes, participants emphasized the need for more punitive approaches to violent crime.

Researcher: *In terms of how the criminal justice system operates, what would you want to change about it?*

Participant: *I'd like to see them enforce the laws more, not be so lenient. I mean, we just had a rash of police shootings in both Pinellas and Hillsborough County. The people who allegedly shot these policemen … there's no way they should be out on the street.*

All White group, Tampa

5. Government as Problem and Solution. Analysis of the peer discourse sessions confirms findings from previous FrameWorks research on cultural models of government[13]. Specifically, peer discourse participants toggled between two perspectives in thinking about government and public safety and criminal justice: 1) government is responsible for fixing social problems and 2) government is ineffective, wasteful and corrupt. The following quote illustrates the assumption that criminal justice is a central arena of government responsibility:

My main solution/suggestion would be, I used to live in London, in Britain for a couple of years, I was working over there, and they have the security cameras absolutely everywhere. There's something like a density of 150 per square mile. Something happens and within pretty quick time … Because, the idea of adding more cops is a great one — it's one I don't disagree with — but it [cameras] sure seems it could work here.

Primarily Latino group (1), Los Angeles

Yet, even as participants called for more government efforts to address crime and threats to safety, they criticized the criminal justice system for being mismanaged and inefficient. In particular, participants cited politician and government corruption as explanations for the system's ineffectiveness.

I think it pretty much stands for being political these days. I think that's just where it starts ... If you're a political figure; who's paying you money, and I mean, you got to pay it back some way or the other, so I think it's all pretty much politics. Money comes in second. I don't think most politicians care about need anymore. It's about getting reelected.

Primarily Latino group (1), Los Angeles

Participant 1: *You have a lot less waste when you have volunteers there, because then they have to work harder to get whatever funding they need to support, whether it's job training, or housing, or a free clinic for the medical benefits. It seems like, if it's a smaller organization like that — there's a lot more self oversight than if it's a government-run organization.*

Participant 2: *Because the people who work and volunteer — they have a vested interesting in making it something. And it seems, generally, with people who are in government, many are very hard-working, but they don't have the vested interest that somebody has in their own.*

All White group, Tampa

6. Strengthening Communities as a Primary Solution. Participants consistently spoke to the need for individual neighborhoods and communities to take increased responsibility for their own community safety. In many respects, this "solution" is an expected by-product of a largely individualist approach to thinking about the causes of crime — the idea that individuals must come together to ensure safety rather than rely on and strengthen governmental agencies and services. In that respect, this call for strengthening communities can be seen as counter to efforts to bring systemic reform and improve public services. On the other hand, the strength and consistency of this model on community can also provide a communications opening for connecting reform efforts to a broader scope of collective well-being and benefit. Reform policies that can successfully speak to people's desire for more integrated and empowered communities, including via public interventions, can potentially gain traction in people's thinking and connect to their actions and aspirations for stronger infrastructures.

I think more people need to be involved. More of the public need to be involved, and it shouldn't be just reliant on police force, and fire — because obviously, we don't have enough in California, can't pay for what we need. So it is a responsibility of people in

*their own communities to rally others who have the same view of trying to make
things better.*

<div align="right">

Primarily Latino group (2), Los Angeles

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Participant 1: *And people getting involved. If you see something going on, then don't
sit back and watch it go on. Get involved. That'll shape your neighborhood, how
good it's going to be or how bad it's going to be.*

Participant 2: *I really do agree. I think that involvement is key to changing if you have
a public safety issue that you want to change. The more individuals work to change
something like that, the better you're going to be. You can't sit back and just leave it
to the police to do it or the government to do it or to wait for somebody else to do it.
You have to do it.*

<div align="right">

Mixed Race group (2), Baltimore

</div>

B. Cultural Models in Discourse: Complexities and Variations Across the Sessions.

While the above findings confirm previous cultural models research, analysis of data from
peer discourse sessions also revealed several subtle variations with respect to the racial
compositions of the groups.

1. Top-of-Mind Associations with "Public Safety" — Differences by Race. While
analysis revealed similarities across all groups in "top-of-mind" associations with the term
"public safety," there were several subtle differences between groups in understanding this
term. Participants in the All African American and Primarily Latino groups responded to
open-ended questions about the meaning of "public safety" and/or "community safety" by
emphasizing notions of community as place (i.e., neighborhoods where people live) and
space (i.e., interactions between people and their relationships to policy). In this way, the
term "public safety" in these groups elicited discussions of differences between
neighborhoods, unequal access to resources, and policy reforms that could address these
issues.

Participant 1: *Socioeconomic. I mean, economics. Yeah, 'cause you go to
neighborhoods, it doesn't matter what the demographics are, if everybody's poor
there, then it's a difference in lifestyle than everybody living in Beverly Hills. It's just
a different world.*

Participant 2: *Well, there's a different need, a different sense of desperation because of what's available to them in comparison. Unfortunately, a lot of times in that environment, it's every man for himself.*

Primarily Latino group (2), Los Angeles

I mean, obviously, if you don't have the education and the background to go out and get a job to better yourself, you're going to be in a position where you're wanting — this is where I believe crime comes from, it comes from opportunity. It doesn't come from somebody sitting around plotting to do something all day. It's just that if the opportunity presents itself, maybe Neighborhood Watch is not around, somebody left the door open, and the neighbor just drove off, opportunity. Obviously not having a job being around ... not doing anything, wanting, it sets up a situation where things like this happen.

All African American group, Tampa

2. Cultural Models of Causality — Differences by Race. In the All White and Mixed Race group sessions, individualist and rational actor models were more dominant than in the All African American and two Primarily Latino groups, where discussions were less focused on individual choice and responsibility and focused more on ecological models of causation. In these sessions, public and community safety were described as part of a connected network of government agencies, local communities and individuals, all responsible for developing and implementing policies that remediate the current system. Likewise, discussions about the factors causing crime focused on the persistence of resource disparities across communities and what communities must do by way of response. This observable difference between groups also confirms findings from FrameWorks' previous research on race that found that white Americans often believe that institutional discrimination and racism have declined and that the "playing field" is level in terms of race (though not class). As such, most white Americans have difficulty seeing structural racism or supporting systemic reforms to reduce disparities across racial communities. [14] By contrast, black and Latino participants in the peer discourse sessions were able to speak to the need for systemic reforms that address both underlying biases in the system and many of the underlying ecological sources for criminal behavior in the first place.

Economic conditions, overall, not just for the funding of these agencies, but you know, obviously, as people get driven into more desperate kind of measures, and you see different kind of things, you know, more people becoming homeless, more people

maybe looking to go to lengths that they wouldn't have done previously. High crime rate. Higher unemployment, as well.

Primarily Latino group (1), Los Angeles

In some of the areas around here there's a proliferation of crime, and the reason being is, you have some very large populations within the present county that we're in [with] people returning, going to, and returning from prison. And because of present policies, it's hard for them to acquire employment, because policies have not changed with hiring the folks that were oftentimes referred to as "ex felons," — I prefer the term "background challenged," — that helps proliferate the crime.

All African American group, Tampa

It is notable that in the All African American session, much of the conversation revolved around the central importance of education as the engine for both empowerment and prevention. Rather than talk about how their communities have suffered from discriminatory practices on the part of the criminal justice system, conversation focused on how to get out ahead of, and avoid, the system altogether by strengthening schools, thereby affecting both community life and individual opportunity.

3. Racial Profiling and the Intersections of Race and Class. As discussed above, participants across all peer discourse sessions cited social class as a source of bias in the criminal justice system. Conversations in the All White and Mixed Race groups were generally limited to a critique of the corrupting power of money, whereas discussions in the All African American and Primarily Latino groups explicitly discussed race as an axis of bias in the system, especially in terms of racial profiling.

If you go into a predominantly black neighborhood, and it's all white cops, a lot of these white cops aren't able to look at these black people and distinguish who's bad, who's good. So you put them in a neighborhood that's infested with gangs — every young black man is a gang member, and they're it. And so that's where you get this almost "you're guilty until proven innocent" instead of the other way around.

Primarily Latino group (2), Los Angeles

Participant 1: *We have a situation here, going on right now, with a current Bucks player, where he was caught in a situation with gunplay. And because of his past*

doings and everything else, people were just throwing the book at him already before it even goes to court or anything else ... I think it's not only money, but obviously it's a color/race issue.

Participant 2: *If you have money, it definitely helps you out tremendously, but I think it's also money and ... race ... racial background combined.*

All African American group, Tampa

Section 2: Experimentation

The following section describes how the introduction of reframing primes — *values* and *simplifying models* — affected patterns of conversation across these six peer discourse sessions. Below is a brief overview of the three values and three simplifying model primes used in this project. A full description and a more detailed account of the rationale behind, and effectiveness of, each of the six primes tested is presented in Appendix B.

Values and simplifying model primes represent different frame elements in communications. Values provide different ways for participants to orient to the issue — about who is responsible for the factors related to crime, about the social ramifications of reforming the criminal justice system, and about what might be done to address and improve public safety. The value primes *Prevention*, *Ingenuity* and *Responsible Management* were selected as potential reframing elements because of their success in earlier FrameWorks quantitative experiments on government, health care and early child development.

Simplifying models *Opportunity Grid*, *Air Traffic Control* and *Levelness* were designed to provide participants with metaphors or analogies to better understand and communicate elements of the science of child development into their talk about juvenile justice reform. The simplifying model *Opportunity Grid* was designed to open up the conversation to talk about access to, and utilization of, resources and the role an evenly and well-distributed infrastructure grid plays in strengthening all communities' access to these resources. The simplifying models *Air Traffic Control* and *Levelness* proved successful in previous FrameWorks research on early child development and were tested again in this project.

Each prime was analyzed using the following three criteria:

- *User-friendliness/stickiness[15].* Were participants able to use the language of the primes and to what degree did the language and underlying ideas of the primes find their way into subsequent discussions?

- *Shifting away from the dominant models.* Were the primes successful in "loosening the grip" and inoculating against the dominant cultural models and conversational patterns?

- *Filling gaps in understanding.* Were the primes successful in filling "gaps in understanding" between the ways that the public understands a concept and the way that experts and advocates do?

Analysis revealed four primes that were most effective across these criteria: one value, *Prevention*, and three simplifying models, *Air Traffic Control*, *Opportunity Grid* and *Levelness*. Even these relatively successful primes, however, were not completely effective, as each group inevitably found its way back to evoking many of the dominant models described above. This finding speaks to the pernicious power dominant cultural models have in their ability to guide people's thinking on issues of public safety and criminal justice.

User-friendliness and Stickiness
Among the three value primes *(Responsible Management*, *Prevention* and *Ingenuity)*, *Prevention* was the most user-friendly and "sticky." The utility of *Prevention* emerged, despite being critiqued as "too vague" to be useful for thinking about the concrete challenges of reforming the criminal justice system. That critique aside, the language and idea of *Prevention* emerged consistently in both this and the final Negotiation exercise as a useful organizing concept in thinking about reforming the criminal justice system. Notably, the language of *Prevention* also found its way into discussions of all three simplifying model primes.

All three simplifying model primes — *Air Traffic Control*, *Opportunity Grid* and *Levelness* — showed a high degree of user-friendliness and stickiness, especially in the discussions of juvenile issues. Specifically, participants were able to talk about the *Air Traffic Control*, *Opportunity Grid* and *Levelness* ideas and easily use the language of these primes in a way that allowed tenets of these ideas to pervade their discussions. Once introduced, these simplifying models also appeared in later parts of the session, including during the final Negotiation exercise.

For the *Levelness* simplifying model, it is worth noting that the model was often referred to as the "*table*" idea during discussions among participants, and parallels were consistently drawn to the "legs of a table" that either were or were not equal in length and conducive to providing a level surface. This pattern of usage by participants suggests that more research is

needed to develop the language of the simplifying model to build off of what is clearly a user-friendly and sticky idea.

Shifting away from dominant models

Analysis of conversations across the peer discourse sessions confirmed the extent to which dominant cultural models structure public thinking about crime and the criminal justice system, and pervade consideration of reform efforts. Even after exposure to the primes, participants frequently continued their previous discussions of factors and causes of crime, invoking government irresponsibility and corruption, and individualistic and rational actor models, just as they did during the unprimed sections of the sessions. Given the dominance and hold of these cultural models, the three simplifying models — *Air Traffic Control*, *Opportunity Grid* and *Levelness* — were relatively successful in "loosening the grip" of the dominant cultural models, even as participants inevitably found their way back to them in their discussions. The impacts of these three simplifying models, though relatively short-lived, were nevertheless qualitatively different from the effects of the less successful primes and the unprimed conversations. It is this observed ability to shift the discussion, and effectively "re-mind" people of more latent alternatives to the dominant cultural models, that constitutes the identification of a potentially successful prime.

A notable synergy between the value of *Prevention* and all three of the simplifying models emerged across all six of the peer discourse sessions. Specifically, exposure to either *Air Traffic Control*, *Opportunity Grid* and/or *Levelness* after exposure to the value of *Prevention* moved the conversation powerfully toward more ecological talk in all sessions, even if only for a short duration. Notably, the emphasis on ecological factors in public safety was often linked to education and the role of educational resources. Participants frequently invoked the value of *Prevention* as a way to explain the importance of having equitable distribution and access to educational resources and opportunities (i.e., *Opportunity Grid*) that can support children's brain development and functioning (i.e., *Air Traffic Control* and *Levelness*). Consider the following statements, the first from a discussion about the *Air Traffic Control* simplifying model; the second from talk about the *Levelness* model:

> *I feel children can be criminals just like adults can be criminals, but because we know that children aren't completely developed until they're in their 20s, we need to give them some compassion, we need to teach them other things. I feel the juvenile system should be a giant after-school program for these kids. They need to find their way, they need to find their niche, and they need to find their place.*

<div align="right">

Primarily Latino group (2), Los Angeles

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I like this analogy with the table. I think what the juvenile system does, when a child is in trouble at a young age, they're showing that they have a problem functioning in everyday society, as is. And so what's our solution? We throw them in a place with a bunch of people who have the same problem. So, instead of fixing that leg, we're taking another off. When you put a kid in jail for a year, you take him out of school, take him away from everyday normally functioning people, and you put them with a bunch of people like him. And then you put them back out in society, you've just really made that child worse and at that stage where they're really developing. I think the prison system works more for adults than it does for kids.

Mixed Race group (2), Baltimore

Filling gaps in understanding

FrameWorks' recent "map the gaps" report on public safety[16] identified several key gaps between expert and public understandings of the criminal justice system. One of these gaps concerned the acknowledgment of racial biases in the system. Experts identify a persistent racial bias in the system, whereas interviews with members of the general public revealed a dominant focus on the corrupting influence of money and the capacity for wealthy people to purchase differential outcomes within the system; racial biases were largely left unaddressed. In the peer discourse sessions, while all the groups responded well to *Opportunity Grid* in some way, this notion of a grid appeared to provide participants in the All African American and Primarily Latino groups with a particularly effective way to talk about systemic racial biases and articulate the need for a reallocation of resources to address disparities in ecological conditions that contribute to crime.

The *Opportunity Grid* prime was also relatively effective across all peer discourse groups in closing another expert/public gap in understanding. Earlier research showed that, while experts adopt a heavily ecological perspective in understanding crime and issues of recidivism, public thinking is dominated by individualist models. After exposure to the *Opportunity Grid* prime, group discussions shifted heavily towards ecological considerations and participants quickly began to discuss the criminal justice system as being less about individuals and more about being connected to civic institutions and communities — a view more consistent with that expressed by experts in the field.

And also more of a dispersed and equal funding, no matter if you're in Englewood, Compton or Burbank. And I think it should be treated like a grid flat out, like a flat rate of funding.

<div align="right">Primarily Latino group (2), Los Angeles</div>

For juvenile crime, if they [juveniles] had access to a Boys and Girls Club [and it] was open up until 11:00 at night, maybe the juvenile crime rate would go down because they have something else to do.

<div align="right">All White group, Tampa</div>

The "map the gaps" report also identified several cognitive "holes" in public understandings of criminal justice.[17] Instead of gaps between expert and public understandings, "holes" are areas where the public lacks a readily cognized model for thinking about a topic at all. This earlier research showed that the public is not attuned to the importance of separating the juvenile justice system from the broader criminal justice system, or to the criminalization of undocumented immigrants. Analysis of peer discourse data revealed that the hole on juvenile justice can be readily filled. The experimentation with simplifying models showed that both the *Air Traffic Control* and *Levelness* primes — simplifying models that deal with specific aspects of the science of early child development — were successful in getting people to think and talk about the need for a juvenile justice system that specifically targets the developmental and maturational needs of children and youth, across communities and developmental periods. This suggests that the cognitive "hole" on juvenile justice reform can be filled if information about child development is effectively communicated. Talk about the *Air Traffic Control* prime led to this statement:

We're spending too much government money on building prisons when we need to be building better schools, equipping these kids at a early age. If they are challenged more earlier, then we won't be sending them to prison, period ... I say, "education" is our biggest issue, especially in our community. It's education.

<div align="right">All African American group, Tampa</div>

On the other hand, the simplifying models tested in these peer discourse sessions did not address the cognitive "hole" on the criminalization of undocumented immigrants. Further research is required to explore how best to raise awareness about the current policy of criminalizing undocumented migration and employment, and to build support for a

comprehensive two-pronged reform effort that decouples immigration and criminality and seeks to develop coherent policy reforms in each arena.

In summary, results from the experimentation section of the peer discourse sessions suggest that the value of *Prevention* and the simplifying models *Air Traffic Control*, *Levelness* and *Opportunity Grid* have potential in creating a more productive public conversation of criminal justice issues. FrameWorks will pursue these and other reframing tools in upcoming quantitative framing experiments.

Section 3: Negotiation

In the final section of our peer discourse sessions, FrameWorks uses an exercise meant to engage participants' sense of efficacy about solving social problems. On many of the issues on which FrameWorks has worked, we find that participants' own feelings of being overwhelmed by the magnitude of social problems, and their lack of agency with respect to solving them, can be inhibitory to constructive thinking. This final exercise gives participants the power (albeit simulated) and the opportunity to problem-solve from a different perspective — as active rather than as passive stakeholders. This effect of agency-shifts in moving discussion away from highly individual perspectives to more systemic and ecological understandings about the world has been documented in past FrameWorks research.[18]

We should say at the outset of our findings here that, over the course of the negotiation exercise, participants became less frustrated with and overwhelmed by a criminal justice system they perceived as riddled with interconnected and complex problems. As a result of this agency-shift, participants became less consumed with blaming individuals for causing crime or the government for ineffectively managing the system, and more focused on problem-solving; they were able to engage in discussions of ecologically based solutions needed to improve the current system.

In the Negotiation exercise, participants were presented with a hypothetical scenario where they were members of a governor-appointed task force on public safety and criminal justice reform. Divided into groups of three, they were presented with three policy reform options and asked to choose one as the most important. Then each group was tasked with using the already-discussed primes to build an argument for their chosen policy reform. The three policy proposals were:

1. Reduce sentences for nonviolent offenses.
2. Increase police partnership with communities and community organizations.

3. Separate the adult and juvenile justice systems in order to respond more effectively to the specific needs of youth.

Each group was given approximately ten minutes to develop their policy proposal and rationale. Following a period given to each group to plan their presentation (which FrameWorks recorded for analysis as well), each small group took turns presenting its arguments to the larger group for consideration. After all three groups presented, each participant voted for the policy and rationale they thought was strongest and was asked to justify their choice.

It was clear from our analysis of these sessions that the participants across all of the sessions were using greater levels of empowerment and efficacy in negotiating for particular policy outcomes. In particular, we saw several specific trends emerge through the negotiation exercise:

1. The value of *Prevention* was "sticky," and helped structure conversations about redirecting criminal justice policy priorities.
Participants consistently spoke to the need to shift resource allocation within the criminal justice system in order to effectively prevent crime from taking place or worsening. More often than not, their reasoning was not solely focused on a reduction in spending overall, but rather a better allocation of the resources already designated for public safety and crime reduction efforts. Across all peer discourse sessions, this pattern of reasoning was most evidenced by participants' call for reduced sentencing for nonviolent offenses in order to increase investments in community policing and/or the juvenile justice system.

> *The most cost-effective thing is to stop the problem before it starts. And so, we could put money into reducing sentences for nonviolent drug offenses, but these are people who are already in the system. We need to start talking about how to keep people out of the system, so anything that affects the juvenile system is going to have the greatest effect overall.*
>
> Primarily Latino group, Los Angeles

> *Reducing the sentences for nonviolent offenses, definitely. I mean, I know for a fact that in the state of California, they're already doing this because their prisons are overcrowded right now, and by releasing the nonviolent offenses people, they have*

more money to free up to use for other things in the community, and it's one of the things that I know we talked about, just basically just money; it frees up money.

All African American group, Tampa

If 90 percent of our criminals weren't in there [prison] for really petty low level crimes, then we would actually have the money to work with communities; we would have the money to work with the juvenile justice system.

Mixed Race group (1), Baltimore

Beyond the benefits of reduced sentencing, participants also spoke to the preventative value of both community policing and separating the juvenile justice system from the adult system.

I think with getting the police partnership going right at the beginning, you hopefully prevent crimes from happening from the people in the neighborhood, and for the people that live in it. So, I just think it's more of a preemptive one.

Primarily Latino group (1), Los Angeles

If we're separating the children from the adults, and we're giving different types of training then it should, in theory, lead to less violent crimes in the future, which leads to less funding going towards jails, and the criminal system, and more towards the prevention and the education, and so it should have this cycle of "good." If we're looking at cycles, we're trying to break the bad cycle, and start this other direction.

All White group, Tampa

Participants across the six sessions discussed prevention through a focus on strengthening community, and the positive effects of increased community integration in reducing levels of crime.

Well, one of my arguments would be trying to strengthen that community to try and prevent the criminal element from even existing … And just as the inner cities, crime sort of feeds on itself, the more crime there is today, the more crime there's going to be tomorrow. The opposite is true, that if you have a safer community people are going to want to start businesses in your community, people are going to want to

invest in your community, you're going to have a better environment, which will breed on itself, and just, you know, snowball the other direction, hopefully.

Mixed Race group (2), Baltimore

The notion of "strengthening communities," as a preventative strategy, was often invoked to argue the case for the community policing policy. Participants across all groups spoke to the potential value of community policing programs for increasing integration in communities and improving relations between police and community members, especially youth, and emphasized that, by implementing such programs, crime could be prevented.

Familiarity with the community is good because they [the police] know the families, they can see trouble and prevent it. They can identify situations before they become problems. Police stop being scary and are looked at as friends. This helps develop a cohesive community.

All White group, Tampa

The community feels more safe because they feel comfortable with the people, 'cause they see them all the time and they get to know them, hopefully walking the beat and not just riding around in their patrol cars patrolling the neighborhood.

Mixed Race group (1), Baltimore

2. *The Opportunity Grid* model has enormous potential, but also a key complication. Participants evoked the *Opportunity Grid* metaphor when arguing for all three of the policy proposal options. In many ways, this demonstrates the flexibility this prime has in explaining the importance of access to, and distribution of, resources. Also, *Opportunity Grid* had utility in addressing the importance of basic services at the community level, such as job training opportunities and mental health counseling. The more common trend, however, was for discussions to shift towards the importance of social relationships — among community members, between police and children, and so on — thereby recasting the prime *Opportunity Grid* as a "social grid of relationships." In this respect, the model can act to shift thinking away from enduring systemic problems and towards individualized solutions via improved interpersonal relationships. Yet, at the same time, the focus on relationships is not altogether unproductive, especially for policies promoting community empowerment. In drawing attention to a local *network* of relationships, the model can potentially link communities up to public resources, institutions and actors, and point to the quality and fairness of those

relationships. Subsequent prescriptive research should explore how this positive potential can be further realized.

> *To me, the "grid" is related more with opportunities of job training. I wasn't necessarily relating it to "crime prevention." It was more like "keep yourself out of trouble if you didn't have a job." Rather than going and committing a crime, you would go to this place either for mental health, or for employment opportunities, or job training, or something like that.*
>
> Primarily Latino group (1), Los Angeles

> *Police come across not only authoritative, but they're unapproachable sometimes, for those that don't have a good relationship with them. We're talking about developing people skills where they have some empathy ... to become approachable by having community events where they look like just a regular person ... Sometimes if there's like a death in the neighborhood, maybe having a fundraiser to help the family bury that person ... to give them more of that warm and human feeling because a lot of them have that cold and distant side of themselves. So, we thought that if these things were developed and the grid would come into play because the community events, fundraisers ... neighborhood watch meetings, neighborhood awareness meetings, that it would give probably a better look at that police officer versus the negative one that they have ... especially the lower neighborhoods.*
>
> Primarily Latino group (1), Los Angeles

3. Children's brains can be brought into the conversation about criminal justice reform.
The *Air Traffic Control* and *Levelness* simplifying models were successful in getting participants to think about children's unique developmental needs and of the advantages of developmentally appropriate approaches to intervention for troubled children and youth.

> *We agreed to the separation of adult and juvenile systems because the customization and parameters for handling the treatment of adults versus those of juveniles, and with the functioning systems of the brain there, obviously, they're in different situations in their life where you can't combine the two.*
>
> All White group, Tampa

The juvenile justice system needs to be separate so that we can address things like their needs ... mentally, educationally, and trying to maybe change behavior for the positive.

Mixed Race group (1), Baltimore

As far as separating the adult and juvenile justice systems, recognition of the fact that youth have a different thought process, and they should be dealt with differently. Separation would be effective in helping ensure that youth do not reoffend. They're dealt with appropriately, and hopefully we can assure that youth become eventually productive members of society.

All White group, Tampa

If you could take something from the beginning, and help it to grow in a positive way, you're not going to have to face that issue in the future, and the investment in our children is our future. And it's the only way our country is ever going to reach the level of success and integrity and morals that I think we all want. It's by taking those kids and giving them the opportunity to grow into the successful, good citizens that we all want to live with ... And understanding that they are wired differently, and they can be molded into a way that is going to give them a happy life, and will create future generations after them, and they will become the role models.

Primarily Latino group (2), Los Angeles

While these primes heightened participants' sensitivity to children's development and mental well-being, and the importance of early interventions, these primes did occasionally enter the negotiation exercise in less productive ways. Designed to highlight the malleability of children's development, the primes were used by some participants to then conclude that adults who commit crimes are "already developed," "fixed," and beyond the reach of intervention in comparison to children. This type of "damaged goods" perspective has been documented in past FrameWorks research on early child development and illustrates an ever-present challenge in communicating about human development. Such attempts must constantly walk the line in balancing ideas of permeability and the potential for change with the durability and long-term consequences of early experiences[19].

It's got to be treated completely different. I mean, both the articles about the juvenile system are pointing out that children are different than adults, and you still have a

*chance to hold them out. Like, 'cause once they're adults, their table is like this.
[Uses hands to show unevenness] You can't fix it. Like it's not — you can't fix a table
that has one leg that's 3 inches and one that's 3 feet. Like it's over.*

Primarily Latino group (2), Los Angeles

CONCLUSION AND COMMUNICATION IMPLICATIONS

The peer discourse sessions discussed above are part of a larger research process aimed at developing empirically tested communications recommendations to expand public thinking about the criminal justice system, the problems it faces and the potential for policy solutions to address these challenges.

Pre-Prime Findings

There are multiple ways that criminal justice advocates could engage Americans in a conversation about the need to reform the current system. As noted in the Introduction to this report, participants in these peer discourse sessions were engaged in a conversation about criminal justice reform through a directed concern with public or community safety, and specifically with the challenge that incidents, levels, and types of crime present to that safety. Among the central pre-prime findings of this research is that safety *is* an effective and compelling concern that succeeds in getting Americans to think and dialogue about how the criminal justice system can be changed and improved. Across all six peer discourse sessions, a concern with safety quickly brought participants into talk about how best to improve levels of public and community safety and how to make changes to the criminal justice system towards that end.

Results from pre-primed discussions show that:

- Participants shared a sense that safety is a core requirement and value for all communities. Even as participants in all of the session groups recognized that levels of public safety differ across places, there was an underlying sense that safety is a concern that applies to all communities.

- Participants described safety as something that must be actively constructed, rather than a default condition, in communities. In short, safety does not just happen on its own accord, but rather requires efforts and conditions for its realization.

- Participants understood only a partial intersection between the topics of public or community safety and the criminal justice system. Considering the strength of both individualist and moral developmental models of causation for crime, they (not surprisingly) located substantial responsibility for safety with individuals, parents and communities, aside from their respective involvements with the criminal justice system.

The clear implication of these findings is that *safety* provides a valid and constructive lens through which the public can think about criminal justice issues, even as challenges remain in terms of determining its most productive applications. In particular, the extent to which "public safety" activates thinking about individuals (and hence individualist and rational actor models) presents a clear challenge to any effort to communicate a systemic approach to improving public and community safety. Further research is required to explore the precise contours for how best to maximize the gains of this promising reframing lens.

In addition to these broad findings about how the public models an understanding of safety, these peer discourse sessions also evidenced several key ways that members of the American public think about the operations and parameters of the criminal justice system, both on its own terms and in relationship to a concern with safety. Across the peer discourse sessions, participants were quick to address the importance of law enforcement in affecting public safety. They were also partially attuned to the negative impacts of recidivism on communities and community safety. That said, the dominant model of the criminal justice system's impact on public safety was through policing, and this model was largely both positive and quantitative — the more police on the streets, the more safety a community will have.

Among the session participants' strongest critiques of the criminal justice system was that it is overloaded because it focuses too much effort and resources on crimes that do not present a threat to public safety, in particular low-level, nonviolent drug crimes. This critique of the system was grounded in a key cultural model identified by FrameWorks in the previous phase of research: a "violence threshold" model that clearly distinguishes between violent and nonviolent crime and calls for a differential response to them. Session participants used it to articulate a call for a recalibration of the system's priorities — with greater and more punitive focus on violent crime, and a less punitive approach to nonviolent drug crimes. While the call for increased punishment of violent crime can be deemed problematic, the broadly shared idea that the system currently devotes too much of its resources to targeting, sentencing and punishing nonviolent drug offenders, for example, suggests an important opening for communications efforts. Future research should explore whether and how to

invoke this threshold model in conjunction with efforts to challenge the policy and rhetoric of the "war on drugs," and to call for alternate approaches for addressing the challenges of drug use and addiction.

Post-Prime Findings

Each peer discourse session experimented with a series of primes that were presented to participants as a way to think and talk about public safety and criminal justice reform. These primes were also brought into the negotiation section, in which participants debated the merits and rationales for a number of progressive reform proposals. Analysis of these experimentation and negotiation sections revealed several findings that have important communications implications:

- The value *Prevention* has a positive effect in helping people reason about the necessity of reforming and addressing the operations and priorities of the criminal justice system. To the extent that Americans believe the current operations of the system do not effectively *prevent* crime and that changes could be made to bring the system into better alignment with this value, they seem quite open to supporting criminal justice reform. When presented with specific reform ideas — reduced sentencing for nonviolent crime, enhanced community policing, and a dedicated and developmentally sensitive juvenile justice system — participants rallied around the value of prevention as a way to *link* these policies together in the service of improving the system and reducing crime. This suggests that *Prevention* can serve as an important framing value for getting people to support reforms of *both* the adult and juvenile systems.

- The simplifying models *Air Traffic Control* and *Levelness* proved successful in getting people to think and talk about why the juvenile justice system needs to be separate from the adult system and better attuned to the developing brains and needs of children. In short, these models succeeded in getting people to think about children and development in a way that inoculated against the power of the otherwise dominant rational actor model, in which people are quick to attribute full responsibility to an agent for their actions. From a communications perspective, the language of *Air Traffic Control* and *Levelness* was both sticky and user-friendly. In several sessions, participants linked up these models to the value of *Prevention*, speaking to the individual and collective benefits of helping children and youth get on the right path early on to prevent criminal behavior down the road. On several occasions, this led to talk about the need to support schools and educational resources as key community institutions and places where children's development and brain functioning can be strengthened while reducing crime. This hints at a powerful

values/simplifying models synergy that should be explored in future communications research.

- The idea of "strengthening communities" proved very instrumental in conversations about how to improve public safety. Participants attributed primary responsibility for this strengthening to community members themselves, but readily embraced thinking about ways that the criminal justice system intersects with community strength and empowerment. Increased partnerships between police and communities were consistently supported across sessions, as were efforts to break the cycle of recidivism through reforms of the penal system. Participants also spoke to the links between community empowerment and safety, and local employment and educational opportunities, business development, mental health services and the like. Importantly, these public resources were connected directly to enhanced community integration and coherence in the process, suggesting that framing criminal justice reform efforts around a call for strengthened communities will find traction in public thinking, even as further research is required to evaluate how best to do so. A particular communications challenge here will be to move the public's focus away from strong individualist and "family bubble" models[20] that attribute responsibility to individual community members, toward thinking that connects community empowerment to government infrastructures.

- In line with this community focus, the simplifying model *Opportunity Grid* was frequently recruited as a way to talk about the need to build and strengthen relationships within communities. In the process, the meaning of the "grid" morphed from its original reference as a grid of resources and services, into a way to talk about networks of relationships. In other words, it was transformed from a way to think about an *unevenly distributed public infrastructure grid* to a way to talk about a *community-level social grid of relationships*. As such, it provided people with a way to talk about how, for example, police departments could, and should, be brought into the "grid" of community relationships and institutions. In its capacity to connect the well-being of communities to public institutions and resources, the *Opportunity Grid* model shows substantial promise. Likewise, in bringing focus to relationships, the model shows potential in opening a door to talking about race as part of a conversation about relationships among community actors and institutions. FrameWorks addresses the issue of race in these peer discourse sessions in Appendix C. Additional research is needed to explore how best to use this *grid* model, and develop others, that can effectively connect a promising emphasis on community integration with increased awareness of the importance of public infrastructure and ecological factors.

- A central problem identified by expert advocates is the increasing use of the criminal justice system as a proxy for both social services and social policy. Among the most

egregious examples is the use of the criminal justice system to address the country's lack of a coherent immigration policy, which has resulted in the increased criminalization of undocumented migration to the U.S. The earlier cultural models research for public safety showed this area to be a cognitive "hole" for much of the American public. Peer discourse sessions confirmed this finding. The topic did not emerge in any of the conversations about public safety or the operations of the criminal justice system, either pre-prime or post-prime. Notwithstanding this observation, there remains an opportunity to fill this cognitive hole and bring immigration reform into the criminal justice reform conversation. In fact, FrameWorks' previous research on immigration reform indeed outlines specific communications strategies and recommendations that emphasize notions of *fairness between places* and *opportunity for all* that may prove key for future prescriptive research efforts on public safety and criminal justice reform[21].

The analysis presented here suggests that there is just such an opportunity in communicating about criminal justice reform — leading with the value of prevention and employing simplifying models to concretize thinking about more specific aspects of the system that need to be reformed. To the degree that the values and simplifying models developed in subsequent phases of FrameWorks' research can demonstrate an ability to press the issue of differential impacts across communities, they can set up a conversation about the relationship of public safety to structural racism that takes advantage of the current shape of the discourse rather than fighting an uphill battle against it.

APPENDIX A: MORE ON PEER DISCOURSE SESSION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Peer discourse sessions observe the dominant cultural models participants naturally employ to understand an issue, as well as the "cues" or "primes" introduced by a trained moderator in small peer-group discussions.

Session Guide and Analysis

Based on the peer discourse session's three research objectives, the peer discourse guide was divided into three sections: Confirmation, Experimentation and Negotiation.

Section 1: Confirmation. The first exercise used a word-association task and open-ended discussions about factors influencing public safety, community safety, crime and the criminal justice system to confirm, amend and expand upon the findings from the cultural models interviews. Patterned ways of talking — what the literature refers to as social discourses[22] — were identified and analyzed across the six groups in order to reveal tacit organizational assumptions, relationships, logical steps and connections that were commonly taken for granted. In short, analysis looked at patterns both in what was said (how things were related, explained and understood) and in what was not said (assumptions and taken-for-granted understandings). Anthropologists refer to these patterns of tacit understandings and assumptions that underlie and structure patterns in talk as "cultural models."

Section 2: Experimentation. In the second exercise, the moderator introduced primes that were written as news articles. The primes included values (*Prevention*, *Ingenuity* and *Responsible Management*) that were selected as potential reframing elements because of their success in earlier FrameWorks quantitative research on issues including government, health care and early child development. FrameWorks expected that the values would lead to more policy-productive and "public" thinking about how to reform the criminal justice system and promote public safety.

Because of a core reform concern with juvenile justice, the primes also included two simplifying models (*Air Traffic Control* and *Levelness*) that have proved successful in previous FrameWorks research on early child development. In addition, one simplifying model was tested that has proved effective in past FrameWorks research in structuring productive thinking about unequal patterns of public resource allocation (*Opportunity Grid).*

FrameWorks varied the order in which the primes were presented across the sessions, and discussions following each prime were analyzed for patterns across groups in how they shaped the specific direction of conversation.

The primes were also analyzed in relation to the following criteria:

- *User-friendliness/stickiness:* FrameWorks examines whether primes are "user-friendly" and "sticky" — if participants are able to use the language of the primes and if the ideas find their way into subsequent discussions. User-friendly and sticky primes are also more likely to appear in other areas of the peer discourse sessions, such as in the discussions of subsequent primes and during the final negotiation exercise.

- *Shifting away from the dominant models:* The success of a prime is also measured in its ability to "loosen the grip" or inoculate against the dominant unproductive cultural models and conversational patterns. FrameWorks examines whether, after being exposed to successful primes, group discussions are measurably different than both unprimed conversations and discussions following exposure to some of the less successful primes.

- *Float time:* Related to the ability to shift off of the dominant default patterns of thinking and talking, FrameWorks looks at "float time." Float time refers to the time from the introduction of the prime (when the moderator has finished reading the prompt), to the point at which the group conversation makes its inevitable way back to one of the dominant default discourses.

- *Filling gaps in understanding:* Successful primes are also relatively successful in filling what FrameWorks calls "gaps in understanding," or gaps between the ways that the public understands a concept and the way that experts and advocates do. FrameWorks measures this by referencing previous phases of the research that identified these gaps and analyzing whether discussions that follow the primes bring participant responses more in line with those of issue experts.

Section 3: Negotiation. In the third exercise, each nine-person session was broken into three groups of three participants. FrameWorks used small, handheld digital recorders to capture the discussions and negotiations within the small groups, as well as their presentations to the larger group session. Afterwards, FrameWorks researchers analyzed transcripts of both small group discussion and larger session presentations for patterns of argument, rationalization and negotiation within the small group sessions. In the analysis of the negotiation exercise, FrameWorks was interested in participants' patterns of talk and the

process of negotiation, as well as whether and how their active engagement in the exercise diffused the dominant models that structured earlier unprimed conversation about criminal justice issues.

APPENDIX B: DETAILED ANALYSIS OF EXPERIMENTATION EXERCISE WITH PRIMES

Pragmatism and Responsible Management

As Americans, when we identify a problem, it's our responsibility to figure out practical ways of fixing it. We know that we have problems with our criminal justice system — it is costly, doesn't have the right priorities, and often works to make communities less rather than more safe. Furthermore, the system relies on imprisonment as the solution for crimes large and small, and does not consider other effective and available alternatives. We know that there are more effective and responsible ways to manage our criminal justice system, and that workable and proven solutions are out there. As a nation, we need to do the right thing and adopt a can-do attitude to make our criminal justice system more consistent, more cost-effective, and better for communities. That is the responsible and practical thing to do.

This prime is a combination of two related values, both of which have shown success in previous FrameWorks reframing experiments in generating more policy-productive thinking about systems reform. More specifically, previous research has shown that, if used carefully, the *Responsible Management* prime can help the public better understand its role and connection to government and systems, as well as the government's role and responsibility in solving social problems. Likewise, the value of pragmatism has shown the capacity to shift thinking away from dominant narrow models of government as corrupt and inefficient, and instead encourage broader thinking about improved, practical approaches for policies and solutions.

Surprisingly, this prime had negative results across all peer discourse groups, immediately eliciting many unproductive discussions of government as: (1) corrupt (at both local and federal levels), (2) inefficient when it comes to the uniformity of punitive sentencing structures, and (3) wasteful in the funding and program management of community and state-level resources and services. More often than not, participants struggled with the utility of this prime, and argued that it was too vague or unrealistic to apply in the real world. As a result, participants immediately dismissed the tenets of the prime and defaulted to dominant discourses on government. In that respect, the prime was not user-friendly. Furthermore, after

this initial critique, the prime did not reemerge or in any way structure subsequent conversation.

Regardless of the group's racial composition, this prime was also ineffective in shifting conversations away from default dominant models. Once the prime was introduced, conversations quickly focused either on government's inability to better allocate funds to much-needed social programming, or its inability to better manage itself. In short, the float time for this prime was very short, and it was ineffective in filling the gaps in expert-public understanding.

> *Are they [government] going to implement them? No. They don't like change. They like the people they put in there and they're not going to try nothing. They think it's working and certain people must be getting them money and receiving the benefits. It's not going to change.*
>
> <div align="right">Mixed Race group (2), Baltimore</div>

> *You have your closing schools. You pull that money from schools, so how you going to help these underachievers. But yet the state and government is pulling money. You can't do both. You can't pull money and still try to improve it.*
>
> <div align="right">Mixed Race group (2), Baltimore</div>

Prevention (Pay Now or Pay More Later)

Lately there has been a lot of talk about how we can do a better job of preventing problems in our country before they occur. One example is with regard to public safety. We know that communities that have high rates of crime usually also have high rates of unemployment, underachieving schools that don't prepare students for success, and a lack of resources for community improvement. We know that if we strengthen communities we will improve public safety and prevent much crime from ever happening in the first place. When we postpone dealing with these problems, they get bigger and cost more to fix later on. So we can choose to either pay a little up front to prevent problems, or a lot more later once those problems have worsened. A preventative approach, focused on communities, will save our nation money in the long run, and improve the quality of life for all Americans.

Of the three value primes tested in this experiment, *Prevention* performed by far the best along all of the evaluative criteria, clearly striking a chord with an existing value orientation about addressing problems earlier rather than later, and preventing them from growing in scope in the process. Although this prime was more successful in shifting the conversation when compared to the other two value primes, *Prevention* float time was short-lived during the experimentation exercise.

For some of the groups, the conversation very quickly defaulted to negative models of government and its role and responsibility in the lives of citizens. Specifically, the "pay now or pay more later" tenet of this prime led to talk about how the government spends money to support long-term programs and investments that are of limited effectiveness. Participants from the All White group and Mixed Race groups, in particular, asserted that the government has been ineffective in financing programs that make real changes for children and communities. Participants followed up such assertions with comments derived from moral development models, designating parents as solely responsible for keeping children out of trouble.

> *It sounds like things that have been done before — the head start program and all the government programs that they keep throwing money at these things. But I think what we talked about earlier, until you get to that mother, who's having children without a father. Until you drill all the way down there 'cause that's where you're going to make a real change. That's what you need to really focus on because that's where it starts and until you can get a handle on that I think it's just a hard problem to solve.*
>
> Mixed Race group (2), Baltimore

In instances where participants had already been exposed to either the *Air Traffic Control* or *Levelness* simplifying model, the *Prevention* prime was easily mapped on to the model and helped participants discuss prevention in terms of reducing crimes committed by juveniles. Participants were able to advocate for programs (i.e., after-school programs) and policies that would strengthen and protect the community while keeping children's minds active and bodies out of trouble.

> *You have to have the after-school programs, because you have your normal curriculum that everyone's learning. They also need to exercise their mind with art classes, soccer, volleyball, basketball, even work programs that teach kids who don't want to go to college, maybe they want to do work. If there's schools that can't afford it, the only way that you're going to get around it is tax dollars funding it.*
>
> Primarily Latino group (1), Los Angeles

In evaluating the utility of this value prime, using a simplifying model such as *Air Traffic Control* or *Levelness* may prove to be useful in connecting this value of prevention to a metaphor typically used to discuss children's development. The benefit of doing this may reveal how prevention is an approach to supporting more positive environmental factors that promote the healthy development of children, with positive consequences for public safety.

Ingenuity

As Americans, we have historically used our collective ingenuity to solve some of the most challenging national problems. Today, we are faced with another challenge — a criminal justice system that does not deal effectively with issues of public safety. We need to come together, embrace innovative ideas, and use our ingenuity to fix this problem. We can start by recognizing that not all crimes are created equal, and that the criminal justice system would be better to focus its resources on those crimes that represent the biggest threat to public safety. We should stop filling our prisons with nonviolent offenders. The time has come to put our ingenuity to work to make the criminal justice system

The *Ingenuity* prime was developed to "remind" participants that the United States has a rich history of creating coordinated systems and has the capacity to continue to develop new programs and policies to benefit the overall community. Yet, similar to the *Responsible Management* prime, the *Ingenuity* prime had limited results when presented in session groups. The prime struggled to shift conversations away from default cultural models, as participants toggled between the interrelationship of individual failings and systemic inefficiencies. Participants quickly defaulted to a dominant discourse about government inefficiencies or corruption. Unlike the *Prevention* prime, which did emerge consistently later on in conversations, the *Ingenuity* prime showed limited float time, quickly dropped out of conversation, and did not reemerge.

> *I think this is a good idea, but it kind of ignores ... the reality.*
>
> Mixed Race group (1), Baltimore

Once the *Ingenuity* prime was introduced, comments across peer discourse sessions quickly focused on a specific policy solution addressed in the prime, which argued that the criminal justice system should "focus its resources on those crimes that represent the biggest threat to public safety."

> *But when I look at the system, so much time, so much money, so much of prison space, so much of everything, and really concentrate on the crimes that are really hurtful — the armed robberies, the murders, the child abuse. It [reform] just might be more doable.*
>
> Mixed Race group (2), Baltimore

Interestingly, this focus on the system's need to redefine its focus and mission did not elicit lasting conversations that focused on innovation and policy solutions. Instead, the prime provided additional examples of the salience of the "violence threshold" in public thinking, as several group conversations shifted to the need to reduce punitive measures for nonviolent crimes, particularly for those arrested for marijuana use.

> *Equal punishment for the similar crimes, where nonviolent crimes do less, because there's no reason for low-level people who use it for personal use. Either that's more people in this country are locked up for drugs than for anything else, and the violent offenders who you read about in the paper when they make the paper several times, are out doing the same thing.*

> Mixed Race group (1), Baltimore

Opportunity Grid

In previous work on race, FrameWorks has had success with the prime *Opportunity Grid*, a simplifying model designed to emphasize the importance of people's equal access to a critical grid of resources, infrastructures and opportunities across place. The metaphor is intended to provide people with the idea of a grid as a critical piece of infrastructure to which individuals have either more or less access.

In terms of the model's user-friendliness, "stickiness" and float time, participants spent just a few minutes using it in the discussion but often found additional opportunities to invoke the "*grid*" later in their conversations. The prime's ability to shift the conversation away from dominant cultural models was also observed. Instead of focusing on government corruption or individual responsibility, participant discussions centered on ensuring how communities can effectively "plug in" to resources.

Participants from some groups used the metaphor of the grid to emphasize fairness and equality across communities, which helped avoid conversations that blamed individuals for their personal failures.

Some people believe that now is a great time to address public safety by working to increase the way that opportunity flows through the grid of American institutions. By working on the grid, we can increase access to critical services and develop the infrastructure that neighborhoods need to support their residents. Working on the grid would mean, for example, ensuring that neighborhoods have access to mental health services, developing better employment services that train people and help them find jobs, and making sure that communities have schools that provide quality education. Some areas of the country have a strong connection to these services and are able to plug into the grid with relative ease — other areas are not plugged in and are truly off the grid. Making sure communities have strong connections to this opportunity grid is one way to increase public safety.

And also more of a dispersed and equal funding, no matter if you're in Englewood, Compton or Burbank. And I think it should be treated like a grid flat out, like a flat rate of funding.

Primarily Latino group (2), Los Angeles

They need to revamp hiring policies … human resource departments need to be brought in and say, you can help affect public safety by changing your hiring practices. Some folks have isolated situations where maybe they've gotten in trouble. There are some really skilled folks that can contribute to your company. Get them to consider getting away from that … we don't care to work with convicted or not convicted … and it could be the best person for the job. So, that part of the policy of hiring has to change to make something like this be most effective for supporting public safety.

<div align="right">All African American group, Tampa</div>

On the other hand, for participants in the All White group and one of the Primarily Latino groups, *Opportunity Grid* evoked a "government is irresponsible" sentiment that held that the government (and its representatives) should not be responsible for distributing and managing resources or services to communities. In fact, some participants commented that government should be blamed for supporting the dependence of its citizens, as opposed to supporting individual efforts for pulling oneself up by one's own bootstraps.

Providing these services [on the grid] doesn't necessarily mean they're going to use that opportunity.

<div align="right">All White group, Tampa</div>

In some instances, participants specifically pointed to individual communities that currently operate on a *Grid* and to those that do not. In the example below, participants acknowledged that the suburbs and gateway communities of Los Angeles County have different access to resources and infrastructures. In an interesting but subtle way, participants bring race and class into the discussion. Los Angeles, Southgate and Bell communities have populations that are almost 90 percent Latino and working class, whereas Santa Monica has a population that is approximately 78 percent white and middle income. Here, the naming of specific communities with specific characteristics, which are well understood by their peers, becomes the proxy for a more overt discussion of racial and class differences.

I know Santa Monica is a neighborhood that does that, okay? Maybe Los Angeles does not. Maybe Southgate does not, and maybe Bell does not, but I know that there are some cities that do this successfully.

<div align="right">Primarily Latino group (1), Los Angeles</div>

Notably, the discussion about the merits of a well-resourced grid sometimes led to talk about creating infrastructure in the grid devoted to children and youth:

> *For juvenile crime, if they [juveniles] had access to a Boys and Girls Club [and it] was open up until 11:00 at night, maybe the juvenile crime rate would go down because they have something else to do.*

<div align="right">

All White group, Tampa

</div>

During the later Negotiation exercise, *Opportunity Grid* was frequently recruited as a way to talk about the need to build and strengthen relationships within communities. In the process, the meaning of the "grid" morphed from its original reference as a grid of resources and services, into a way to talk about networks of relationships. In the process, it was rendered less helpful in structuring consideration of public investment and resources, even as it did provide people a way to talk about the importance of strengthening community relationships and institutions.

Air Traffic Control

The *Air Traffic Control* prime was effective along all four criteria of evaluation: user-friendliness, float time, filling in gaps or holes, and shifting conversations. It was very user-friendly and had a notable and lengthy float time. Perhaps its most important function was in filling a cognitive "hole" in public thinking — the general lack of top-of-mind attention to juvenile justice issues and the related inability to appreciate why we might need to create a system that attends to the specific needs of children

> *The mental skills and abilities that a child develops play a huge role later in life. For example, the abilities to focus, pay attention and ignore distractions are key. These skills begin to develop in early childhood, where they require lots of practice and support, but aren't fully developed and operational until the mid 20s. These abilities are like air traffic control at a busy airport, where lots of things have to be coordinated. Some planes have to land and others have to take off, but there's only so much room on the ground and in the air. The human brain also has a mechanism for controlling its mental airspace. It's called executive function. This mechanism enables our brains to create mental priorities and watch over the flow of information so they can focus on tasks and make good decisions. We need to make sure that our systems recognize that these air traffic control systems are still developing in youth and make sure that communities give young people practice and support in using these skills.*

and youth. The model facilitated participants' understanding of the importance of child mental health, children's specific developmental needs, and the importance of having policies and programming that recognize these differences.

> *I feel children can be criminals just like adults can be criminals, but because we know that children aren't completely developed until they're in their 20s, we need to give them some compassion, we need to teach them other things. I feel the juvenile system should be a giant after school-program for these kids. They need to find their way, they need to find their niche, and they need to find their place.*
>
> Primarily Latino group (2), Los Angeles

> *As large as the adult system is, we're screwing up a lot. Evidently we're not curtailing anyone and we're adding people to the problem as he or she matures and grows. If they're in the juvenile system, nine times out of ten they're going to go to jail in the adult system. Then there are some who they just never get caught but get caught when*

they're older. So I mean we're missing the boat. And it starts in the juvenile justice system. If you want to make any real headway.

<div align="right">Mixed Race group (2), Baltimore</div>

The juvenile justice system needs to be aware that kids' brains aren't the same as adults so they need to be treated differently when they're being sentenced, or going through court or something.

<div align="right">Primarily Latino group (2), Los Angeles</div>

For some peer discourse groups, when the prime emphasized the importance of strengthening executive functioning, conversations specifically mentioned the role of education, schools and other community-level institutions facilitating this development.

Pinellas County had the highest dropout rate in the nation for African American males. Right here in our backyard. This was just announced, what, like six months ago. This wasn't a local [NPR] — it was a national, and they were talking about this. I was shocked. I had no idea Pinellas County's rates were that high, and we're spending too much government money on building prisons when we need to be building better schools, equipping these kids at a early age. If they are challenged more earlier, then we won't be sending them to prison, period. I think the biggest issue is education. I had this conversation with several people, and no, the "drugs" isn't the big issue. I say, "education" is our biggest issue, especially in our community. It's education.

<div align="right">All African American group, Tampa</div>

While *Air Traffic Control* was relatively effective in shifting the conversation away from dominant cultural models, it was only short-term. For many of the groups, the conversation eventually defaulted back to home-based or family-focused developmental models, in which parents were assigned near-exclusive responsibility for ensuring the proper development of children's brains and mental well-being.

Actually, the biggest thing to me, it belongs on the parents.

<div align="right">Primarily Latino group (1), Los Angeles</div>

Levelness

Like the *Air Traffic Control* model, *Levelness* was also effective in drawing attention to the specific cognitive and developmental needs of children. The prime provided participants with a sticky and user-friendly language to talk about the need for a separate juvenile justice system that is attuned to the brain-development needs of children.

Notably, the *Levelness* model did not always shift conversations toward ecological thinking about the impact of children's environments on development. Rather, conversations would focus on family and/or the home environment as the key place where a culture of crime is learned and that moral development happens, as in this first response to a reading of the prime.

> *A child's mental health develops early on and plays a huge role in their ability to function later in life. One way to think about children's mental health is to compare it to a table or another piece of furniture. When it's level, the table can be used and is able to do its job. In the same way, a child's mental health affects how they socialize, how they learn, and whether or not they realize their potential. When a table is not level, it doesn't function well and needs to be adjusted. Just like a child's mental health, a table can be leveled by working on the piece of furniture itself, by focusing on the floor that it rests on, or both. Some kids' brains develop on floors that are level, but others develop on sloped or slanted floors. As a person grows up, the little wobbles from instability early on tend to grow bigger. To develop the levelness they will need to function as*

I agree with that … You take a kid that's verbally abused, physically abused from the time he's 2 or 3 until he's 10; it's only a matter of time until he picks up those same habits, you know, as he gets older … and verbally abuses people, physically abuses a girlfriend or a wife, or his own kids when they get older. Because that's what they were taught.

<div align="right">

All White group, Tampa

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In other instances, the prime helped participants articulate how important environments are to children's brain development and functioning, and why a separate juvenile justice system should be established that is attuned to children's unique needs.

I like this analogy with the table. I think what the juvenile system does, when a child is in trouble at a young age, they're showing that they have a problem functioning in everyday society, as is. And so what's our solution? We throw them in a place with a bunch of people who have the same problem. So, instead of fixing that leg, we're taking another off. When you put a kid in jail for a year, you take him out of school, take him away from everyday normally functioning people, and you put them with a bunch of people like him. And then you put them back out in society, you've just really made that child worse and at that stage where they're really developing. I think the prison system works more for adults than it does for kids.

Mixed Race group (2), Baltimore

While the prime helped shift the conversation toward the importance of brain development, there were groups that tended to emphasize individualistic and "culture of crime" models of thinking that defaulted to blaming parents for the failings of their "delinquent" children. These participants often pushed back strongly against any argument in support of systems-structures by asserting that children's development "starts at home."

Let's say your house is all messed up, you go to school and get into trouble, and I don't know, this isn't putting enough responsibility on parenting.

Primarily Latino group (1), Los Angeles

Well, the person committing the crimes needs to want to stop. I actually knew a young man who was released from prison, he really wanted to settle down but he didn't know how to act in society. And he, on purpose, got out of his car at a stoplight with a knife, and went up to another car so that they would call the police to get him arrested and get him back in jail. And so, it's the criminal that has to make the decision to stop.

All White group, Tampa

Still, the prime *Levelness* shows promise. In helping the public understand children's sensitivity to environmental factors and their critical need for social and other supports, the simplifying model can serve to emphasize the need for a separate and well-supported juvenile justice system, one that addresses the distinct needs of children.

APPENDIX C: IN-DEPTH CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING RACE AND JUSTICE

It is notable that the value of justice was not an explicit topic in any of the sessions. In fact, there was very little talk among participants about whether the criminal "justice" system is in fact just, or whether and how it could be made more so. And yet, there were conversations about *fairness* — is it *fair* that a pizza-stealer goes to jail because it is his "third strike," or a pot-smoker who's only doing harm to himself goes to jail? Often, these conversations were set up by discussions about inefficiencies in the system and their impacts on public safety. In short, conversations framed around ways to improve the efficiency of the system to prevent crime opened up cognitive and discursive room for considerations of fairness and justice. This raises an important point that is articulated in the earlier cultural models research — that there are indirect ways of communicating that can powerfully direct the public's thinking toward these concerns and open up and broaden their thinking about policy reforms.[23]

It is also notable that these sessions rarely *explicitly* engaged the topic of race, or spoke to the clear expert opinion that our current criminal justice system is imbued with a deep racial bias that fundamentally compromises the integrity and justice of the system. It was an open question going into the sessions whether participants would themselves directly address the topic of race in their critique of the system. What is clear from analysis of the sessions is that, with a few brief exceptions, they did not — at least not explicitly in the conversation among themselves. That said, it was clear that race as a topic was often just under the surface of the conversation, and that the language of class and location (references to "poorer neighborhoods in the city" or contrasts between place names, e.g. Beverly Hills vs. South Central L.A.) was used as a way to talk about how the criminal justice system often engages people of color, especially if they are poor, in a different way than whites. These discussions were more pronounced in both of the Los Angeles sessions, as well as the All African American session, but they also were part of the other session discussions.

The subtle implicitness of race in participants' discussions to explain unfair punitive treatments shows the extent to which standards of acceptable public discourse in America have been structured to exclude a discussion of systemic racism. As such, it could be said that race represents not so much a cognitive "hole" as a cultural and discursive one. The challenge, then, from a communications perspective, is whether and how to address this deeply entrenched discursive avoidance pattern, and what the cognitive results of any such strategy might be in terms of shifting patterns of thought and talk among the American public.

Previous FrameWorks research on race has shown that communications that lead with the topic of race are often counterproductive in terms of shifting patterns of thinking among the American public. It is worth quoting at length from a recent FrameWorks report on race to summarize these findings:

> *In particular, we have found that white Americans, in the main, reject the idea that racism plays a significant part in determining life chances for minorities in general, and African Americans in particular. The prevailing view is that racism is an historical artifact that has been outlawed by a series of legislative policies which ensure that individual acts of racism are effectively redressed. In fact, many groups have begun to argue that those policies need to be dismantled because they constitute reverse discrimination and actually advantage African Americans over other groups. From this perspective, it is easy to understand the consistent pattern of findings that emerge from our qualitative work — whites shut down when the conversation begins with a discussion of American racism.*

> *As a result, FrameWorks has devoted a considerable number of both qualitative and quantitative studies to finding alternative ways to communicate about race that mitigate the public's instinctive reactions to racism as a supposition for policy action. In that respect, we have found that priming people with fundamental, widely consensual American values such as Opportunity for all, Ingenuity and Prevention can lead to higher levels of support for race-targeted public policies and programs. The logic of this approach is found in the notion that Americans do indeed honor core ideas about the openness of the society, its opportunity structure, and its capacity to meet and solve even the thorniest of problems. … [W]e have found that leading communications with broadly shared values has a greater impact on enhancing public support for race-based policies than does leading with a direct statement about race or racism.*[24]

ENDNOTES

[1] See Bunton, A., Kendall-Taylor, N., & Lindland, E. (2011). *Caning, context and class: Mapping the gaps between expert and public understandings of public safety*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

[2] Simplifying models are the metaphors or analogies people often use to process and assimilate all the new information they constantly take in. These metaphors allow people to create mental maps to grasp the meaning of concepts, including abstract or complex ideas. Oftentimes, these metaphors are drawn from the physical world and allow people to create images in their minds and map them onto nonphysical things. Understanding the simplifying models or metaphors people use to describe a phenomenon and why they use those metaphors points to their motives and can shed some light on why people decide on specific courses of action. See also: Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press; and Collins, A. & Gentner, D. (1987). How people construct mental models.. In D. C. Holland & N. Quinn (Eds.), *Cultural models in language and thought* (pp. 241-265). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

[3] Gilliam, F., & Manuel, T. (2009). *The illogic of literalness: Narrative lessons in the presentation of race policies.* Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Davey, L. (2009). *Strategies for framing racial disparities: A FrameWorks Institute Message Brief*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

[6] See Heath, C., & Heath, D. (2007). *Made to stick: Why some ideas survive and others die*. New York, NY: Random House. Drawing extensively on psychosocial studies on memory, emotion and motivation, the Heath brothers define the concept of "stickiness" as the art of making ideas unforgettable. Ideas that are understood and made memorable, or "sticky," have a lasting impact powerful enough to change people's opinions and behaviors.

[7] Gilliam, F. (2010). *Framing immigration reform. A FrameWorks Message Memo*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute. In this Message Memo, FrameWorks found common traps in public thinking about immigration that were likely to conjure up illegal immigration and the importance of securing borders through more stringent immigration and criminal justice reform. In addition, findings also pointed to the ineffectiveness of citing racism as a way to build public will for progressive reforms, because it emphasizes assessments of "otherness." Hence, this interesting intersection between immigration and criminal justice reform in the treatment of undocumented immigrants, for example, provided the platform for FrameWorks to highlight communications strategies that will help restructure the public conversation, emphasizing the need to overcome inequalities and address fairness and opportunity.

[8] Kendall-Taylor, N. (2011). *"Anyone can do it … Wake up, rise up and motivate yourself": Mapping the gaps between expert and public understandings of resilience and developmental outcomes*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

[9] See Bunton, A., Kendall-Taylor, N., & Lindland, E. (2011). *Caning, context and class: Mapping the gaps between expert and public understandings of public safety*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

[10] Gilliam, F. (2008). *The explicitness of framing race: A FrameWorks Message Memo.* Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

[11] See Bunton, A., Kendall-Taylor, N., & Lindland, E. (2011). *Caning, context and class: Mapping the gaps between expert and public understandings of public safety*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

[12] O'Neil, M. (2010). *Changing addiction from a "sin problem": Peer discourse sessions on addiction in Alberta.* Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

[13] The FrameWorks Institute. (2004). *Mind and monolith: Findings from cognitive interviews about government.* Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

[14] Gilliam, F. & Manuel, T. (2009). *The illogic of literalness: Narrative lessons in the presentation of race policies*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

[15] See Heath, C., & Heath, D. (2007). *Made to stick: Why some ideas survive and others die.* New York, NY: Random House.

[16] See Bunton, A., Kendall-Taylor, N., & Lindland, E. (2011). *Caning, context and class: Mapping the gaps between expert and public understandings of public safety*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

[17] Ibid.

[18] For examples of this type of efficacy shift, see Kendall-Taylor, N., & O'Neil, M. (2009). *Having our say: Getting priority, transparency, and agency into the public discourse on budgets and taxes*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

[19] O'Neil, M. (2009). *Destiny or destructive environments: How peer discourse sessions toggle between child mental health and child mental illness*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Gilliam, F. (2010). *Framing immigration reform: A FrameWorks Message Memo.* Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

[22] See, for example: Schiffrin, D., Tannen, D., & Hamilton, H.E. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of discourse analysis*. Oxford, England: Blackwell; Stubbs, M. (1983). *Discourse analysis: The sociolinguistic analysis of natural language*. Oxford, England: Blackwell; and Quinn, N. (Ed.). (2005). *Finding culture in talk: A collection of methods*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

[23] See Bunton, A., Kendall-Taylor, N., & Lindland, E. (2011). *Caning, context and class: Mapping the gaps between expert and public understandings of public safety*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

[24] Gilliam, F., & Manuel, T. (2009). *The illogic of literalness: Narrative lessons in the presentation of race policies*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.