

Framing Racial Equity in Adolescence

Messaging Recommendations for Advocates and Communicators

Making the Case: Why Connect Adolescence and Racial Equity?

- Adolescence shapes who we become as adults. Providing equitable systems and supports for young people is critical for their healthy development and their ability to contribute to a stronger social fabric.
- Adolescents are exploring their place in the world and are primed for civic engagement. They are key partners in dismantling racism.
- Public policies intended to address racial inequities often fail to consider the needs of young people.

How to Use these Messaging Recommendations

The purpose of this document is to equip advocates and communicators working in the youth space with more effective shared messaging that can build understanding, change attitudes, and raise support for policies around adolescence and racial inequities.

We recognize and expect that advocates will continue to rely on their own angles of emphasis and language in pursuing their respective agendas. This document offers elastic framing strategies that communicators can embed in their messaging.

We are eager to hear any feedback that can strengthen how we communicate about these issues as a field. To read the full research brief, and for more examples of how to use these strategies, visit www.frameworksinstitute.org.

Message Strategy Checklist

- ✓ Be thorough and specific
- ✓ Spotlight Experiences
- ✓ Connect to powerful values

Recommendations

Be Thorough and Specific

1. Define and explain equity, inequity, and equitable solutions immediately and repeatedly

Tip: Regularly define, explain, and give examples of terms like “equity,” “inequity,” and “equitable solutions,” and explain how equity is different from equality.

2. Don’t talk about disparities without naming their causes

Tip: Explain “how it happens” before talking about “who” it happens to. Signpost cause-and-effect relationships by using words and phrases like “because” or “as a result.”

Tip: Situate data within a broader narrative that explains why inequities among youth exist and persist.

3. Explain racism as embedded within both interpersonal experiences and systems

Tip: Give clear examples of how racism is built into our institutions, social norms, systems, and policies.

Tip: Help people connect the dots by offering a sequence of ideas that clearly links the underlying causes of problems and their visible symptoms (Cause > Example Consequence > Solution).

For definitions and more information about racism and its impact on adolescents, check out The National Scientific Council on Adolescence report, [The Intersection of Anti-Black Racism and Adolescent Development](#).

Spotlight Experiences

4. Talk about supporting parents, don't just tell parents what to do

Tip: Highlight the need for supports for families to avoid stigmatizing parents and build understanding about how racial inequities affect parenting. For an example social media post, [click here](#).

5. Amplify the voices of youth of color

Tip: Include direct youth voices whenever possible in communications about racial equity in adolescence. For an example social media post, [click here](#).

Tip: Don't assume race means the same thing to all adolescents within a racial group.

Connect to Powerful Values

6. “Opportunity for all” is a powerful value for talking about equity in adolescence

Why: Research shows that talking about how all adolescents should have the opportunity to reach their full potential increases people's understanding of the need for more equitable systems and policies.

Try this

- Collective responsibility
- Role of environmental factors

Instead of

- Concepts related to individualism
- Individual success

7. Use the “Community Connections” value

Why: Using the value of Community Connections—the idea that supporting adolescents enables them to serve their communities—establishes that racial equity matters because it's an important social issue.

Try this

- Community benefits
- Referring to “we” or “our”

Instead of

- Focusing on deficits
- Using “they” or “them”

8. Connect youth civic engagement and anti-racist advocacy with development of identity and agency

Why: Young people have long been at the forefront of positive social change, and focusing on youth civic engagement, service, and activism can help refute negative stereotypes about adolescents.

Try this

- Multiple future benefits for adolescents and their communities
- Show (not just tell) by giving examples or relating a story

Instead of

- Focusing on single-group benefits without tying them to our collective wellbeing
- Presenting young people of color as responsible for battling racist, adult-led systems

REMEMBER: Telling the full story of adolescence is critical.

Feel free to use the definition below in your communications.

Adolescence—from about 10 years old to our early 20s—is a monumental period of learning, growth, and exploration when we discover, learn from, and adapt to the world around us. It's a time of opportunity for figuring out who we are and who we want to be as we become more independent and develop relationships beyond our immediate family and community. Adolescents need support, resources, and space to try new things and tackle new challenges to promote their positive development.

About FrameWorks

The FrameWorks Institute is a nonprofit think tank that advances the mission-driven sector's capacity to frame the public discourse about social and scientific issues. The organization's signature approach, Strategic Frame Analysis®, offers empirical guidance on what to say, how to say it, and what to leave unsaid. FrameWorks designs, conducts, and publishes multi-method, multidisciplinary framing research to prepare experts and advocates to expand their constituencies, to build public will, and to further public understanding. To make sure this research drives social change, FrameWorks supports partners in reframing, through strategic consultation, campaign design, FrameChecks®, toolkits, online courses, and in-depth learning engagements known as FrameLabs. In 2015, FrameWorks was named one of nine organizations worldwide to receive the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

Learn more at www.frameworksinstitute.org

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