

The background features a dark blue gradient with three large, overlapping circles. Each circle contains several concentric rings of varying line styles, including solid and dotted lines, creating a complex, layered visual effect.

Framing in Legal Services Advocacy

What Is Framing?

- “Long standing research in social and cognitive sciences demonstrate that people understand all issues in terms of a small set of internalized concepts and values, also known as frames, that allow us to accord meaning to unfolding events and new information.”

Institute

Dr. Franklin D. Gilliam FrameWorks

How Do Frames Work?

- Frames are mental cues that suggest how a person should think about a subject.
- They are triggered by language choices, tone, visuals, values or the messenger.
- Frames are shortcuts that lead us to a conclusion that we might not otherwise reach with more careful reflection.
- Our dominant frames are created and reinforced by the media.
- We all use frames.

Know Your Audience

- We all have language in our communities that bind us and make us who we are. This language may not play well with clients or the public.
- Advocates may wish to activate common frames in support of a client's case, or.
- You may wish to re frame the discussion when dealing with the public or policy makers.

How Have Frames Been Used in American History

- We are very talented at explaining away and justifying inequity.
- We do this to resolve the conflicts between our moral/ethical commitments and the way things are.

How Have Frames Been Used in American History

- Every moment in American History evinces vast disparities of wealth, power, and privilege among groups identified by salient characteristics such as race and gender.
- Instead of perceiving those inequalities as conflicting with American ideals, groups with power have justified and legitimized those disparities with an arsenal of arguments, assumptions, and stereotypes.

Common Frames Used to Justify Inequity in America

- God frame
- Nature frame
- Choice frame/Personal Responsibility

Common American Frames

- Anyone in America can rise from rags to riches.
- Individualism and Innovation: Americans have the frontier spirit building cities with nothing but the sweat of one's brow.
- America is a meritocracy where personal responsibility is a sure path to success.
- Americans play by the rules and pay their dues.
- America is a land of equality.

How People Understand Race Today

- We have overcome.
- Racism is caused by a few bad people.
- The self made person.
- Different communities have different fates.
We are not one.

How People Understand Race Today

Americans Should be Colorblind.

- We must achieve a “colorblind society”, a social order where race is irrelevant.
- To succeed in achieving racial harmony, race must disappear from public discussion. It is divisive.
- One must uncouple individual behavior from group identification.
- Individuals who succeed or fail, do so as individuals and not as members of a group.

Negative Consequences of the Dominant Race Frame

- People believe we have made tremendous progress on matters of race thus no more action is needed.
- To the extent that racism persists, it is in the hearts and minds of “bad” people who unfortunately pass it on to their children.
- Dramatic changes in laws and politics have leveled the playing field so no new laws or politics can change this.

Negative Consequences of the Dominant Race Frame

- Until minorities choose to adopt mainstream values there is little that can be done to improve their situation.
- Race relations will improve if we become colorblind in our language so race conscious programs will not help.
- People must take responsibility for their actions and not blame racism.

The Framing Graveyard

Frames That Do Not Work.

- Diversity as strength
- Prevention – *The Miner's Canary*
- White privilege

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Frames That Tested Well

Opportunity for All

- Americans consistently support the value of opportunity for all when couched in terms of things that prevent *all people* from realizing a better life.
- People are willing to acknowledge that the system falls down. To the extent that the problem is with structure, they believe it should be fixed.

Framing Example

Opportunity for All

- America is the land of opportunity but the reality is that some children do not have the same opportunities for success. Frequently, schools in minority neighborhoods have less funding and fewer qualified teachers. We must see that all children have access to quality education, qualified teachers and safe schools or they will have little hope for a better life. We can make the American Dream a reality for everyone if we address these problems together.

Successful Frame

“American Ingenuity”

- Americans are “Problem Solvers”.
- Americans are creative in their choices of solutions.
- When presented with solutions, we act.

Framing Example

American Ingenuity

- In the future, Americans will continue to make significant progress in solving problems because when we work together we can do anything. Effective solutions that extend opportunity to all people exist. People didn't fix problems like polio through sheer will. It took coordination, planning and programs. We have solutions; it is time to make it a priority.

Framing Rules

Certain Principles apply no matter which frame you choose.

- Solutions First.
- Controlling the “We”.

Example of Solutions First Frame

Only by supporting inclusive growth policies can America achieve its dream of equality for all by fixing the broken system of land use planning that segregates people into communities without access to safe neighborhoods, good schools, safe affordable housing and healthy foods.

Successful Framing

Controlling the “We”

- *I share with all Virginians a deep disgust for what we witnessed in our state today. Whatever your feelings about race, I don't think there's a decent, God-fearing Virginian who believes that publicly ridiculing a young man for the color of his skin is anything short of morally repugnant. In ridiculing Mr. Sidarth today, and “welcoming him to America”, Mr. Allen wasn't just attacking a fellow child of God or a fellow American.*

Successful Framing Controlling the “We”

He was attacking a fellow Virginian. In this country, and in this state, we don't care where your ancestors came from. If your born in Fairfax Virginia , where this young man was born, you're just as much an American as the Senator and you don't need him to welcome you here. Mr. Allen has disgraced himself and disgraced the state. Welcome to American Senator.

A Reframing Structure

Definitions

- What are Values.
 - Equality, Community, Opportunity, Economic prosperity for all.
- What are Issues.
 - Unemployment, Affordable Housing, Public Education, Jobs, Immigration.
- What are Solutions.
 - Affirmative Action, CRA Inclusive Communities, Amnesty, Access to fresh food.

Rules for Effective Communication

- Lead with Values.
- Signal Solutions early on.
- Control the “We.”
- When discussing race try the opportunity or ingenuity frames.

Acknowledgments

- FrameWorks Institute – Architecture of a New Racial Discourse.
- The Opportunity Agenda – *American Opportunity. A Communications Toolkit.*
- Dr. Drew Westin, *The Political Brain.*
- Jon Hanson, Harvard Consortium on Law and Mind Science.
- George Lakoff, *don't think of an elephant.*