On Culture: Do Americans still believe we live in a meritocracy?

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Friends and partners,

It's 2024, and we're starting the year off by launching the Culture Change Project's new monthly blog series! As part of the *On Culture* newsletter, in addition to new research reports and framing tools, you'll have access to monthly blog posts where I'll share updates from our culture tracking research, emerging findings, framing recommendations, and connections between mindsets and current events. Let's get started!

2024 is a presidential election year and we're already seeing the effects of the upcoming election on our public discourse. When it comes to the economy, we've seen louder criticism *and* praise of "Bidenomics," as well as a general dissatisfaction with economic performance despite cooling inflation, expanding GDP, and decades-low unemployment.

At FrameWorks, our Culture Change Project team is particularly interested in if and how the surround-sound of our election discourse is affecting how Americans think about the economy. Are there ways we can contribute to this discourse that *activate* productive mindsets while sending more unproductive ones to the background?

In this month's *On Culture* blog post, I dig into some of the deep-seated cultural mindsets that dominate Americans' thinking about the economy—particularly, how people think about financial success. (Do people think we live in a meritocracy after all?) I also share some new data that suggests that previously-dominant patterns in thinking about the economy might be changing in promising ways.

READ THE BLOG POST

As we go forward, we'll continue to dig into these trends and update

you on what we find. In the meantime, we invite you to share the blog post (and this newsletter!) with friends and colleagues who might be interested in following the research and learning how fundamental American mindsets are (and aren't) changing. As the election discourse inevitably continues to ramp up, we're looking forward to staying in conversation about deep patterns in thinking—and what they can tell us about effective communications.

In partnership,



Clara Blustein Lindholm
Director of Research Interpretation, Culture Change Project

UP NEXT

REVISITING MINDSETS AROUND GENDER: In the next couple months we will be digging into new data to follow up on our previous research into how Americans think about gender. Stay tuned for a deeper dive into how mindsets around gender are changing and intersecting with thinking about other issues.

CLAIMING THE SYSTEM-IS-RIGGED NARRATIVE: How can we communicate about our political and economic systems being rigged in ways that fuel action, *without* activating fatalist, racist, or xenophobic thinking about who the system is rigged against? This spring we'll share findings from a series of experimental studies on how to effectively talk about "the system." Stay tuned!

NEW FROM FRAMEWORKS

DEMOCRACY IN THE UNITED STATES: In December, we released a new research report on how Americans are thinking about democracy and the US political system. The report covers mindsets related to democracy, government, and the Constitution, and identifies a set of strategic opportunities and potential challenges for those working to strengthen our democratic system. We also released a quick-start guide that can be used to foster more productive dialogue about democracy and build understanding of *what democracy is* and how we can improve it.

CHECK OUT THE QUICK-START GUIDE

COMMUNICATING ABOUT HUNGER AND POVERTY: We recently published a strategic framing guide to help advocates change the conversation around hunger and poverty. The resource includes framing recommendations for helping people better understand the root causes of these experiences and making it clear that structural change is possible. Our research shows that a social justice-informed communications strategy is crucial to catalyzing collective action to end hunger and poverty in the United States.

LEARN MORE

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT: Our 2023 Annual Impact Report includes highlights and a resource library from our past year of work, along with stories of long-term framing collaborations that led to meaningful policy and practice change. #FrameOn

READ THE IMPACT REPORT

SPOTLIGHT ON CULTURE CHANGERS

WORKING PAPER: This new working paper from the Early Childhood Scientific Council on Equity and the Environment exemplifies effective solutions framing. The paper explores the impact of extreme heat on early childhood development and life-long health, and is accompanied by an Action Guide for Policy. The latter includes strategies for mitigating negative impacts and features examples of ongoing progress in the field.

LEARN MORE

SHORT FILM: A team from the Philadelphia Center for Gun Violence Reporting (PCGVR) and the Logan Center for Urban Investigative Reporting at Temple University recently spoke at the Crime Coverage Summit to discuss more effective ways of framing of gun violence, along with their new documentary, *The Second Trauma*. The film is designed to help inform and improve journalistic practice when it comes to reporting on gun violence and trauma.

READ ABOUT THE SUMMIT

CHECK OUT THE DOCUMENTARY



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