On Culture: Disrupting the Anti-'Woke' Discourse

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Friends and partners,

In a previous *On Culture* newsletter we asked you about the framing research that would be most helpful to you and your work. The answer was clear: *"How can we combat anti-'woke' discourse?"*

Over the last few years we've seen the emergence of a rhetorical strategy in which some groups and politicians label any conversation about race, gender, or equity as "woke." Many see this as a racist, transphobic, and reactionary dog whistle. Various bills, such as Florida's "Stop WOKE" Act, explicitly use the term in legislation that

restricts training and education about race and gender.

This past fall, we held a series of focus groups to explore the effectiveness of potential framing strategies—all of which are currently being used by progressive advocates and organizers—to counter these attempts to advance harmful policies.

Of all the framing strategies we tested, appealing to the idea of ***freedom*** was the most effective. Across the political spectrum, a message that emphasized ***freedom*** (such as the freedom to be speak our minds and express ourselves) helped people see anti-woke messages and legislation as harmful and contrary to core American ideals.

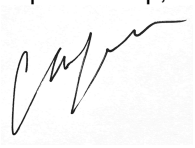
Interestingly, earlier this month, parts of Florida's "Stop WOKE" Act were blocked by the United States Court of Appeals for violating First Amendment rights. According to the ruling: *"By limiting its restrictions to a list of ideas designated as offensive, the Act targets speech based on its content. And by barring only speech that endorses any of those ideas, it penalizes certain viewpoints—the greatest First Amendment sin."*

If anti-woke legislation continues to be labeled as contrary to freedom in the courts—and by the newsrooms covering their rulings—our research suggests that this could help people understand anti-woke appeals as harmful, especially if advocates and organizers amplify this framing in our own communications.

In this month's blog post, I walk through the research we conducted and show you how framing with freedom can be used to push against anti-woke discourse and legislation.

READ THIS MONTH'S BLOG POST

In partnership,



Clara Blustein Lindholm
Director of Research Interpretation, Culture Change Project

If you are interested in a presentation for your organization or team about the ways our culture is shifting, new trends in cultural mindsets, and implications for your communications, please let us know using the link below!

REQUEST AN ENGAGEMENT

UP NEXT!

SHIFTING MINDSETS ABOUT WORK AND LABOR | Amidst the aftermath of the pandemic, a rise in remote work, an increase in public support for unions, and an influx in policies designed to create jobs and address inflation, there's *a lot* happening in our public discourse about work and labor. Next month, we're sharing the first set of findings from a multi-year study on how Americans are thinking about work.

A NEW NARRATIVE FOR TALKING ABOUT KIDS | We often hear that children are our future; that "it takes a village;" that investing in children is a moral and economic imperative. And yet, we invest remarkably little in our nation's kids and families. This spring, we'll be sharing new research-based framing strategies to build broad support for systemic solutions to advance the wellbeing of our nation's children and families.

TALKING ABOUT RIGGED SYSTEMS | We have been testing different framing strategies to activate the "system-is-rigged" mindset in ways that facilitate productive critiques of power and generate support for policies that address inequity (rather than inspiring fatalism). We're excited to share the results in the next few months!

NEW FROM FRAMEWORKS

UPCOMING EVENT | This Thursday, March 28, the FrameWorks Institute is joining United Way of Greater Cincinnati for a conversation about what social science can tell us about moving mindsets. Dr. Julie Sweetland will discuss how framing shapes social movements, social campaigns, and

ultimately how it can be a powerful driver of systemic social change.

REGISTER HERE

BRIEF: REFRAMING HOW WE TALK ABOUT OPPORTUNITY YOUTH | Our new resource, "Connections and Communities: Reframing How We Talk About Opportunity Youth," addresses the challenges we face when talking about young people—particularly those who are neither working nor in school. The brief also provides recommendations for moving the narrative in a more positive direction.

EXPLORE THE RECOMMENDATIONS

SPOTLIGHT ON CULTURE CHANGERS

REGISTRATION OPEN FOR 2024 "MOVEMENT TO REFRAME AGING" SUMMIT | The National Center to Reframe Aging is preparing for its 2024 Summit: *The Movement to Reframe Aging* on April 10th, 2024. The event is set to feature timely conversations about revolutionizing our communications and actions around aging. FrameWorks Senior Vice President of Research Interpretation, Moira O'Neil, will join Nancy LeaMond from AARP to discuss "Ageism's Political Footprint: Voters, Candidates, and Policies." FrameWorks CEO, Nat Kendall-Taylor, will deliver a keynote addressing the "Importance of Culture Change Movements."

NEW ARTICLE ON SYSTEMIC TRAUMA | Our friends at the Collective Change Lab recently published a new article about healing systems in Stanford Social Innovation Review. The piece addresses some of the characteristics of systemic trauma, its role in contributing to social systems, and the steps we can take in pursuit of collective healing and transformative systems change.



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FrameWorks Institute
1333 H St NW Suite 700 West
Washington, DC 20005

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