On Culture: AI, Authoritarianism, and America's Future

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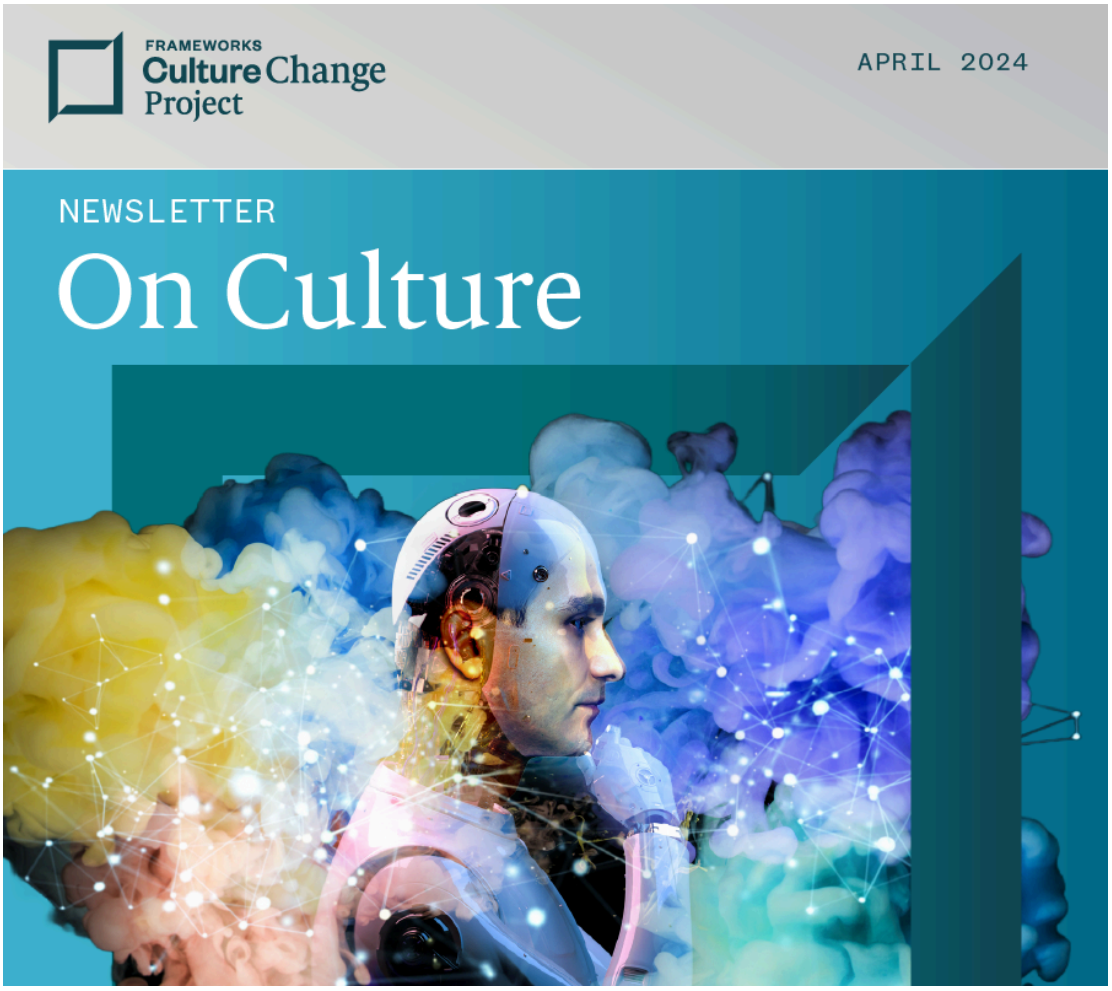

Friends and partners,

There's no shortage of fear about the future of America. But what do people picture when asked what could go *right?* The answer surprised me.

In January, we asked focus group participants to paint us an optimistic picture of what could happen in the United States between now and 2050. One theme that emerged clearly was that someone—or something—will come along to "save us" and fix our society. In this month's blog post, I explore two patterns that emerged from our

analysis of these focus groups.

READ THE BLOG

First, participants tended to envision a future where **artificial intelligence (AI) solves our problems.** In this version of America's future, people are hopeful about AI as an autonomous replacement for human beings that can fix the many issues facing America—a major departure from the fatalism and worries around AI that we've seen in previous research.

Second, people across political lines **suggested that a strong leader is crucial in uniting the country and healing our divisions.** This yearning for a single, strong leader is a manifestation of our cultural fixation on individuals as both the source of problems and font of solutions. It's also a worrying indication of the increasing threat of—and openness to—authoritarianism, especially because research has shown that people are more likely to turn to strongmen in periods of uncertainty.

These findings speak to a disturbing trend of people wishing to hand over decision-making power to an outside actor who can come in and fix everything. They also point to the need to be really explicit and explanatory when we talk about *what structural changes are needed* to get to a better future. When we leave the "how" open, our research suggests that people might fill it in with robots or strongmen.

We'll be monitoring this trend as part of our culture tracking research, and will continue to share new strategies to build support for change —including a comprehensive set of communication strategies for reframing the social implications of AI. Stay tuned for more!

In partnership,



Clara Blustein Lindholm
Director of Research Interpretation, Culture Change Project

POLL: FRAMING DURING AN ELECTION SEASON

It's hard to avoid getting lost in the political rhetoric of an election season. To help you navigate the challenges of communicating during this time, we're planning a video Q&A with our best insights on framing social issues during an election.

What questions do you have about framing your issues during an election season?

Let us know in the box below!

UP NEXT!

SHIFTING MINDSETS ABOUT WORK AND LABOR: COMING MAY 1!
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 launching the **WorkShift** project, including the first set of findings from a multi-year study on how Americans are thinking about work and labor.

A NEW NARRATIVE FOR TALKING ABOUT KIDS: COMING IN JUNE!
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 hesitate to make significant investments in our nation's kids and families and rarely prioritize their health and wellbeing. In June, we'll be sharing a new research-based framing strategy that builds broad support for systemic solutions to advance the wellbeing of our nation's children and families.

TALKING ABOUT RIGGED SYSTEMS
We have been testing 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

NEW ARTICLE ON THE FUTURE OF CARE: In honor of Care Workers Recognition Month, we recently released an article focused on reframing the conversations about care to build a better narrative about care work and care workers. The short read includes tips to help frame our communications in ways that build support for systemic changes—like better pay and working conditions for care workers—and make it clear that care is part of our collective social responsibility.

READ THE ARTICLE

NEW BRIEF ON FRAMING ADVERSITY, TRAUMA, AND RESILIENCE: This new resource is designed to help researchers, advocates, and practitioners tell clearer stories about adversity, trauma, and resilience. The brief includes framing guidance for advancing systems change on child abuse and neglect, family violence, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), early trauma, trauma-informed care, and toxic stress.

CHECK OUT THE BRIEF

SPOTLIGHT ON CULTURE CHANGERS

COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE | INNOVATIONS NETWORK: This exciting new resource from the team at Innovation Network includes important guidance for disrupting injustice through our communications. Although

designed with evaluators for the social sector in mind, the “Equitable Communications Guide” is a useful resource for folks across various fields aiming to center equity in their work.

ARTICLE | STANFORD CENTER ON EARLY CHILDHOOD: In her recent article, “From Program to Place: A Community Systems Approach to Supporting Young Children and Families,” Dr. Joan Lombardi describes the crucial role that community initiatives play in shaping early childhood development and lays out a framework for building more sustainable communities.

PODCAST EPISODE | SECOND NATURE STORIES: This new podcast from our friends at B4 Community Storytellers focuses on how to build storytelling habits to talk about early childhood development. In episode 1, FrameWorks Institute CEO, Nat Kendall-Taylor, joins podcast host, Penny Terry, to talk about how framing can shape the stories we tell everyday. Listen to learn how the choices we make—from the words we choose to the images we use—can help our audiences understand, engage with, and support actions and policies for promoting early learning and development.



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