On Culture: How to Talk about Rigged Systems

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Friends and partners,

A large majority of Americans think the system is rigged. For those of us who communicate about social issues, **the question isn't *whether*, but *how* to engage our audiences about rigged systems.**

SHOW ME THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Our research shows that the *System is Rigged* mindset is widely shared, and that people already draw on it to make sense of the world. But what "the system is rigged" means is highly contested, and the blanks get filled in differently. *(Who is rigging the system? How? For whose benefit?)*

These "blanks" are a critical site of contestation in US politics—this is where framing comes in. Whether we're talking about healthcare, race, the economy, or any other social issue, the way these blanks get filled in shapes the conclusions people draw about the causes of our country's problems and what we need to do to solve them.

Today, we're sharing two new resources to help you make sense of this cultural moment, contest problematic narratives, and craft communications about rigged systems that move people in the direction of justice.

Filling in the Blanks: Contesting What "the System is Rigged" Means

Over the past two years, we have conducted in-depth research to deepen our understanding of this mindset and to explore how progressives can best engage it. In this report, you will find a description of the mindset, the opportunities and dangers it poses, and why it can't be avoided. You'll also find an outline of how to lead productive, justice-centered conversations about rigged systems, including:

- appealing to values that center *collective power*;
- explaining *how* systems are rigged;
- effectively describing *solutions*;
- talking (or not talking) about *villains* in the story;
- describing *systemic racism* as a rigged system; and
- explaining the *government's* role in designing and redesigning the system.

SHOW ME THE REPORT

Talking about Rigged Systems: A Quick-Start Guide

This quick-start guide outlines the core framing elements that should be included in communications about rigged systems in order to channel thinking in productive directions. By "productive directions," we mean these framing elements have been shown to:

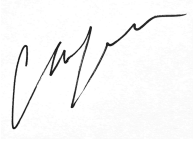
- increase collective efficacy (the idea that change is possible);
- decrease exclusionary attitudes (e.g., xenophobia and antisemitism);
- decrease authoritarian attitudes (e.g., support for a strongman); and/or
- build support for systems change and progressive policies.

TAKE ME TO THE GUIDE

In an era of authoritarian threats, high economic inequality, and a push to protect and strengthen historical power structures, thoughts and conversations about rigged systems will only become more frequent. **Those of us working for justice cannot and should not avoid engaging with this mindset.** Instead, we must engage in the contest over its meaning through careful framing.

If we work together to tell a true and compelling story about rigged systems—one that helps people see how power is actually exercised in U.S. society, in which ways, to whose benefit, and against whom—we can avoid ceding this important ground and help fuel the movement toward justice.

In partnership,



Clara Blustein Lindholm
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UP NEXT!

NEW RESOURCES ON IMMIGRATION | NEXT MONTH
After a flurry of federal actions, immigration is top-of-mind. Next month, we'll be sharing the first article in a multi-part series to help you navigate tough public conversations about immigration and counter anti-immigrant sentiment. If you'd like to be notified when new resources are available, you can sign up for immigration-related email updates here.

NEW VIDEO SERIES: MINDSETS AND MOVEMENTS | COMING SOON
In the next installment of *Fast Frames*, we're exploring three of the most dominant mindsets in American culture: *Individualism*, *Otherism*, and *Fatalism*. These mindsets often block efforts to build demand for more just and inclusive systems. In each episode, we'll take a look at what the mindset is, how it works, and how we can use our communications to open up more productive and expansive ways of thinking about solving social problems.

NEW FROM FRAMEWORKS

SHIFTING THE NARRATIVE ABOUT CHILDHOOD OBESITY
How we frame conversations about childhood obesity is central to advancing policies that support child health. This new report, *"Shifting the Narrative about Childhood Obesity,"* outlines how Americans currently think about the issue, along with framing strategies to shift away from highly individualistic ideas of who experiences obesity and why. The accompanying how-to guide features recommendations designed for public health practitioners, communicators, and advocates to build a new narrative around what it means for a child to be healthy.

READ THE REPORT

READ THE HOW-TO GUIDE

IMPACT STORY: HOW FRAMING SHAPED UNDERSTANDINGS OF

CHILD WELLBEING

Public perceptions of child wellbeing and abuse have evolved significantly over the past two decades, thanks to coordinated science, framing, and advocacy efforts. Twenty years ago, the public viewed child abuse as largely an issue of "bad parenting." Since then, the field has worked intentionally and collaboratively to shift the narrative, emphasizing the importance of positive childhood experiences (PCEs) and the role of societal factors in shaping child outcomes. This effort has led to a much broader public understanding of early childhood development and numerous policy wins for children and families.

READ THE STORY

SPOTLIGHT ON CULTURE CHANGERS

LETTER-WRITING CAMPAIGN FOR WELCOMING POLICIES | WELCOMING AMERICA

Our friends at Welcoming America are launching a letter-writing campaign to encourage policymakers to prioritize and support welcoming policies that help Americans flourish. In light of increasingly anti-immigrant policies, it's more important than ever that communicators champion inclusion, safety, and respect for all in our communities. Check out the campaign to learn more!

ADOLESCENTS NAVIGATING SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE ONLINE WORLD

On the UCLA Center for the Developing Adolescent podcast, "Adaptivity: The Science of Adolescence," Dr. Ron Dahl, Director of the Institute of Human Development at UC Berkeley, explores the science of adolescence and the ways it's often misunderstood. In the most recent episode, he is joined by former Youth Scientific Council Members, Dallas Tanner and Becker Chabaan, as they discuss the complexities of navigating the online world and suggestions for changing how we think about and regulate social media access for adolescents.

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