On Culture: Post-election Reflections

Mon, Nov 25, 2024 at 8:06 AM



Friends and partners,

Like many of you, we're still processing the election results, what they tell us about the state of the country, and what they mean for the work ahead. As we think about these questions, we're returning to the importance of cultural mindsets and how they help us make sense of the moment and figure out where to go from here.

Mindsets—the implicit assumptions and deep understandings that people use to make sense of the world—don't, on their own, explain election results. Doing so requires looking at tactical campaign decisions, how people responded to individual candidates, the

economic situation, incumbent-challenger dynamics, and many other issues. Yet mindsets *do* help us make sense of the broader cultural terrain on which elections, and other events, happen.

We've been studying mindsets for the last 25 years and formally tracking changes in cultural mindsets for the last four-and-a-half. Several trends from this work feel helpful in understanding the cultural moment and making sense of the recent election:

- The rise of *system is rigged* thinking is critical to understanding our populist moment. Across age, race, gender, political party, and income, people rely on this mindset to make sense of what's happening in society, using it to explain everything from economic hardship to immigration to healthcare. Whether and how candidates speak to this way of thinking has implications for whether people feel their concerns are addressed… or not.
- *Zero-sum* thinking, *otherism*, and *American exceptionalism* are fueling anti-immigrant sentiments and making people receptive to xenophobic articulations of the *system is rigged* mindset. (For example, that our economy is rigged to benefit immigrants at the expense of white, working class Americans.)
- The mindset that *gender is a fixed binary*—the assumption that everyone's gender is "man" or "woman" and is assigned at birth and unchangeable—is playing a foundational role in many people's responses to current events. We have more to learn about the role this mindset is playing, but it's clear that this assumption about gender was critical in the election.

Understanding mindsets can help us find direction in the long journey ahead. In the coming months, we will use research from the Culture Change Project to deepen our understanding of our current cultural inflection point and work with partners to find effective framing and narrative responses. Through this work, we hope to contribute to the long task of putting the country on cultural terrain in which more just political and social outcomes are possible.

In partnership,



Drew Volmert

Senior Vice President of Research

UP NEXT!

WEBINAR: HOW TO COUNTER PUBLIC HEALTH MYTHS AND ELEVATE SCIENCE NOW | Thursday, December 5th, 1:00 PM ET
Why have purveyors of health misinformation gained a foothold in American culture, and how can we push back? On December 5th, we're hosting a webinar featuring FrameWorks senior advisor, Dr. Julie Sweetland, and moderated by FrameWorks board member and director of the Population Health Institute at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Dr. Sheri Johnson. The conversation will explore the most important framing strategies for dampening disinformation, reducing polarization, rebuilding trust, and elevating science.

SIGN ME UP

HOW TO TALK ABOUT RIGGED SYSTEMS | JANUARY 2025
The idea that our systems are rigged by a powerful few to benefit themselves and hurt the rest of us is *highly dominant* in American culture. In January, we'll be sharing a full research report with recommendations for how to navigate this complicated and highly contested cultural terrain in ways that allow us to productively critique power while *avoiding* activating the mindset's fatalistic, xenophobic, and authoritarian directions.

NEW FROM FRAMEWORKS

NEW WEBSITE!
Last week we launched our new website, designed to more readily accommodate the needs of our users. The new site—built in collaboration with our longtime partners at Constructive—includes a more robust search function to make it easier to find what you're looking for; a framing fundamentals page for those who want to start with (or go back to) the essentials; and a new section highlighting what effective framing can accomplish in practice.

TAKE ME TO THE SITE

THE STATE OF AMERICAN CULTURE: 2023-2024

Last month, we released our annual research update from the Culture Change Project, highlighting the most important shifts and patterns we're seeing in American culture. The update includes findings that suggest growing support for transformational change, a cross-cutting critique of the status quo, and more.

SHOW ME THE UPDATE

PODCAST: FIGHTING FOR IMMIGRANT FAMILIES THROUGH FRAMING

In a recent episode of the Academic Pediatrics Podcast, FrameWorks senior advisor Dr. Julie Sweetland joined Dr. Lanre Falusi in a discussion of how framing can help inform advocacy for children in immigrant families. The episode features insights into avoiding polarization, the important role that pediatricians play in advancing health equity, putting forward an effective message, and more.

PLAY ME THE EPISODE

FRAMEWORKS IS HIRING: CHIEF OF STAFF

We are seeking a chief of staff who will help us design, lead, and implement organization-wide initiatives to ensure cross-departmental integration, efficient organizational functioning, and a strong organizational culture anchored in FrameWorks' core values of social justice, collaboration, innovation, impact, and a scientific approach. The chief of staff will be an integral part of our interdisciplinary (and fun!) team, and must be passionate about advancing narratives that promote social justice.

SHOW ME THE LISTING

SPOTLIGHT ON CULTURE CHANGERS

COMMUNICATIONS FOR COMMUNITY I STANFORD SOCIAL INNOVATION REVIEW (SSIR)

In an age of division, partisanship, and distrust, this article identifies practices that can help social impact organizations align our work with our values to build community and meet the moment. This piece is the latest in the *Communication in a New Era of Social Change* series from SSIR, presented in partnership with The Communications Network. The series will share stories, strategies, and lessons from forward-thinking foundations and nonprofits that have begun evolving the way they think and do communications.

'WE TIRE VERY QUICKLY OF BEING TOLD THAT EVERYTHING IS ON FIRE' I NEW YORK TIMES OPINION

In a recent New York Times piece, Jeneen Interlandi details the history of crisis messaging and public health. She discusses the mixed consequences of such framing—from temporary increases in public health funding to racist quarantines and vaccine hesitancy. Interlandi also incorporates advice from FrameWorks CEO Nat Kendall-Taylor to explain why crisis messaging doesn't work and the strategies that are more effective at inspiring action. Read the full piece to learn more!

JOB OPPORTUNITY I NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION

Our friends at the National Skills Coalition are hiring a Chief Development Officer (CDO) to drive the organization's growth and development strategies. By focusing on innovative fundraising, financial sustainability, and long-term relationship-building, the CDO will be integral to enhancing the NSC's impact. Take a look at the full job description for information on how to apply.



FRAMEWORKS Culture Change Project

follow on Instagram | follow on LinkedIn | subscribe to our YouTube channel

Copyright © 2024, All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:

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

unsubscribe from all emails | update subscription preferences