



Friends and partners,

Americans are increasingly concerned about political division. According to new national polls, worries about polarization have overtaken concerns about almost every other issue—from immigration to inflation to the state of democracy. It’s no wonder that everyone is calling for unity.

But what’s underneath those polling numbers? What kinds of thinking do calls for unity *really* activate?

## SHOW ME THE BLOG POST

Exploring the underlying mindsets that shape our thinking allows us to understand what “unity” really means to people. Our research reveals two competing mindsets:

1. **Unity through progress (forward-looking).** In this mindset, people see the need for us to come together to address injustice in order to move forward together as a country.
2. **Unity through restoration (backward-looking).** In this mindset, people see unity as a return to the way things “used to be,” when people imagine that we were a more united and less divided country.

**These two mindsets lead to dramatically different ways of thinking about the problem of division and how to solve it.** The way we frame this discussion and the narratives that we advance have significant implications for who is included and excluded in a “united” America.

In this month’s blog post I unpack these two very different notions of unity and what they mean for our communications. One thing our research makes clear: communicating effectively about unity and engaging this broadly-held goal is more complicated than vaguely gesturing to the importance of “unity.” If we aren’t careful, we may inadvertently activate a mindset that works directly against our goals of advancing justice.

In solidarity,



**Clara Blustein Lindholm**

## NOVEMBER BRIEFING: ASK US ANYTHING

This month, we’re doing something a little different. We’ve now held seven monthly briefings on how ongoing research can help us understand and navigate the public’s reactions to current threats to democracy. This month, we’d love to hear what’s top-of-mind for you as you communicate

about democracy, authoritarianism, the rule of law, the Constitution, and other issues.

Join us on **Wednesday, November 19 from 1–2pm ET** for an ask-us-anything session. You can submit questions when you register at the link below, and we'll also save time for a live Q&A.

[SIGN ME UP](#)

## NEW FROM FRAMEWORKS

### VIDEO SERIES: NARRATIVE KNOW-HOW

Narrative change is getting a lot of attention—but it's more than just a buzzword. Narrative change is a strategy for shifting culture, and we're unpacking it in our newest social media video series, *Narrative Know-How*. In this series, running through November, we're breaking down what narrative change strategy looks like, why it matters, and lessons from real-world narrative shift efforts. Follow us on Instagram or LinkedIn for new episodes!

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### NEW RESEARCH: FIVE TRENDS IN PUBLIC THINKING ABOUT THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is a current reality, and young children are among those most at risk. But the public doesn't often make this connection. To build demand for actions that protect young children from the adversities of climate change, we need to shift how people think about the ways these two issues are connected. In these new resources, produced with the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University and Harvard Chan C-CHANGE, we share findings about how Americans currently think—or don't—about the connections between climate change and early childhood development, and provide emerging recommendations for how to build

public understanding and concern about this relationship.

[SHOW ME THE REPORT](#)

[TAKE ME TO THE SUMMARY](#)

## UP NEXT!

### **FRAMING DIAPER NEED AS A SYSTEMIC ISSUE | THIS MONTH**

Nearly half of U.S. families with small children struggle to afford diapers. To help the public recognize diaper need as a systemic issue, we teamed up with the National Diaper Bank Network to release a new framing brief. Drawing on two years of research into how Americans think about diaper need, poverty, and social inequality, the brief highlights key cultural mindsets that shape public understanding of these issues and offers strategies to shift this thinking. It provides a framework for building a sense of collective responsibility and increasing support for solutions.

### **FRAMING THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF AI | COMING SOON**

Despite the increasing prominence of artificial intelligence in public life and discourse, there remains a lack of understanding about how AI works and what it means for our lives. By examining the implicit assumptions that shape thinking about AI, we will identify and share strategies for deepening understanding of AI technologies, the social implications of their use, and how they can be used on behalf of the public interest.

## SPOTLIGHT ON CULTURE CHANGERS

### **LIFE & DEATH IN *THE PITT* | NORMAN LEAR CENTER AT USC ANNENBERG**

The Norman Lear Center's Hollywood, Health & Society program has helped the entertainment industry tell better stories about health equity and systemic racism for years, recently consulting on the Emmy-winning

series, *The Pitt*. A recent study of the show found that its authentic portrayals validated the lived experiences of medical professionals and moved audiences to learn more about topics like organ donation and end-of-life care. This is a great example of how entertainment can move thinking and inspire action.

## **ONE CONCRETE WAY TO MAKE THE JUSTICE SYSTEM FAIRER | THE BAIL PROJECT**

This New York Times op-ed by David Gaspar, CEO of the Bail Project, explores how cash bail perpetuates inequality and destabilizes families. It clarifies recent executive orders, explains why bail reform is critical for public safety, and presents evidence showing that limiting or ending cash bail supports fairness and community stability.



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