Invisible Structures of Opportunity:

How Media Depictions of Race Trivialize Issues of Diversity and Disparity

A FrameWorks Research Report

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by

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Introduction

This analysis was supported by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to examine the ways in which race is presented to readers, directly and indirectly, in the nation's newspapers. More specifically, it analyzes media coverage of race in four issue areas: health care, education, early child development and employment. Identifying media frames is an important step in FrameWorks' empirical measurement of public thinking about race as it pertains to the issue areas mentioned above. This report lays out the dominant frames that are applied to race in these areas and demonstrates how these frames constrain public solutions.

The data for this report is drawn from major news articles during 2007 that covered issues relating to race in health care, education, early child development, and employment. Findings include a description of how race and racism are framed as a problem for each issue area, an analysis of the frames employed to explain *why* and *how* racial disparities persist in these areas, and finally an examination of the solutions promoted by the news media. For each section, the report includes a list of the dominant frames in the news and an explanation of their construction and nuances, with examples.

Summary of Findings

A number of important findings and implications resulted from this media review.

- Racism is primarily, if not exclusively, framed as an interpersonal dynamic typically enacted through blatant and overt discriminatory actions. What sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva calls "racism without racists"[1] or racism that is the result of policies or institutions that operate apart from the conscious intentions of individuals is generally absent from the news media's depiction of racism in healthcare, education, child development and employment. This does not mean that the media did not use terms such as institutional, structural or societal racism, but these terms were defined as the sum of all racist interactions and discriminatory practices between individuals within an institution. In the articles included in this analysis, there was very little attention given to racism as being larger than the sum of its individual articulations.

- Following the above point, in all of the issue areas, the news articles were dominated by anecdotes about individuals who were victims of or who enacted overt and blatant acts of racism, such as an employer parading around as a Klansmen at a company party. These stories provided clear and unambiguous accounts of how racism can exist in a number of institutions and were easy for a wide audience to identify as racist. However, the dominance of such stories reinforces the notion that racism is primarily about individual actions rather than embedded in social structures. Furthermore, overt and blatant acts of

[1] Silva, Eduardo (2006). *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United State, 2nd Edition*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

racism were framed as aberrant occurrences that were unfortunate, but did not effectively challenge the perception that the United States has largely transcended its racial past.

- Racism in the U.S. is defined primarily by relationships between black and white people and followed what previous FrameWorks research has described as the "separate fates" frame. However, in 2007 the news media further differentiated poor and working-class black people from the black middle-class and white America. Several news articles in 2007 concentrated on the idea that there are "two black Americas" and focused on the "values gap" between poor and affluent black communities. That is, the separate fates frame has taken on an explicit class dimension that separates poor black people from the rest of American society. It should be noted that white people living in poverty were not subjected to a similar type of differentiation.

- Health care, education and early childhood development disparities among immigrant groups—even non-white immigrant groups—were rarely framed as *racial* issues. In contrast, articles that covered race and employment framed immigration as an explicitly racial issue. These stories typically reported on competition for jobs between U.S. citizens and immigrant workers. The effect of the selective inclusion of immigrants and immigration as an explicitly racial issue was two-fold. First, in health care, education and early child development, it reinforced the conception that racism is primarily defined by the relationship between black and white people in the United States. Second, because immigration issues were framed as racial in employment contexts, it furthered ideas that achieving *racial* equality must come at the expense of another racial group.

- Individual beliefs, attitudes and mentalities were the most commonly cited explanation of why racial disparities exist in each issue area. In short, journalists employed what FrameWorks researchers have termed a "mentalist" perspective in which social problems are explained through reference to individual attitudes. This ranged from discussions of the "poor habits of mind" of black people that impeded their occupational success to the "unconscious bias" of doctors who treated people of color.

- The explanatory frames employed in the news media linked racial disparities to individual prejudices. As a result, the potential solutions proposed were primarily aimed at fixing pathological individuals. For example, the most common solution proposed to ameliorate racial inequality in health care, education and employment was to increase diversity and racial sensitivity courses for doctors, teachers, school administrators and employers, not to open opportunities to minorities in these fields. Furthermore, because articles typically centered on individual stories about racism in a certain context, solutions were often confined to a specific school, health care center or workplace, rather than more systemic solutions that address racial inequalities across institutional contexts.

- The materials that dealt with solutions often relied on images of dedicated and hardworking advocates who have to overcome "government bureaucracy" and anachronistic social policies. While these frames rightfully give credit to hardworking advocates, it prevents the public from imagining sustainable social policies and social structures that will ameliorate racial inequalities in health care, education, child development and employment for the long-term.

- There was an absence of sustained discussions of the mutual benefit of finding solutions for racial inequality for *all* Americans. While articles emphasized how improved access to healthcare or educational opportunities could benefit communities of color, the primary benefit ascribed for white people was that diversity added more "flavor" to their experiences. Furthermore, racial equity, particularly in educational and employment contexts was often described metaphorically as a "race" in which there are winners and losers. Without clear explanations of why finding solutions should matter to all Americans apart from "spicing" up their neighborhoods, it is unlikely that such frames will lead to widespread support for policies aimed at achieving racial justice and equity.

- Related to the above point, the articles included in the analysis were generally directed to two distinct audiences. Most articles were written to *explain* the persistence of racial disparities to an implied white audience. The remainder of the articles was written primarily by black authors and was constructed as a type of conversation within the black community about various impediments to black achievement. This bifurcation in targeted audience reinforced the "separates fates" frame. Furthermore, racism was framed as something that was of intellectual interest to white audiences, but the articles generally failed to present how ameliorating disparities would directly benefit their lives. Moreover, the articles published as conversations within the black community presented much more conservative accounts of why racial disparities exist. Mainstream media did not publish the equivalent conversations among progressive black commentators.

Methods

FrameWorks reviewed a total of 140 newspaper articles collected from newspapers in various parts of the country. Articles from January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007 were drawn from news sources in the following metropolitan areas: New York City, Washington, D.C, Boston, Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, San Francisco, and Seattle. These areas were selected to provide geographic diversity in the sample. New stories were drawn from *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post, The Washington Times, The Boston Globe*, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *The Chicago Sun-Times*, *The Denver Post*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Seattle Times*, among others.

The articles were drawn from four major issue areas: health care (40 articles), education (38 articles), early child development (24 articles), and employment (38 articles). They were identified by searching LexisNexis for the terms "racism," "racial inequality" and "racial disparities" with terms that identified each issue area such as "health" and "health care," "education" and "schools," and "employment" and "jobs." There were considerably fewer articles concerning race and early child development. Search terms were broadened to "infants/infancy," "babies," "pre-Kindergarten" and variations of development including "mental development" and "brain development."

Articles were selected that most directly addressed race in the specific issue area. For example, an article about race that only listed health inequalities as one of the myriad problems facing communities of color in the United States were excluded in favor of articles that focused primarily on racial inequities in health outcomes or health care. Because the analysis focused on the metaphors, explanatory frames, and solutions suggested to address racial inequality, lengthier articles that provided more in-depth analysis were chosen over shorter pieces. Book reviews and obituaries were excluded from the analysis.

This analysis is a qualitative examination of how topics related to race in each issue area are treated in the materials, and the likely implications for readers' thinking. The analysis looks at such factors as the types of topics that are and are not mentioned in a given article, the ways in which topics within a story are treated as either related or unrelated, the causal stories conveyed or implied by the articles, and so forth. The analysis is less about cataloguing what is explicitly said than it is about identifying the implicit understandings that are conveyed by the materials.

Much of the report is devoted to harmful patterns in the coverage of race and racism—i.e. ways in which the coverage is likely to create counterproductive understandings in the minds of readers. However and although limited, we also discuss pieces that avoid these traps, since these positive examples can help guide advocates (and responsible journalists) to identify ways of providing more constructive framing.

In what follows, we provide an in-depth cognitive analysis of media coverage of race in each issue area.

Racial Inequality in Health and Health Care

In 2007, the news media most often featured reports that discussed the disparities in health outcomes for people of different racial groups. The stories in this analysis often included statistics that showed the stark differences among racial groups in a wide variety of health indicators, including infant mortality rates, mortality and morbidity rates for cancers, heart disease and a host of other medical conditions and diseases. Although the sample size is too small to say anything conclusive, reporting on racial differences in *access* to care was less prevalent and tended to rely less on statistics than anecdotes that forcefully illustrated extreme differences in care.

Scholarly research that documents the vast disparities among racial groups by many measures of health outcomes is widely available. That people of color, often irrespective of class background, are in poorer health and receive substandard health care throughout the life course in comparison to their white counterparts was widely reported in 2007. Focusing on *how* newspapers discussed racial disparities in health care, however, reveals important ways in which race and racism are constructed in the media today. In this section, we analyze what was emphasized and what was missing in news reports regarding racial disparities in health care, how reporters attempted to explain the underlying causes of these disparities, how these causes were linked to popular understandings of racism, and the explicit and implicit solutions that were endorsed by the news media to address these disparities.

Framing Racial Disparities in Health

Analyzing which statistics are emphasized in news media reveals people's common understandings of what is meant by racial disparity. First, news reporting on racial difference in health outcomes was dominated by the division between white and black people, although there were regional differences such as reporting on health services for Native Americans in the Pacific Northwest. Furthermore, using the search terms "racism," "racial inequalities" and "racial disparities" captured only one article concerning health care disparities for immigrant populations, indicating that these disparities are not considered "racial." What the news media defines as "racial" disparities in health care is predominantly defined by the difference between black and white; differences in health and health care among other groups tends to fall outside of an explanatory frame that is based on race.

While news stories often included statistics evincing the disparities in health among racial groups, these were typically accompanied by stories about individuals. These narratives were dominated by crisis frames and often accompanied with images of "vulnerable" victims. The recent rise in the black infant mortality rate in several parts of the country received more media attention than other disparities, which fit dominant themes of crisis and vulnerability. For example, the following article covered the calls for expansion of public support for programs that addressed rising infant mortality rates.

> With infant mortality rates at its highest level since 1999, D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty and other leaders announced yesterday that they will expand social support programs for vulnerable mothers and children (Programs Aimed at Reducing

> District's Infant Mortality Rate," *The Washington Post*, December 20, 2007, Metro Section Pg. B01, by Susan Levine).

The "vulnerability" of mothers and children was framed as such to garner public support for social spending on such programs. In a similar vein, the following article concerning the gaps in availability for dental care for children of color began with the following anecdote.

> The death last month of Deamonte Driver, a 12-year old Prince George's county boy who succumbed to an infection that started in his tooth and spread to his brain, is drawing renewed attention to the barriers to oral health care facing the nation's poor—including those who live in or near Washington. Racial and socioeconomic disparities exist "in both the prevalence of oral health problems and…access to oral health care," said David Satcher, who as U.S. surgeon general oversaw the 2000 release of that office's first national report on oral health. Both race and socioeconomics played into Driver's plight: He was black, his family was homeless and his mother reported finding no dentist who would accept the family's Medicaid coverage ("Dental Care Challenge: Open Wider; Local Tragedy Spotlights For More Affordable Care and Public Education," *The Washington Post*, March 27, 2007, Health Section Pg. HE01, by January W. Payne).

Similar to "vulnerable children," victims of accidents, who suffered through no fault of their own, were also featured in the beginning of stories to demonstrate disparities in health care, as the following account demonstrates.

> At 4am, the ambulance rushed the driver in a single-car accident to the emergency room where I was the attending physician. The victim, a man in his late 20s had been knocked unconscious when his head slammed into the window. The paramedics handed me two-thirds of his scalp in a plastic bag. That sounds horrible, of course, but modern medicine can do a lot in such cases—if it has the chance. Our team worked to stabilize the patient and to save his scalp. Human tissue can die in just a few hours if it's come off from its blood supply. So to avoid a disfiguring injury, our patient would need the care of a specialist, who could reattach his scalp's blood vessels. Unfortunately my hospital didn't have such a surgeon; the closest one worked at a sibling hospital in a more affluent neighborhood 15 miles away ("I treat the patients Michael Moore Forgot," *The Washington Post*, July 1, 2007, Outlook Section Pg. B02, by Thomas L Fisher).

Later in the article, the author reported that his hospital was in a predominantly black neighborhood while the sibling hospital was in a predominantly white neighborhood. Like the child who died as a result of a tooth infection, the accident victim was unwittingly brought to the hospital with fewer services and was equally vulnerable to the whims of the health care system.

The consistent pairing of the "crisis" and "vulnerability" frames in news stories regarding race and health disparities will likely have important effects on how readers understand these problems. First, FrameWorks research has consistently shown how the "crisis frame" can be counterproductive to people's sense of efficacy in solving a social issue and can leave people with the impression that the problem is insurmountable. Second, while representations of

vulnerable victims may likely invoke sympathy in the reading public, they can be seen as unfortunate stories, rather than emblematic of larger problems in the U.S. health care system, particularly for people of color. The "crisis" and "vulnerability" frames isolate health disparities from other social and economic issues. Finally, "vulnerable" victims, such as children are often contrasted with people who wittingly or knowingly compromise their health. That is, the vulnerability frame reinforces notions that others are completely and wholly responsible for their individual health, a frame that was very much prevalent when journalists attempted to explain why racial disparities persist in health care contexts.

Explanatory Frames

While a small number of articles included in the sample simply documented that disparities exist, most journalists dedicated some portion of their stories to explaining *why* race is a determining factor for individual health and access to healthcare. Journalists presented a wide range of potential causes of racialized health disparities that included both individual level explanations such as "lifestyle" and limited mentions of systemic barriers to care. However, as we will further elaborate in this section, systemic issues that produce poor health, such as substandard living conditions, were typically framed as "social" issues that were analytically distinct from race or issues of racism. Racism was represented only as occurring within interpersonal interaction between individuals. Poor health outcomes that result from what many scholars of race call systemic or structural racism were framed as something quite distinct from racism. The conclusion that racism exists within a social system, at times without the conscious or even unconscious intention of individuals, was simply not reflected in the news media.

Given what social critics describe as the re-ascendancy of biological and genetic paradigms for understanding race,[2] it is not surprising that the news media focused on research that pointed to genetic differences to explain racial disparities in health outcomes. While scholars tend to discuss the relationship between a person's genetic makeup and environment as complex and multifaceted, genetics or environmental determinants of health were typically framed as an either/or causal issue. For example, this journalist drew on recent health research to explain the differences in breast cancer rates between white and black women.

> Some studies suggest that African Americans are generally predisposed to more aggressive forms of breast cancer. But the task force said the more likely explanation is that black women receiver fewer mammograms—and poorer quality mammograms. Also, blacks lack access to quality treatment ("Fighting Breast Cancer in black women Death rate here 68% higher than in Whites" *Chicago Sun Times*, News Section Pg. 28, Jim Ritter, October 18, 2007).

This excerpt gives social causes, such as lack of access to quality care, more explanatory weight. More often, however, biological and genetic research explaining differences in health outcomes and suggesting potential biologically based solutions was given more authority. For example, in another article about breast cancer rates, the journalist explained:

> For decades doctors assumed the lower survival rate was due primarily to societal issues –most importantly, that black women were less likely to have health

[2] See for example Duster, Troy, "Lessons from History: Why Race and Ethnicity Have Played A Major Role in Biomedical Research," in *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics,* Fall 2006.

> insurance, and therefore less likely to get mammograms that can spot early, highly treatable cancers. Health care access is still considered part of the problem. But in the past two or three years, research has focused on biological differences between the cancers that attack black women and white women. Black women are likely to get cancer at a younger age, and their tumors tend to be more aggressive and harder to treat. "There is certainly a lot of interest now to look at the genetics of breast cancer," said Esther John, an epidemiologist with the Northern California Cancer Center. "Maybe the genetic profile of African-American women that explains what's going on. But we need more research." ("Breast cancer mortality studied in black women," *The San Francisco Chronicle* May 18, 2007, Bay Area Section, Pg. B1, by Erin Allday).

While the journalist mentions that health care access is still considered part of the puzzle for explaining higher mortality rates among black women, it is clear that genetic differences are becoming ascendant not only in research communities, but in the news media as well. Another interesting piece of this excerpt is the way that race is reduced to a person's genetic profile, while other considerations are categorized as "societal issues" that are separate from race, a pattern that was repeated in the articles included for this analysis.

This pattern was most clearly evident in articles reporting on the impacts of racism on people's psychological and physical health. For example, this article in the *Boston Globe* examined new research about how racism can produce ill-health among people of color.

> Four years ago, researchers identified a surprising price for being a black woman in America. The study of 334 midlife women, published in the journal Health Psychology, examined links between different kinds of stress and risk factors for heart disease and stroke. Black women who pointed to racism as a source of stress in their lives, the researchers found, developed more plaque in their carotid arteries—an early sign of heart disease—than black women who didn't. The difference was small but important—making the report the first to link hardening arteries to racial discrimination ("How racism hurts-literally-Warning: exposure to racist remarks may cause strokes, heart attacks, or other serious health problems," *The Boston Globe*, July 15, 2007, Ideas Section, Pg. E1).

This article reported on the important finding that racism can have embodied effects for people of color. However, racism is defined quite narrowly in the article. The title suggests racist remarks are the source of harmful interactions; one of the research studies cited was one in which African-Americans whose blood pressure was monitored while exposed to images of a white store clerk using racial epithets. The author goes to great lengths to differentiate social and institutional factors from racism narrowly defined. The journalist continued:

> For decades, experts have agreed that racial disparities in health spring from pervasive social and institutional forces. The scientific literature has linked higher rates of death and disease in American blacks to such "social determinants" as residential segregation, environmental waste, joblessness, unsafe housing, targeted marketing of alcohol and cigarettes, and other inequities" (ibid).

As presented in this article, "societal determinants" such as housing segregation were not defined explicitly as a form of racism. Framed as such, notions of racism among the reading public will likely be limited to individual interactions, such as an unpleasant experience with a store clerk. Although perhaps not the intention of the author, racism in regards to health is defined primarily through individual interaction. Systemic inequities are invoked, but are not defined as racism but as outcomes of assumedly neutral "social determinants."

Many articles employed explanatory frames in what FrameWorks has identified as the "mentalist perspective," in which people's beliefs, perceptions, feelings and desires are the primary causal mechanisms that explain intentions and actions. This perspective is in contrast to the "materialist," in which the public can begin to think about other factors, apart from subjective inner states, that might lead to certain courses of action.[3] In articles concerning racial disparities and health, there were two primary modes by which the mentalist perspective was expressed. The first was that people of color suffered from poorer health than their white counterparts because they lacked "understanding" of healthy practices. For example, in the same article that reported the tragic story of Deamonte Driver who died as a result of a tooth infection, the journalist explained that some barriers to dental care for children of color included lack of transportation, childcare and English fluency. A few paragraphs later, the journalist wrote:

> On a recent Monday morning, the waiting room at Chevelry was about three-quarters full. Danya Gordon, a case manager, said one of the center's major issues is the lack of availability of the parents because of schedule conflicts. Nine-year-old Abdul Kamara of Chevelry was cavity-free in a dental checkup at the center early last week and returned a few days later to get a chip on the front tooth repaired. "You've been brushing very well," dentist Debony Hughes told him. Memunatu Kamara, the boy's mother, said the family learned about the clinic through another part of the health center. Hughes said the clinic's biggest challenge is to educate parents on the importance of dental care for children. "There needs to be more outreach," she said, "because if the parent does not know, then of course the child won't know" ("Dental Care Challenge: Open Wider; Local Tragedy Spotlights For More Affordable Care and Public Education" *The Washington Post*, March 27, 2007, Health Section, Pg. HE01, by January W. Payne).

This passages begins with the assertion that part of the problem is that parents are not available during dental appointments. By the end however, the problem is reframed and the biggest challenge, according to the messenger, is that parents do not know about proper dental hygiene. Framing the problem as a lack of knowledge completely obscures solutions that might address the underlying systemic problem: parents who work cannot accompany their children to the dentist. The solution offered in the article is to increase outreach and public education to parents, rather than extending office hours so that working parents could be available to attend their

[3] See Aubrun, Axel and Grady Joseph (2003). "Moving the Public Beyond Familiar Understandings of Early Childhood Development: Findings from Talkback Testing of Simplifying Models." Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute. http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/products/cl_shonkoff_sm_report.pdf

children's appointments.

In another article on health disparities in three Maryland counties, the author explains the problem as follows: "The increasing diversity of three of Maryland's largest counties is exacerbating already serious health disparities within communities, according to a new report." In this formulation, diversity causes disparities. The author continued:

> Much of the counties' growing diversity is because of immigrants from Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean and Africa. Together, the report notes, the immigrants bring "new challenges" to local health care because of a lack of understanding or fear of the system as well as language difficulties ("Diversity Tests Health Care in 3 Md. Counties," *The Washington Post*, December 1, 2007, Metro Section, pg. B01, by Susan Levine).

Similar to noting a lack of "understanding" of healthy practices among people of color, "culture" was invoked to explain why racial health disparities persist. Again, culture in the news media was cast in highly mentalist terms, as the sum of a racial group's motivations, attitudes and beliefs. For example, in one article titled "Black Destruction is Self-inflicted," the author argued that problems in black communities, such as high homicide rates and poor health, are primarily self-inflicted and woven into the culture of black communities. This article was framed as a kind of "wake-up call" directed to an implied black audience.

Previous FrameWorks research on public perceptions about race has shown that a dominant frame in American thinking is "separate fates," in which concerns of communities of color are separate and alien to those of the broader American society.[4] This frame, as previous FrameWorks has shown, makes it more difficult for people to connect differences in life chances to larger social structures. Similarly, the invocation of "culture" to explain differences in health outcomes undermines public understanding of other structural factors (such as economic inequality and discrimination based on race and immigration status) as important predictors of these differences.

The second mode of the mentalist perspective was invoked when journalists turned to health care providers to explain racial disparities in health care. In these articles, racism was represented primarily as something that occurs in people's minds. For example, one article cited "our tolerance for racism" as the root mechanism by which racial inequities in health outcomes and health care are perpetuated ("Report Exposes Harmful Racial Bias in Healthcare Delivery," *The Boston Globe*, August 16, 2007, Letters to the Editor Pg. A8). The use of the word "tolerance" in this article suggests that racial discrimination in health care is a conscious process. Most articles included in this analysis, however, suggested that racism was not only primarily a mental process, but that it most often occurred unconsciously and without knowledge of the person

[4] See FrameWorks Message Brief: Framing Race, http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/clients/message_brief_race.pdf

perpetuating such inequalities. Furthermore, unconscious racial bias was typically pitted against other explanations for disparate outcomes, rather than presented as a piece of the very complex ways that race impacts health and health care, as the following excerpt demonstrates.

> Some studies have shown…that diagnoses and treatments offered by physicians vary between racial groups, for diseases as dissimilar as heart disease and schizophrenia. But does this reflect physician bias, or the possibility that patients from different backgrounds present themselves differently? Could race be a marker for insurance status? A new study by researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital and other institutions affiliated with Harvard University provides some empirical evidence for the first time that when it comes to heart disease, bias is the central problem—bias so deeply internalized that people are sincerely unaware that they hold it ("The Color of Health Care: Diagnosing Bias in Doctors," *The Washington Post*, August 13, 2007, A-Section Pg. A03, by Shenkar Vedantam).

In fact, several articles narrowly defined racism as individual bias. Systemic racial inequities in health care were then considered the sum of all health care providers' unconscious biases. For example, in this article, the doctor acknowledged his bias when treating patients.

> At our hospital in Tennessee not long ago, I saw my picture on a hallway message board alongside those of other doctors in a display thanking us for our service. My Asian-Indian complexion set me apart—it's something that I am rarely conscious about in everyday life. It got me thinking: When I walk into the room, do my patients see me as a foreigner? Then I wondered: When I walk into a room, how do I see my patients? For the next few days I observed myself whenever I entered a hospital room to see a new patient. To my surprise, I realized that in the initial glance I viewed patients as an "elderly black man" or a "Hispanic worker"—and all the baggage that comes with their race, gender and ethnicity. My prejudices had kicked in ("How I learned to treat my bias," *The Washington Post*, April 15, 2007, Editorial Copy, Pg. B07, by Manoj Jain).

In this excerpt, racism and sexism are represented as "baggage" unconsciously carried by health care providers and even patients. There is no conception in this article that issues related to race and health care are the result of something larger than individual bias, or that racism can be perpetuated within the structure of a health care institution and need not be perpetuated by individuals, either consciously or unconsciously. All of the explanatory frames cited above failed to capture how institutionalized racism can impact health and access to health care. Not surprisingly, possible solutions typically addressed individual rather than systemic change.

Solutions

Most articles included in the analysis documented the existence of racial disparities in health care and attempted to explain the mechanisms by which such inequities were perpetuated. Very few articles, however, included either explicit or implicit solutions or steps that could be taken to ameliorate racial inequalities in health care. Potential solutions, if offered, rarely addressed systemic racism, nor did they propose large-scale policies. Because the articles frequently used a

mentalist perspective to explain the problem, mentalist solutions were also prominent. For example, the Indian-American doctor who confessed to his unconscious bias in treating patients explained how he thought such biases should be overcome.

> Once I became aware of how I thought when I encountered patients, I was able to start changing. Though I initially saw a patient as an elderly black woman, my forced reflection helped reduce the stereotype. As our conversation developed, the stereotype melted away. I began to see my patient rather than his or her social group. I hope that patients have done the same for me. I hope that they did not see me only as a brown foreigner but recognized me as a doctor keen to be a partner in their health care. As a society we can overcome prejudices in healthcare by facing our tendency to stereotype. Medicare and its contractors—quality improvement organizations—are training doctors in a "cultural competency" program in which they receive free educational credits and become aware of biases in care delivery and cultural perception of illness (I am taking the course) ("How I learned to treat my bias," *The Washington Post*, April 15, 2007, Editorial Copy Pg. B07, by Manoj Jain).

Again, the assumption in this passage is that racial disparities in health care exist as the result of the sum of all the stereotypes held by medical practitioners. The solution proposed is that health workers first acknowledge stereotypes and that the act of acknowledgement will "melt away" stereotypes once they are brought to consciousness. At a programmatic level, the author suggests that cultural sensitivity training will aid medical practitioners in achieving consciousness of their biases. This is fundamentally a mentalist perspective about solving racial inequalities in the U.S. health care system. While this may in fact contribute to improved health practices, the narrowing of solutions to this one recommendation limits any consideration of new policies or fundamental changes to systemic inequalities. Moreover, it limits the change required to the individual level, requiring only that actors in the system recognize that such abuses occur.

Solutions were also implicit in news articles that reported on ways in which health disparities in a given community were being addressed and in some cases overcome. These types of stories tended to highlight individuals who were represented as health "crusaders" working tirelessly against an unjust system. The following two excerpts are the beginning paragraphs of articles written to highlight the work of individuals who provided health services to underserved communities.

> Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and most inhumane." Decades later, at the Odessa Brown children's clinic, Dr. Ben Danielson is working to make sure that doesn't happen here, that Seattle children receive the best possible health care, no matter their financial or family situation. "Quality care with dignity" is the motto of the Central District clinic, where Danielson, 43, is medical director. The center has served mostly poor and uninsured children since 1970, now offering dental, mental health and medical service and special programs for children with sickle cell disease, asthma, school underachievement and obesity ("Health Care with Dignity Means Equal Access for All Children; Money plays no role for this doctor," *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, February 19, 2007, News Pg. A1, by Cherie Black).

> Although Boston has the best medical facilities in the country, it's a sorry truth that African-Americans and Hispanic Bostonians don't enjoy the same standard of health as do their white neighbors. For Barbara Ferrer, who took over as executive director of the Boston Public Health Commission this summer, fighting this disparity is her greatest challenge ("She took city job to bridge gaps in care," *The Boston Globe*, August 20, 2007, Health Science Section, Pg. C2, by Andrew Rimas).

"Crusader" stories often highlighted doctors or public officials who worked to end racial inequality in health care, but some articles also told very compelling stories of patients who were bringing awareness to health and racial disparities. For example, the *Washington Post* featured an article on environmental racism, which described the life and advocacy of Sheila Holt-Orsted. She and many of her family members suffered from a number of diseases caused by the dumping of trichloroethylene (TCE) in their water supply. The source that supplied water for neighboring white communities was cleaned up, while the water supplied to the small black community, including the Holt-Orsted household, contained toxic amounts of TCE.

> Her husband, Corey Orsted, 38 gave her "Erin Brokovich," the 2000 Oscar nominated movie about the busty and bodacious self-made environmental activist. The film offered some good pointers, except that Holt-Orsted, as a breast-cancer survivor, can't show off cleavage the way Brokovich did. "Mine's all scarred up," she says, "Looks like a railroad track." She is not as reticent as her father. He was more private, more old school proper, didn't want to publicly discuss his prostate cancer and his fears of how he got it. "I think when dad was first diagnosed, I was like, if it was me, I'd be shouting," Holt-Orsted says. And she started shouting ("A well of pain; Their water was poisoned by chemicals. Was their treatment poisoned by racism?" *The Washington Post*, March 20, 2007, Style Section Pg. C01, By Lynne Duke).

The three excerpts included above alert the public to the very important work done by individuals to address the fact that in the U.S., one's quality of health and quality of health care are very much determined by racial background. At the same time, the crusader frame makes it more difficult to imagine how policy solutions, and not only the hard work and determination of individuals, could ameliorate racial inequalities in health care. How, for example, might the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) enact and implement policies that effectively protect communities of color from environmental hazards? While the need for this change is implied in the above articles, it is not the journalists' central focus and therefore readers are likely left with a great admiration for these individuals, rather than a vision of what systemic change might look like.

Holt-Orted's story points to deeper problems that arise when people begin to imagine governmental policy as solving racial disparities in health. Namely, that the government has been directly linked to the perpetuation of such inequalities. As Holt-Orsted claimed, she and her family were "the wrong complexion for protection" by the government. After Hurricane Katrina, social policy is understandably and justifiably represented as the source of such inequities; imagining how the government could become involved in solutions is very difficult. Politicized government agencies such as the EPA or FEMA are framed as something to be overcome, not mobilized to protect communities of color.

Such representations of government policy were not limited to contemporary issues. While racism is often represented in the news media as a relic of the past, racial injustices perpetuated by the U.S. government were included in media analyses of racial disparities in health care. For example, the following article reported on the preference for people of color to seek more aggressive treatment during end of life medical care and discussed how historical events influenced people's health care decisions.

> "You may have a daughter who spent months fighting the system to get a mammogram for her mother. She's finally diagnosed with advanced breast cancer. Now they say nothing more can be done. You can see how her reaction may be, 'Oh, they're just trying to avoid caring for my mother just one more time,'" said Betty Ferrell a nurse and researcher at the City of Hope National Medical Center in suburban Los Angeles who studies palliative care. For some, this view may be intensified by distrust of the medical system stemming from historical maltreatment, such as the infamous Tuskegee syphilis study in Alabama, which denied black men treatment for the disease ("At the End of Life, A Racial Divide; Minorities are More Likely to Want Aggressive Care, Studies Show," *The Washington Post*, March 12, 2007, Section A Pg. A01, by Rob Stein).

In sum, solutions for the lack of access to quality healthcare and for the poor health outcomes of people of color were primarily framed in highly individualist terms. Government intervention was described as inept at best and inherently discriminatory at worst. Health care was the one issue area in this analysis in which the country's racial past was acknowledged to have real and lasting effects on the lives of Americans of color. Unfortunately for advocates seeking more systemic change to address racial disparities in health and health care, this has the likely effect of further reducing the public's support for government and political interventions.

Racial Inequality in Education

Newspapers articles on racial disparities in education covered all levels of schooling, from primary schools to postgraduate programs such as medical school. Two frames were dominant in these articles. First was the idea that education was a competitive race between racial groups in which there are winners and losers. The second is that racial disparities in education are defined by the "achievement gap," a notion that highlights individual performance rather than systemic inequities. These frames shaped the media's construction of the problem of race in education, organized the types of explanatory frames employed, and finally limited the kinds of solutions that could be imagined.

Framing Racial Disparities in Education

Newspaper articles provided very narrow conceptions of the purpose of education and why people should be concerned about disparities among students of different racial backgrounds. Education was primarily framed as a competitive race between members of a social group to attain financial gain. For example, this article reported the decline of enrollment of students of color to the University of California system after affirmative action was declared illegal in 1996. Students of color, the journalist notes, were losing in the "academic arms race."

> But in the early 1990s, the elite campuses began to pull back from their aggressive affirmative action policies, and in 1996, California voters passed the California Civil Rights Initiative, also known as Proposition 209. After that, race could no longer be a factor in government hiring or public-university admissions. The number of black students at both Berkeley and UCLA plummeted, and at UCLA the declines continued through the next decade. The reasons weren't entirely clear, but they seemed to include some combination of the admissions office taking Proposition 209 to heart and black students falling further behind in the academic arms race ("The New Affirmative Action" *The New York Times*, September 30, 2007, Magazine Pg. 76, by David Leonhardt).

In this passage, education is understood primarily as a competition with very high stakes; an "arms race" typically connotes a nation's participation in a competition that will somehow lead to the security of its people. Education is not framed as a social good and the metaphor does not underscore the benefits that accrue to all members of a society when the populace has access to education. In a race or competition, it is understandable that certain groups, in this case racial groups, will have to fall behind. The educational "arms race" also indicates that increasing educational opportunities for one group will mean that another will lose. Another article defined education as a "means of ascension."

> Education as a means of ascension has been held as a precious ideal by enlightened blacks throughout history in America ("The Lessons of Fat Albert" *The Boston Globe*, April 8, 2007, Magazine, by John Ridley).

This journalist was writing to the black community in support of comments made by Bill Cosby citing black students' indifference to education as the primary reason that black children were "failing" in the educational system. In this passage, education is framed as a way that a person

can lift oneself out of unequal circumstances, rather than changing the circumstances that lead to inequality. Second, education is framed as an ideal that can be achieved through a certain mindset or mentality; therefore "enlightened" blacks were able to realize the value of education as a means to overcome difficult social relations.

Unlike articles related to racial disparities and health care, the articles that covered educational disparities relied much more heavily on opinion poll research than other types of scholarly research related to race and education. Although this is a proposition to be tested with more quantitative research, the reliance on opinion research had important implications for the ways in which race and racism were constructed in educational contexts. For example, the following article reported on differences among racial groups for support of affirmative action:

> Last year, a Gallup poll found that a majority of white Americans, 53 percent, felt that people of color had equal job opportunities. Eighty-one percent of African-Americans and 62 percent of Latinos said they did not. In 2003, when Bush sided with white students who tried to kill affirmative action at the University of Michigan, he took up the side of ahistorical white Americans who want to wish away a half-century of turbulent progress after 3 ½ centuries of trenchant enforcement of slavery, segregation, and discrimination. Particularly telling was a USA Today/Gallup poll. When asked if affirmative action was ok for women in general, white Americans by a 55-to-38 percent margin favored it. But when the same question was asked in terms of people of color, white Americans, by a 49-to 44 percent margin opposed affirmative action ("Another era of willful white ignorance," *The Boston Globe*, July 4, 2007, Op-Ed Pg. A9, by Derrick Z. Jackson).

More than other areas included in this analysis, the nexus of educational policy and race was framed as much more dependent on public opinion rather than on educational research that demonstrated different kinds of disparities.

In fact, in the few instances in which journalists turned to scholarly research, there was a notable absence of a clear description of what is meant by "poor educational outcomes" for students of color. When articles included research on disparities in education, following popular terminology in the scholarly literature, journalists used the term "achievement gap" to describe differences in educational outcomes among students of different races, most often for disparities between white and black students. The following article, for example, reported on new measures that used socio-economic status, instead of race, as a way to integrate schools and ensure equal educational opportunity for all students.

> Experts of every political persuasion agree that the achievement gap—the disparity between white children and black children's educational achievement—is the biggest problem in American education. And just about every recent educational innovation, whether vouchers, the No Child Left Behind Act or school financing law suits, was designed with an eye to closing that gap ("Money, not Race, Is Fueling New Push to Bolster Schools," *The New York Times*, June 30, 2007, Section A, Column 0, National Desk Pg. 10, by Tamar Lewin and David M. Herszenhorn).

This passage exemplifies three major themes in media framing of racial disparities in education:

- First, as with health care, racial difference is constructed primarily in a black/white paradigm. When other groups are included, they are represented as gradations on the scale. And again, immigration is framed as something very different than a racial disparity, therefore obscuring some of the systemic issues that can explain lower levels of "educational achievement" among both Black and immigrant students.

- Second, the factors used to measure educational achievement are rather obscure. One article included differences in SAT scores among black and white high school students in a suburban neighborhood in the Washington D.C. area and another referred to differences in intelligence tests. Most of the articles included in this analysis framed the achievement gap as something that was assumed, a "given," and provided very little explanation as to the measures used in the scholarly literature to document that such a gap in fact exists. In the absence of concrete information as to how "educational achievement" is measured, the reader is left to create his or her own ideas about what it might entail. The word achievement connotes something that is attained through an individual's hard work and personal enterprise. As will be discussed in the following section, this obscurity of what "educational achievement" means leads to individualist explanations of *why* there are disparities between black and white children.

- Finally, policy solutions—such as the ones listed in the article—are aimed to fix individual students, rather than addressing larger, systemic issues.

Explanatory Frames

When President Lyndon B. Johnson signed legislation that federally mandated affirmative action, he discussed the "hundred unseen forces" that impact the chances for academic success by children of color. Such a complex view of the way in which racial inequality operates in educational contexts is difficult to see in contemporary media coverage.

As seen in the above section, racial disparities in education were primarily defined by the difference in "achievement" between white students and students of color. The primary explanatory frames employed in these stories, therefore, explored why individual students were not "achieving" academic success at the same rate as their peers. Journalists typically focused on individual students or their families to show readers why such disparities continue to exist. For example, one article cited "unprepared households" as the primary cause of racial disparities in school performance. Framing households as unprepared is congruent with what previous FrameWorks research has called the "family bubble" frame. The "family bubble" is a dominant assumption in the public's ideas about parenting that supports patterns of thinking that child rearing—and, importantly, responsibility for children's education—occurs primarily if not solely in the family while things that occur outside that family are irrelevant.

In news media concerning race and education, the "family bubble" frame was often employed in tandem with the "separate fates" frame. This was most clearly seen in news articles that pathologized poor and working-class black families. For example, the following article reported on Cosby's controversial speech and opinion polling conducted by the Pew Research Center that found that black respondents claimed that there was a "values gap" between middle and lower

class black people. Although critical of this frame, the author lays out how public thinking about the values gap leads to popular explanations of racial disparities in educational outcomes.

> Cosby and the recent Pew study are the latest in a long finger-wagging tradition of instructing poor blacks to lift themselves up by their bootstraps and reject pathologically "black" values. Today, rap culture is usually presented as Exhibit A, but strains of the same argument have cropped up for more than a century. If blacks would just get their act together, this old story goes, all the social inequalities between them and the rest of society would just disappear ("White may be Might, but It's Not Always Right" *The Washington Post*, December 9, 2007, Outlook Section pg. B03, by Khalil Muhammad).

Values are framed as something intrinsic to individuals or racial groups that are solely determined by internal, mental states. In this frame, poor black people only need to "get their act together" to ameliorate racial inequalities in schools. The idea that pathological "black" values were at the source of racial inequities in schools was reiterated repeatedly in the articles included in this analysis. Again, media attention in 2007 to Bill Cosby's controversial speech typically provided the platform for such frames, as the following two examples demonstrate.

> But the media gave disproportionate attention to the whining of the Old Schoolers and Victim Mongers—those who make a good living shilling to other blacks the snake oil of eternal scapegoating and low expectations—rather than giving full examination to the facts of which Cosby spoke: the need for blacks to refocus themselves on the fundamentals of learning ("The Lessons of Fat Albert," *The Boston Globe*, April 8, 2007, Magazine, by John Ridley).

> The community has the power to affect fatherlessness. But that has not persuaded every black adult to join Cosby in a crusade to educate, empower and free black youths from the chains that weigh them down. Many would rather stick to their belief that slavery and racism are to blame for every ill that affects black America. It is sad, because we are all missing a great moment to debate the role the black community must play for its children versus the role of the government, and how the two could act in synergy. There is a refusal by some blacks to acknowledge that some negative behaviors are due to personal choices, that they're not dictated upon us by some powerful evil spirit ("He's a Hero: Cosby is just telling blacks the truth" *The Denver Post*, October 23, 2007, Pg. B-07 by Pius Kamau).

The second passage's mocking usage of a "powerful unseen spirit" is reminiscent of Johnson's "unseen forces." Journalists' inability to frame systematic racial inequality as something concrete and connected to a social structure dismisses the systemic sources of racial inequality in education out of hand. Instead, the dominant frame in regards to race and education is that poor black people only need to "refocus" or "acknowledge" their negative behaviors and personal choices.

Another very common reason cited for differences in the "achievement gap" between black and white students was "low expectations" for black students' educational success. For example, the following articles described differences in educational outcomes, such as SAT scores, between white and black students in affluent, suburban areas.

> Stubborn disparities challenge educators everywhere, including those in affluent Washington suburbs, where overall high performance can overshadow lower achievement among some groups. The typical explanations that experts cite—including language barriers, poverty or uninvolved parents—often do not fully explain those gaps. Three years ago, a group of highly educated and professional African American parents in Ashburn realized that their middle-school-age sons could slip into under-achieving as they encountered low academic expectations in or out of school ("Lingering Academic Gap Riles NAACP; Loudoun Board Told More Efforts, Resources Needed," *The Washington Post*, November 6, 2007 Metro Section Pg. B01, by Michael Alison Chandler).
>
> The racial achievement gap at affluent schools goes mostly unnoticed by parents who seldom look beyond the high SAT averages. But it vexes black parents, who make the same sacrifices as their neighbors to buy homes in high performing school districts and have the same aspirations for their children. "I wanted my children to be in the school where the most people were focused toward higher education," said Pam Spearman whose son is a junior at Severna Park High. But Spearman said she and other black parents in the Annapolis area suburb have come to recognize "that our kids have issues at school because achievement is not necessarily expected of them by fellow students—black and white" ("Area Schools' Success Obscures Lingering Racial SAT gap," *The Washington Post*, September 10, 2007, A-Section Pg. A01, by Daniel de Vise).

Framing the problem of racial gaps in education as one of expectations again employs a mentalist perspective to the problem. Implied in this formulation is that students and the people surrounding them, such as peers and teachers, need only to change how they think about Black achievement and such gaps will begin to narrow. Again, the problem is framed as based in individual mentalities rather than embedded in larger social structures.

Racism was also cited as a reason why disparities in educational contexts persist. However, like the framing of racism in health care, racism was defined as individual and overt acts of discrimination. Descriptions of blatantly racist acts were frequently used in the articles included in this analysis. For example, the following article described the racial tensions in a school district after a parent used a racially insensitive term.

> "That colored boy." I don't know why La Jara physician Vaughn Jackson picked that description. He didn't return my call. Jackson's words while defending his son Trey against charges of racism surprised a lot of people I talked to Tuesday. "I've had that colored boy in my home," Jackson said of the teen son of an African-American high school basketball coach. If the southern Colorado town of La Jara needs a place to start mending an ugly racial rift, Dr. Jackson's phrase would be a fine place to start. Racial tensions led Centauri high school to postpone its prom and to close for a day for fear of violence ("A phrase stings a whole community," *The Denver Post,* May 16, 2007 Section Denver & the West pg. B01)

While reporters used the term "institutional racism," they typically defined it as the sum of individual acts of discrimination or "widespread discrimination" carried out by powerful people

within an institution. For example, this article covered the hiring of a new school superintendent in Seattle and the debates that emerged after it was suggested that the candidates be asked whether or not they had an understanding of institutional oppression.

> Compared to many other districts around the country, Seattle has staked out strong positions in its strategic plan, for instance, promises to dismantle institutional racism in the city's public schools. A district administrator is paid $102,086 to accomplish that task, though there are disagreements on the board whether widespread discrimination exists in classrooms and administrative offices. Navigating the sensitive waters of race has proved a tough go. Despite the district's bold goals, actions such as last year's debate over closing schools easily turned into crises fueled by charges that the board is insensitive to people of color ("Racism tough to tackle or even talk about for Seattle School Board" *The Seattle Times*, March 29, 2007, ROP zone, News page A1, by Alex Fryer).

Race and racism were described here as "sensitive waters" that must be navigated; institutional racism was defined as the inability of certain members to navigate race with sensitivity. Again, there is no conception that racism can exist apart from individuals who discriminate, who are racially insensitive or who make racist comments. Interestingly, none of the articles included in the analysis covered unconscious teacher bias in the same way that the media reported on biases among health care providers.

Some articles went as far as to argue that teachers and school administrators who focused on race were the *cause* of educational disparities. This is a "color-blind" frame that holds that even talking about racial disparities is in fact racist because Americans should not "see" race. This sentiment was expressed in an editorial published in the *Seattle Times*.

> As part of its well meaning quest to rid itself of racism, the Seattle School District has found a program it considers racially biased. Summer break. The ten week hiatus from school is institutionally racist, said the district's Equity and Race Relations director. That means it's something that "results in less access to services and opportunities of a society based on race." The premise is that summer break disrupts the school year, thereby deterring students of color from catching up academically. Now, you can see from my photo that I am as white as it gets so maybe this goes without saying, but I'll say it anyway: I don't get it. Wouldn't struggling white students benefit from more time in school, too? Can't students who need to catch up go to summer school now? If we want to extend the school year, then let's talk about that. What's skin color got to do with it? More importantly, how will declaring that summer break is racist actually lead to any better education for kids? This obsessive focus on race in Seattle schools has gone too far. It's killing us ("District's obsessed with race," *The Seattle Times*, April 1, 2007, by Danny Westneat ROP Zone, Local News page B1).

This writer was incredulous that what appeared to be a race neutral policy has impacts that disproportionately affect the education of students of color. Racism, according to this article, is deliberately discriminating against a person based on skin color; such a formulation implies that anyone—even white students—can be the victims of racism. According to this author, the school administrators' "obsessive focus" was the source of racism in Seattle's school district.

Although news articles that attempted to explain why racial disparities in education persist often employed counterproductive frames, there were a few examples of media coverage that could garner support for progressive racial politics in education. The following articles provided very good explanations as to why the news media is dominated by stories of individual acts of racism. Commenting on the Jena 6 case, in which a black teenager was given a very severe sentence for beating up a white student who hung a noose on school grounds and went unpunished, two journalists described the significance of the event for media coverage of race in education, as well as other institutional contexts.

> Mainstream media outlets have ignored the Jena 6 or gave the case cursory summations. Their silence shows how mainstream media journalists remain unwilling to tackle the issue of race. At best, racism is addressed when it is overt and simplistic, one ignorant act against an unsuspecting victim. Mix in the institutionalized racism of a town's criminal justice system, and journalists' eyes glaze over ("Jim Crow Comes for Our Kids," *The Washington Post*, September 21, 2007, Editorial Pg. A19, by Amina Luqman).

> A week ago, folks were marching in Jena, La., using symbolism to attack the hard reality of racism. Marchers were calling for justice for the Jena Six, black high-school students accused of beating a white student. The six are hardly heroes and deserve punishment for their actions. I wouldn't have rested my case on their heads, but I think I know why some people did. The case provided a simple story, easier to grasp than the complexities of race in the present. The powerful feelings people brought to Jena are rooted in history and fed by contemporary issues of disproportion in the justice system and education, by discrimination in hiring and home buying, by daily evidence that we've not fully achieved the goals of the civil-rights struggle on which that march was modeled. Criminal justice, education, banking, you name the institution and you will find inequality built in ("Look past symbols of Jena," *The Seattle Times*, September 27, 2007, Rop Zone, Local News Pg., B1 by Jerry Large).

In addition to explaining the dominance of individual acts of racism in the news media, the second passage was one of the few that described institutional racism without reference to the conscious acts of individuals. Describing racial inequality as being "built into the system" can lead to the public to imagine racial inequality as something bigger than individual racists. It is very similar to the "Prosperity Grid"—a simplifying model tested by FrameWorks researchers that proved effective in allowing people to think about the systemic nature of racial inequality. This type of framing can promote public thinking about policy solutions for changing systemic conditions. Unfortunately, as will be shown in the following section, most of the policy solutions in media coverage of race and education were often constructed as ways to "fix" pathological people, not systems, be they students who are not engaged in their education or racist school administrators.

Solutions

Similar to the other issue areas, when reporting on solutions to problems of racism in education, the news media tended to feature stories of exceptional individuals who worked toward racial

justice in schooling. In this story, the journalist and the subject of the story draw parallels between her work and that of Harriet Tubman.

> Jacqueline Rushing, founder and executive director of San Francisco's Young Scholars, has been compared to Harriet Tubman, the abolitionist who led slaves to freedom through the Underground Railroad. Through the young scholars, a college preparatory and leadership program in the Bayview neighborhood, Rushing is helping African-American students overcome the legacy of racism and poverty. For eight years the program has tutored, mentored and provided cultural enrichment and scholarship assistance to help students get into college—black colleges including Texas Southern and Fisk University, and Ivy League schools such as Cornell and Yale. "Harriet Tubman is alive in me," Rushing said. "Just like Harriet, I am not taking any prisoners; we do not turn back. We are the New Underground Railroad. I'm travelling to the freedom land, which I consider the colleges and universities throughout the United States. True freedom comes from an educated mind" ("Jefferson Award: Awarded to Jacqueline Rushing; 'Harriet Tubman is alive in me,' says founder of the mentor program," *San Francisco Chronicle,* January 7, 2007, Style Section Pg. C2, by Sheila Moody).

This excerpt also reflects the idea that equal access to education is the most important, if not the only way, to ameliorate racial inequality in the United States. Another article also featured a dedicated education advocate.

> Growing up in an African American neighborhood in Port Washington, V. Elaine Gross had a childhood that was "pretty segregated," she said revolving around a small cluster of streets and the local church. In elementary school, one incident in particular made clear to Gross, now 56, that "the color of my skin made a difference." After a white classmate came to her house to play, Ms. Gross walked her back to her own home close to the Sands Point School, now the John J. Daly School. "Her mother saw me coming up the walkway and just was screaming at her daughter, screaming at me: 'What are you doing with her? You get away from here,' Ms. Gross recalled. "It was very traumatic at the time." The girls path never crossed much after that. But Ms. Gross who trained as a social worker, dedicated her professional career to exploring the causes of social, political and economic inequities and finding ways to thwart discrimination in daily living ("Pushing the Fight Against Racial Segregation," *The New York Times*, March 25, 2007, Pg. 6, by Marcelle S. Fischler).

As illustrated in the above comments, solutions to disparities in education are typically framed as the responsibility of individual communities of color. Appeals to any sort of government or policy interventions are often discussed as ways of excusing people of color, and specifically black communities as taking responsibility for educational problems in their communities. Advocates who suggest systemic policy solutions, as seen in the above section, are often derided as "victim mongers" or as race-obsessed and inept administrators.

Similar to the types of solutions proposed regarding racial disparities in healthcare, when the news media described certain types of policies they tend to be aimed at fixing individuals rather than fixing systems. First, because low test scores or low achievement among students of color were typically framed as a problem of their engagement or of low expectations, the solutions were consequently aimed at making students care about their education and their future. For example, in 2007 the New York City school district was experimenting with a program in which students in poverty stricken neighborhoods were paid money for good grades. The program is modeled after a social welfare program in Mexico that pays poor people who engage in "socially acceptable behavior" such as using birth control and ensuring their children's school attendance and medical visits. In New York City, the pay for grades program was touted as a way to get poor children "engaged" and to raise expectations for good school performance.

> There are parents who support the program. And Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein responds to skeptics by arguing that no one has figured out how to get poorer children engaged in learning…Some parents, like Nakita Chambers-Camille, a school administrative assistant who lives in St. Albans, Queens, thinks the program should be given a shot. Ms. Chambers-Camille has a seventh grader, Leana, at a school that probably won't qualify. Leana, she chuckled, may think that is unfair. But Ms. Camille believes such sweeteners may ultimately benefit her daughter. "If that is going to help the child that my child is playing with, then I'm all for it," she said. "I want my child associating with people who have education as a priority. If that child is not learning, that child will pull my child down with her" ("Some Wonder if Cash for Good Test Scores Is the Wrong Kind of Lesson," *The New York Times*, August 8, 2007, Section B Column 0 Metropolitan Desk Pg. 9, by Joseph Berger).

This program is very controversial, as the title of the news article indicates. What is interesting, from a framing perspective, is how the journalist described the program's goals. The money paid to students is not constructed as a way to help students overcome some of the hurdles that poor children face when attending school, such as access to nutritious meals or access to a place to get a full night sleep. Rather, cash for grades is understood as a way of changing the mentality of poor students of color who do not "care" about school. The program is framed as changing the pathological attitudes of students, rather than pathological environments that may impede their ability to perform in school.

The idea that policy solutions should be directed at individuals rather than at larger social structures was also apparent when the media turned its attention to teachers and school administrators. Again, similar to the depiction of solutions to healthcare disparities, increasing access to cultural sensitivity programs was another prominent solution in articles regarding racial disparities in education. The following article appeared after public outcry over the inclusion of a racially insensitive math question at a local community college in Seattle. This controversy was followed by a Somali student finding a racist message on a car and another student asking to be taught a racial epithet in a sign language class. While the journalist argued that "the school suffered from institutional racism and lags behind in everything from fielding complaints to retention of minority students and teachers," the majority of the article focused on these three overt and blatant racist acts. Increasing racial sensitivity was the primary solution covered by the journalist.

> After the controversy last year, the school instituted several changes designed to increase racial sensitivity, including the creation of a vice-president for equity and pluralism. James Bennett, on the job for nine months, says the school is bound to go through some discomfort while it tries to improve equity on campus ("Efforts at BCC to combat bias are criticized," *The Seattle Times*, May 10, 2007, Local News Pg. B1, by Ashley Bach).

The dominance of reporting about overt and blatant acts of racism in educational contexts lead to policy solutions aimed at fixing racist people rather than racist systems. Other journalists suggested that increasing space and time for dialogue would be an effective measure to stop racist acts in educational contexts. For example, in this *Washington Post* article, the author wrote about workshops she ran for mostly white teachers concerning the psychology of racism. She noted that many of the participants expressed deep discomfort talking about the nation's painful and embarrassing history. Writing about the Jena Six incident, she lamented:

> While much can be said about the obvious racial disparities in the criminal justice system brought to light by the Jena Six case, we should also ask what could have been done to prevent the violence. What kind of dialogue about race and racism might have led to a more helpful outcome ("It's the Same Old Story in Jena Today," *The Washington Post*, September 23, 2007, Outlook section Page B03, by Beverly Daniel Tatum).

Political solutions for the "obvious" racial disparities in the criminal justice system were overlooked in favor of increasing dialogue about racism. The author's words also reveal the mechanisms by which individual or episodic stories become more salient than more thematic accounts.[5] The Jena 6 case "sheds light on" disparities in the criminal justice and educational systems, yet the systemic nature of racial inequality is rarely wholly addressed in the media. Readers are expected to connect the story of the Jena 6 to larger social structures. Yet, the story of systemic forms of inequality often remains untold. The author is correct that increasing dialogue about race and racism in this particular school district might have changed the eventual outcome of the events in Jena. What is unclear is how it might have addressed larger inequities in school systems.

Policy solutions that addressed systemic inequalities in the U.S. educational system were not entirely absent from the articles in this analysis. In 2007, the Supreme Court ruled that the desegregation plans in Washington State and Kentucky were unconstitutional. School districts across the country were trying to figure out ways to ensure racial equity in schools with the unraveling of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. In articles that described the ruling and school policies in its aftermath, *how* potential solutions were discussed was very interesting. First, the problem of integration in schools was typically described as either ensuring racial or economic integration. In these discussions, policies that addressed racial integration were described as "antiquated," implying that racism in schools is a thing of the past that rears its head

[5] See Iyengar, Shanto. 1991. *Is Anyone Responsible?: How Television Frames Political Issues*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

occasionally in antiquated form. For example, this article presents the positions of two lawyers about decreasing the "achievement gap:" ensuring equity in school funding or ensuring racial integration.

> "We'd do these school panels and discussions, and he'd say that equity lawsuits were a cop-out, that integration is the only way to address the racial gap," said Mr. Rebell, executive director of the Campaign for Educational Equity at Teachers College at Columbia University. "I'd say funding is important because money matters. It doesn't guarantee good educational outcomes, but without it you can almost guarantee there won't be good outcomes. Even before the Supreme Court this week limited options for integrating schools, the push to improve the nation's public schools had turned, increasingly, on money. "Although a lot of districts talk about racial integration at the local level, I actually think that, at the state and national level, race-mixing was already an antiquated issue," said Chester E. Finn Jr., president of Thomas B. Fordham Institute. "At the state and national level it has to do with the achievement gap" ("Money, not Race, Is Fueling New Push to Bolster Schools," *The New York Times*, June 30, 2007, Section A, Column 0, National Desk Pg. 10, by Tamar Lewin and David M. Herszenhorn).

In addition to framing racial integration in schools as antiquated, newspaper articles included in this analysis tended to stress the impact of "race-mixing" in schools on white students. These articles emphasized the benefits of "diversity" for white students, but also their potential discomfort of feeling like a minority. For example, in an article about school integration and gentrification in Boston, the author noted:

> "The question of diversity cuts both ways for parents. White parents may live in Boston because they want their children to feel comfortable with all races, but many will say privately that they feel like a minority in the public schools, which are only 14 percent white" ("The Departing," *The Boston Globe*, September 2, 2007, Magazine Pg. 20, by Michael Blanding).

In a more critical vein, the next article describes how white parents worried that their children were used to "neutralize" school districts.

> Dr. Sternberg said she had received a flood of e-mail messages, including many that took a "hateful, bullying tone." In a recent essay in Greenwich Time, she cited one e-mail message from a parent who complained: "The children are exposed to racial diversity in middle school and high school and in their extracurricular activities. We don't want our elementary school-age children used to neutralize the make-up of another part of town" ("Greenwich Starts to Grapple with Racial Balance in Schools," *The New York Times*, April 5, 2007, Section B, Column 2 Metropolitan Desk; Pg. 1).

Framing white students as neutralizers implies that schools with a majority of students of color are unstable and dangerous. Beyond the obvious racist connotations of this metaphor, both of the above articles frame racial integration as having two distinct values for white students and students of color. Students of color automatically benefit from racially integrated schools.

White students on the other hand may benefit from more "flavor" and diversity in their educational experience and should "embrace the value of being educated in a diverse setting." In short, this is an iteration of the "separate fates" frame. The idea that all members of a society benefit when quality education is ensured for all students is missing from the discourse.

Finally, policies that ensure racial integration in school were described as hopelessly ineffective. In an article about new initiatives in Cambridge that use socio-economic status rather than race as a tool of integration, some of the messengers argued that such policies were ultimately ineffective in achieving racial and economic integration in schools.

> "Even the best social engineering ideas get circumvented by people," said Scott Blaufuss, a stay-at-home father in Cambridge. "People tend to vote with their feet. If they don't like it, they leave." Student achievement has risen in most schools, and schools' percentage of low-income families now range between 28 percent and 62 percent better reflecting the district average. But white families have left many schools that received more low-income students ("An imbalance grows in Cambridge schools-Placement based on income, not race," *The Boston Globe*, July 23, 2007, Metro Section Pg. A1, by Tracy Jan).

The term "social engineering" was used more than once, often derisively, to describe legislation aimed at ensuring educational equality. It is notable for its historical connotations: eugenic programs were often described as social engineering projects. The choice is interesting in its contemporary usage. This is an article on the 2007 Supreme Court case by George Will, a conservative columnist..

> Sandra Day O'Connor, writing the majority opinion in that 2003 case, breezily asserted that in 25 years racial preferences would not be "necessary" to further diversity. But diversity preferences appeal to race-obsessed social engineers—a cohort particularly prevalent among today's educators—precisely because the diversity rationale never expires. The diversity project is forever a work in progress ("The court returns to Brown," *The Washington Post*, July 5, 2007, Editorial Pg. A17, by George Will).

In these passages, policies aimed at ensuring school integration and equality were framed as social engineering projects that are either easily overcome by individuals or tyrannically curtail individual choice. This depiction of educational policy will likely not lead to widespread public support for governmental action in addressing racism in educational contexts.

Race and Early Child Development

Race as a discussion within coverage of early child development received less media attention than any other issue area. In fact, using the search terms "early child/childhood development" in 2007 without reference to race yielded just over 700 hundred articles in the hundreds of searchable U.S. newspapers in the LexisNexis database. As noted in the methods section, we expanded the search terms to include a wide variety of contexts in which journalists would write about child development, such as pre-Kindergarten and infancy. Despite the relative dearth of coverage, what was available provides important insights into how race and racism were framed in media coverage of early child development.

Irrespective of the racial background of children, early child development was primarily discussed in terms of mental and intellectual development. For example, this article that appeared in the *Boston Globe* magazine covered the developmental philosophy of the Better Baby Institute, an institute located outside of Philadelphia. Profiling a family whose toddler followed the Institute's developmental regime, the journalist described the mother's motivation for seeking out the institute.

> Anderson, with the support of her husband, has been working hard to give their daughter a leg up since Morgan was in her womb....While other moms-to-be were dog-earing their copies of What to Expect When You're Expecting, Anderson spent her pregnancy searching for the best approaches to help boost her baby's brainpower ("Rush, Little Baby - How the push for infant academics may actually be a waste of time - or worse." *The Boston Globe*, October 28, 2007, Magazine Pg. 22, by Neil Swidey).

"Boosting" an infant's brainpower was framed primarily as a way to ensure a child's later educational achievement. As with articles related to education, early childhood development was talked about as a competitive race in which parents must do all they can to ensure that their children have a "leg up." For example, providing the historical context for the increase in public demand for knowledge and consumable products related to children's cognitive development, this author explained the origins of the race metaphor.

> But then, says David Elkind, a longtime child development professor at Tufts University, came Sputnik and the startling Soviet successes in space in the late 1950s that spurred Americans to ratchet up their educational demands on the ground. After that came Head Start, the 1960s federal program aimed at closing the achievement gap by better preparing poor children before they entered school. Elkind says the choice of names for the program was unfortunate because it made many middle-class parents believe that, if there was some early-advancement special sauce that poor kids were getting, they wanted it for their kids as well. "Parents began seeing it as a race," he says ("Rush, Little Baby - How the push for infant academics may actually be a waste of time - or worse," *The Boston Globe*, October 28, 2007 Magazine Pg. 22, by Neil Swidey)

In another example that reported on scholarly research that showed that the popular "Baby Einstein" DVDs reduced rather than improved children's verbal development, the author described parents' attitudes towards their infants' development as one of an "arms race."

> Brody, who teaches a course on children and media at the University of Maryland, says videos have helped fuel a kind of arms race involving "hypercompetitive parents who use their children as objects" and seek to ensure they are keeping up – or better yet, excelling ("Wishful Thinking; Many Parents Believe That Watching Videos and DVDs May Help Bring Out the Budding Genius in Their Babies," *Washington Post*, October 9, 2007, Health Section, Pg. HE01, by Sandra Goodman).

Because of the dominance of the "development as competitive race" metaphor, when journalists dealt with disparities in child development among different racial groups, the primary purpose for ensuring that all young children develop in healthy ways was to aid in narrowing the "achievement gap" between different groups. For example, this article reported recent findings regarding the educational benefits of full-day pre-kindergarten programs.

> Montgomery schools Superintendent Jerry D. Weast this week announced the expansion of the federal Head Start pre-kindergarten program to full-day study at 10 high-poverty elementary schools, the latest move intended to teach children more at an earlier age and to narrow racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps ("10 Schools To Offer Full Day Head Start; Pre-K Program Aims To Help Poor Students," *The Washington Post*, August 23, 2007, Extras Pg. GZ03, by Daniel de Vise).

In these articles, early child development for children living in poverty or children of color was framed almost exclusively in terms of educational achievement, rather than other forms of human development, such as social or emotional growth. In fact, the only mention of other forms of development in the articles selected for this analysis, occurred when FrameWorks' collaborator Jack Shonkoff mentioned other dimensions of early child development.

> He said the long-term High/Scope Perry Preschool study shows that at-risk children enrolled in a high-quality preschool program eventually earned more money, owned homes in greater numbers and avoided welfare and jail more than their at-risk peers who never attended preschool. Democratic presidential hopeful Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York has cited Mr. Heckman's work on the racial achievement gap as she proposed $10 billion for a universal pre-kindergarten program. Jack Shonkoff, a doctor and director of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, said a greater focus should be placed on children's mental and emotional needs. He said professionals know how to treat mental and emotional problems in the very young, but "we're not channeling that knowledge" ("Democrats sketch childhood agenda; Summit stresses intervention at early stages," *The Washington Times*, May 23, 2007, Nation Pg. A10, by Amy Fagan).

Despite Shonkoff's warnings, early child development for "at-risk" children was primarily discussed as a way to close the "achievement gap."

Articles that explicitly focused on racial disparities in child development tended to focus on higher rates of neglect and abuse among black children. For example, the following article commented on the high rates of young African-American children in the child-welfare system.

> Germaine Covington, past president of the Black Child Development Institute in Seattle, said she and others will discuss ways to address the disproportion of black children in the child-welfare system. African-American children are more likely to be referred to child welfare than those from other population groups, Covington said, though in the end, neglect in many cases is not found, she said. "The best solution is to make certain they don't get into the system in the first place. We'll be talking about some of the models that exist to address that" ("Minority groups to press concerns; Legislature - Blacks, Asians, Pacific Islanders across state to discuss issues with lawmakers," *The Seattle Times*, February 12, 2007, Local News Pg. B1, by Lornett Turnbull).

Other articles reported on the higher rates of spanking in poor black families. While seemingly neutral in its reporting of such studies, such statistics, if left decontextualized, could lead to the further pathologization of poor black communities.

More than racial background, however, *class* background was framed as the defining factor that shaped children's development. For example, in this article regarding affirmative action, the author reports on studies regarding the intellectual development of children of different racial backgrounds.

> Other recent studies have looked at intelligence testing. There have long been two uncomfortable facts in this area: Intelligence, indisputably, is in part genetic; and every intelligence test shows a gap between black America and others. For a long time, the gap between white and black adults has narrowed significantly since 1970, according to work done by noted researchers William Dickens and James Flynn. Four decades is too short a time for the gene pool to change, but it's not too short for an environment to improve. Most intriguing, Roland Fryer and Steven D. Levitt…have found there to be essentially no gap between 1-year old white and black children of the same socioeconomic status ("The New Affirmative Action," *The New York Times*, September 30, 2007, Magazine Pg. 76, by David Leonhardt).

Other articles addressed more explicitly the impacts of class background on child development, such as these articles that focus on verbal development demonstrate.

> Wolf says the best predictor of how a child will do in school is not reading ability but rather the size and richness of the child's vocabulary. And, as with so much in life, the kids whose parents worry about this area the most tend to be the kids we need to worry about least. Veteran early-childhood researchers Betty Hart and Todd Risley conducted a meticulous longitudinal study tracking the vocabulary growth in young children coming from three types of families: professional class,

> working class, and those who were on welfare. The results were stunning, and depressing for anyone who is troubled by inequity. They found that the children were very much a product of what they were exposed to by their parents: between 86 and 98 percent of the words in their vocabularies were also words their parents used. Across four years, the average child from a professional family would have heard nearly 45 million words spoken to them, the average child from a working class family, 26 million, and the average child from a family on welfare, 13 million. That means that compared with the affluent child, the poor child would be starting school with an astonishing deficit of 32 million words of language experience. How can that child's entire educational career not, on some level, become a demoralizing case of catch-up? ("Rush, Little Baby - How the push for infant academics may actually be a waste of time - or worse." *The Boston Globe*, October 28, 2007, Magazine Pg. 22, by Neil Swidey)
>
> The amount of family talk correlated with social class. Welfare parents in the study were the least talkative, while the most talkative parents were those with advanced, professional degrees. Their amount of talk - not their social class or income or race - predicted their children's intellectual accomplishments ("Bringing up brainy baby Boulder-based Infoture is selling a device to measure how much parents talk with young children. A small study correlated such speech with the level of later IQ," *The Denver Post*, September 12, 2007, Business, Pg. C01, by Karen Rouse).

Both articles appeared to be drawing on the same scholarly literature. While the take-away message in both articles was that children thrive in stimulating *environments*, environments are defined exclusively by their interactions with their parents. Neither comment on the children's exposure to other adults, such as extended families or care-givers who interact with the children. Nor do the articles comment upon the conditioning effect of other community influences on those parents' ability to parent – such as the presence or absence of social networks, for example, in addressing maternal depression. That is, there is a strong tendency in these articles (and perhaps in the design of the study) to invoke the "family bubble," where children's environments are limited to their parents and parents exist in a vaccuum. The following excerpt drawn from the above-mentioned article on the Better Baby Institute is an extreme example of popular ideas of what parents should do to ensure that their babies are developing into "perfect" children.

> After Morgan was born, Anderson wasted no time in following Doman's advice for cracking the Da Vinci code. She skipped the swaddling and the bassinet in favor of a "crawling track" that her husband built on the floor around their bed, allowing the baby to move about safely in the middle of the night. When Morgan was 3 months old, Anderson began rapidly showing her reading and math flashcards every day. When she was 6 months old, the family traveled to Philadelphia and stayed in a hotel for a week while Anderson attended the Institute's $1,200 "How to Multiply Your Baby's Intelligence" course. When Morgan was 10 months old, she began walking, and a few months later Santa left a pedometer in Anderson's stocking so she could keep track of her daughter's daily distances, with the goal of meeting the Institutes' benchmark of having her baby walk half a mile in 18 minutes. When she was 13 months old, Anderson had

> Morgan hang from a "brachiation bar" for longer and longer intervals, to prepare her for the "brachiation ladder," a contraption you and I might call "monkey bars." (“Rush, Little Baby - How the push for infant academics may actually be a waste of time - or worse,” *The Boston Globe*, October 28, 2007, Magazine Pg. 22, by Neil Swidey).

In the media, racial disparities in child development has not emerged as full blown social problem in the same ways that racism is constructed in other issue areas. As noted above, the problem is framed primarily in terms of class differences. Apart from reporting on calls for increases in Head Start and pre-Kindergarten programs, solutions to developmental disparities were related to new products available to aid in children’s cognitive and verbal development.

Racial Disparities in Employment

The final issue area included in this analysis is employment. Many of the issues raised in previous sections were prevalent in media coverage of employment and race, but there were also notable differences. As will be shown in the following sections, discussion of race and racism in employment moved beyond the black/white paradigm and many articles constructed immigration issues in employment as explicitly racial. Articles dealing with race and employment also explored the systemic causes of racial discrimination in hiring and in workplaces in a more meaningful way than other issue areas. However, attention to systemic causes did not result in discussions of systemic policy solutions. Instead, as in other issue areas, solutions were limited to suggestions for addressing inequalities in specific work places or individuals' racial prejudices.

Framing Racial Disparities in Employment

Media coverage of racial disparities in employment concentrated primarily on three different issues: the wage gap, hostile work environments, and discriminatory hiring practices. First, journalists addressed the gap between wages between white people and people of color. For example, the following article reported a dramatic increase in the difference in wages for white and Black workers in Illinois.

> Over the last 15 years, the wage gap between blacks and whites in Illinois worsened more than 162 percent. I'd like to proffer a simple reason for this development, but can't because the worsening wage gap isn't the result of one simple phenomenon, such as discrimination. Certainly, racism played a role, but racism isn't the sole culprit. The truth is far more insidious, involving everything from fiscal policy to economic incentive programs ("Growing black-white wage gap has roots in tax policy," *Chicago Sun Times*, January 27, 2007, Editorials Pg 14, by Ralph Martire).

The persistence of wage gaps across time and across occupations suggests that disparities in income move beyond individual level decisions and prejudices. This author aptly discusses certain policies that allow these disparities to not only persist, but to increase. Yet interestingly, the journalist does not frame such policies as issues related to race or racism. The author equates racism with individual acts of discrimination, very similar to the ways in which racism was discussed in the other issue areas. And like the other sections of the report, this inability to productively frame the meaning and implications of *institutional* racism primarily limited policy solutions to what qualifies as "racism": programs that address the problem of racist individuals.

Second, the news media covered racially hostile work environments. These articles often featured stories of an individual's plight in a damaging workplace. For example, the following articles reported on racially hostile work environments in the Chicago area.

> Panteloy was the only African American working as a custodian at the school in 2004, when she complained about vandalism to her car and about racist comments from coworkers. According to a lawsuit filed in federal court last month, Panteloy's co-workers routinely made comments such as 'How do you know your hands are dirty if your skin is black?' and "I cannot see you in the dark because you are black" and called her "blackie" ("School worker fights racism; She says

> the district won't hire her full time because she spoke up," *Chicago Sun Times*, November 11, 2007, News page A10, by Mary Mitchell).
>
> A supervisor with Chicago's Department of Transportation is on the hot seat for allegedly making racist and sexist comments to co-workers and parading around with a red tablecloth over his head while calling himself the "grand wizard," a title used by leader of the Ku Klux Klan. The assistant project director has been placed on administrative leave, pending termination proceedings, for allegedly referring to female workers as "bitches," using the n-word to address African Americans and referring to other black employees as "mambo." The supervisor allegedly called a black employee "Magilla the Gorilla" and sang the cartoon's theme song to the co-worker ("Klan jokes in city office? Boss on leave over alleged racism, sexism," *Chicago Sun Times*, April 23, 2007, News Section Pg. 16, by Frank Spielman and Frank Main).

Several articles reported similar types of stories of people who endured hostile work environments. These stories of blatant and overt discriminatory acts permit the reading public to clearly and unambiguously label these incidents as racism. By concentrating on these powerful anecdotes, the journalists implicitly and explicitly frame racism in workplaces as aberrant acts enacted by pathological individuals. The second excerpt also implies racism is something that the United States has generally overcome, especially when it is defined primarily by actions committed by groups like the Ku Klux Klan. The supervisor's actions act as a horrific reminder of the past, but they are not interpreted as something that occurs regularly in contemporary society. There was not one story, for example, that addressed hostile work environments across the public sector in Chicago.

Finally, news articles covered discriminatory hiring practices in supervisory or management positions in a wide range of occupations and noted the lack of people of color in positions of power. These articles often included statistics about the racial make-up of a certain occupation as compared to the population of a given city or community. For example the *Denver Post* reported on a class action suit filed by black and Latino police officers in the Denver area who charged that the police department discriminated against them in hiring, promotion and disciplinary action. The journalist reported that Denver's population is 35 percent Latino and 10 percent black, yet officers in the department are 20 percent Latino and 9 percent black (Latino officers to file a bias suit vs. department hiring, promotion issues," *The Denver Post*, February 9, 2007, Section Denver & The West, Pg. B-04). In another example, the *Boston Globe* published an article on a report released in 2007 demonstrating the overwhelming presence of white men on boards of directors.

> The boards of directors of the Bay State's largest corporations, hospitals, universities will be released today by the McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies at University of Massachusetts, Boston. . . . At corporations, 95 percent of board members are white, and 87 percent are men. At hospitals, boards of directors are 94 percent white and 75 percent are men; at higher education, boards are 86 percent white, and 64 percent are men. Boards at cultural institutions are 79 percent white and 50 percent male ("Diversity still lagging in Bay State boardrooms—White men retain power survey says," *The Boston Globe*, May 11, 2007, Metro Section Pg. A1, By Yvonne Abraham).

The statistics included in both of the above passages as well as in similar types of articles are quite striking. Missing from these stories are explanations as to *why* management positions and board of directors should mirror the communities that they serve. This topic is discussed in greater detail in the solutions section, but it is important to note that the benefits of a diverse workforce, and especially diversity in positions of power, are often left for the reader to intuit or imagine.

Apart from defining *what* constitutes racial disparities in employment, the articles analyzed for this section also framed *who* should be considered a racial minority in employment matters. As mentioned above, immigration issues in employment were more likely to be framed as issues of race, racism or racial injustice than in other issue areas, although this proposition is based on a small sample. These articles typically reported on the perception that certain immigrant groups were taking jobs away from U.S. citizens. For example, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* included an article about the reliance on teachers from Jamaica to fulfill benchmarks for teachers of color in certain communities around Atlanta. Beginning with the story of Leonie Palmer, an award winning teacher with 25 years of classroom experience whose contract with the school district was not renewed, the reporter explained:

> But as Palmer stared at the ceiling that April weekend, she couldn't foresee the turmoil ahead. There would be federal lawsuits, accusations of racism and more tears. The controversy would reach the highest level of state government, snaring Gov. Sonny Perdue's office in settlement negotiations and just this month, prompting legislative efforts to change Georgia law. The episode would challenge a school system struggling to recruit minority teachers in compliance with a federal desegregation order. And it would lay bare feelings about race and immigration in a community, that just two years earlier, had put on an international face as the host of the G-8 summit ("Foreign teachers test policy: An arcane law dredged up to get rid of teachers from abroad, Georgia's alien statute may be taken of the books," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, March 25, 2007, Pg. 1A, by Brian Feagans).

In another article, the journalist reported on new measures enacted by the Loudon County Board of supervisors that would penalize employers who hired undocumented immigrants. The following passage includes the response from Latino advocates.

> The resolution drew sharp criticism from Hispanic advocates, who said it would foster fear in the community and encourage racial profiling. Laura Valle, executive director of the nonprofit group La Voz of Loudon, added that it was no simple matter determining who is legal ("Loudon Approves Measures Targeting Illegal Immigrants," *The Washington Post*, July 18, 2007, A-Section Pg. A01, by Sandhya Somashekhar).

By expanding the framing of racism in employment situations to include discrimination against immigrants, the journalists begin to broaden what can be conceived as racism by the public. However, the fact that immigration is coded as a racial issue in matters regarding competition for jobs again supports the dominant frame that racial groups are in competition for scarce resources. Reading publics may interpret steps to ameliorate inequalities as threats to their own livelihood.

Explanatory Frames

The news articles that covered the various aspects of racial disparities in employment utilized certain frames to explain how and why such disparities persist. However, the majority of explanatory frames were limited to elucidating the absence of people of color in managerial or executive positions in various occupations. This is most likely due to the prevalence of articles regarding lawsuits that alleged racial bias in certain companies. These explanatory frames often employed a "mentalist" and individualist perspective. However, unlike other issue areas, the news media provided more nuanced and systemic analyses of racial inequality in employment contexts. Again, this might be explained by the focus on the legal processes and implications of discrimination in the workplace.

Similar to the other issue areas, the news media often reverted to individual level explanations to explain racial inequality in the workplace. Although less prevalent than other frames, some news articles cited the "habits" of poor black Americans as contributing to disparities in employment status. For example, drawing on the "two black Americas" frame discussed in the education section, the following editorial writer describes gaps in "black achievement."

> By contrast, the civil rights movement, which concentrated on removing legal and institutional barriers to black achievement, did not—and could not—benefit an underclass of poor and uneducated black men and women who lack the habits of mind that would propel them toward success. They are more likely to do poorly in school, to work in menial jobs, to live in impoverished and crime-ridden neighborhoods, to bear children outside marriage, to end up ensnared by the criminal justice system ("Two black Americas, one badly lagging," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, December 2, 2007, Editorial pg. 6B, by Cynthia Tucker).

Immediately prior to this passage, the author cited a Pew Research study that found that a majority of black respondents believed that black job applicants faced discrimination. Yet, she described deficient "habits of mind" as the primary reason that poor black people do not have access to well-paid and meaningful work. Furthermore, this article—as well as others included in the analysis—add a class dimension to the "separate fates" frame. The "two black Americas" frame does not necessarily separate black from white, but implies that poor black people are completely alien from middle class black people and implicitly from all white people, regardless of their class background. And as the author explains, the policies enacted after the civil rights movement worked for educated black people, but the author frames policy solutions as hopelessly and inherently ineffective for the black "underclass."

The attitudes and beliefs of white managers and executives were also cited as perpetuating racial disparities in workplaces. For example, the following article attributed the dearth of people of color on boards of directors to apathy on the part of white executives.

> "I think of it is a lack of effort," Budd said. "It's apathy more than a malevolent, conspiratorial effort to keep these boards white. But this has to be something that people are dedicated to. They can't do it once in a great while. Additionally, membership on the boards of many nonprofits goes to those with deep pockets, who belong to the kind of social networks that yield hefty donations. Minorities are less likely to inhabit those worlds, Budd said (Diversity still lagging in Bay

> State boardrooms—White men retain power survey says, *The Boston Globe*, May 11, 2007, Metro section page A1, By Yvonne Abraham).

In this passage, this commentator distinguishes between a lack of effort to recruit people of color and malevolence inspired by blatant racism. Again, racism is constructed as something that "evil" people conspire to do, rather than a systemic effect, such as the composition of social networks from which board of directors are typically recruited. In contrast, the following article takes a more critical view of why executive boards are populated primarily by white men.

> Most of these profit companies are run by a phalanx of white guys, a woman or two, and perhaps a black person in their midst. There may be a few exceptions, but not many. Just peruse the senior executive and board photos in their annual reports. Now exactly why is that? Well, you hear all types of things. Just last week I was in a board meeting and was told, "Highly qualified blacks won't move to Boston because they think it is still a town of great prejudice. They remember the busing issue, Bill Russell's bitterness, and the Charles Stuart case." That one statement, which I have heard in many versions a hundred times, is usually a debate stopper. A bit like, "Well, if that's the issue, how does our single organization make a dent in such a deeply seated view? Guess we will just have to live with it?" Huh? One of the more fascinating things about prejudice that leads to this inaction is it's easy to believe such statements whether they are true or not. And that acceptance allows people an excuse to not change the dynamic (The great lie in African-American hiring," *The Boston Globe*, October 8, 2007, Op-Ed Pg. A11, by David D'Alessandro).

Unlike the previous passage, the author cited prejudices among executive board members as the reason behind the low number of women and people of color in their ranks. Yet similar to the previous article, the prejudice comes down to the beliefs and mindsets of individuals, such as the belief that Black people will not move to Boston. Solutions to this problem are again framed as changing the mentalities of individuals.

Despite the presence of explanations that focused on the mindset of individuals, more than any other issue area, articles on racial disparities in employment gave a more systemic view of how racial inequalities can operate in work places. While still focusing on individual level prejudices, these articles also focus on *policies* that negatively impact people of color in specific occupations. For example, the following three articles report on class action suits by people of color in the Denver police, the Bank of America, and in the Secret Service.

> The commission—charged with hiring and promoting officers—is moving its offices from Federal Boulevard to downtown. Latino Police Officers Association leaders disapprove of the move because, they say, Latino and African-American officers have better access on Federal. ("Latino officers to file a bias suit vs. department hiring, promotion issues," *The Denver Post*, February 9, 2007, Section Denver & The West Pg. B-04, by Felisa Cardona).

> But the suit, which seeks class action status, alleges that many African-American employees in the bank and its investment division were largely partnered only with others of the same race and were disproportionately sent "to sales territories

> which are largely minority and/or low net worth. This practice has significantly and adversely impacted the job success, career and income of plaintiffs and the class," the suit states, and also makes reference to "subjective decision-making by a predominantly Caucasian management structure." When plaintiffs complained, they were told that many of the bank's clients "are more comfortable dealing with sales professionals of their own race," the suit states ("Black workers file bias suit against Bank of America," *The Boston Globe*, May 19, 2007, Business Pg. C10, by Ross Kerber).
>
> The delays have frustrated the plaintiffs, who allege that white agents routinely leapfrogged over black agents who scored higher on promotional exams, that black agents are sent undercover because it is assumed that they talk "street" language and that a white "good ol' boy network" prevails. Cheryl L. Tyler, a former agent, said the Atlanta office was known as the "chocolate office" during the 1980s because eight of 75 agents were black. She shared workspace with a white agent who called his child a racial epithet in her presence, according to her statement ("Secret Service on bias hot seat," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* December 8, 2007, News Pg. 1A, by Rebecca Carr).

Policy decisions—such as the movement of a building to a neighborhood with a different racial and/or ethnic makeup or requiring that salespeople are of the same race as the communities they are serving—may or may not be the result of decisions made by racist individuals. However, these decisions have serious impacts on the employment opportunities of people of color. And as these articles describe, when certain offices become predominantly occupied by people of color they are often given less resources or work in substandard conditions.

Other articles reported on how hiring and promotion policies discriminated against people of color. For example, the following two articles described lawsuits that charged that entrance and promotion examinations used in New York and Boston were racially biased.

> Last year, they said, the department began an advertising campaign to seek a more diverse crop of applicants. It also relaxed its qualifications for taking the entrance exam, deciding that applicants no longer needed 30 college credits to apply. (Either 15 college credits or a high school diploma with six months of work or military experience can now qualify an applicant for the test). John Coombs, president of the Vulcan society, said that little had changed in the department even under Mr. Scoppetta. He added that the entrance exam was still "slanted" against blacks and Hispanics, though he refused to explain precisely why ("U.S. says Fire Dept.'s Exam is Biased, Opening Way to Suit," *The New York Times*, April 25, 2007, Section B, Column 5, Metropolitan Desk; Pg. 7, by Alan Feuer).

> "These examinations have, over the last 20 years, been demonstrated to have significant adverse impact on minority (black and Hispanic) test takers while not having been shown to be valid predictors of job performance," the officers argue in the lawsuit. "All of the defendants have been well aware of this fact, yet have taken no action to design a less discriminatory and more job-related examination

> procedure." They say the multiple choice format of the test, not the content of the questions, has blocked the rise of minorities, many of who grew up speaking a different language. They want the state to devise a promotion system that would better reflect the skills used by a police supervisor, instead of how well they answer multiple-choice questions ("Lawsuit challenges fairness of police test officers passed over for Supervisory roles," *The Boston Globe*, September 12, 2007, Metro Section Pg. B1, by David Abel).

The second excerpt does an undoubtedly better job at explaining to the public how seemingly neutral examinations can have differential impacts on different communities. Yet, both point to policies that contribute to the low numbers of officers of color in these two districts. While many articles in this section provide the public with depictions of systemic problems within certain occupations, news articles were less apt to suggest systemic policy solutions to these problems, as will be discussed in the following section.

Solutions

Solutions to systemic inequities in employment were difficult for readers to engage with, in part because journalists rarely explained *why* diversity and equity in the workplace was something that could be beneficial to everyone. The *Washington Post* did include an article explaining why a diverse workforce was critical for the operation of the Central Intelligence Agency and therefore for national security in general.

> Despite efforts in the past six years to diversify the workforce, only 14 percent of those in the CIA's officer corps are minorities, said Jose Rodriguez, director of the CIA's National Clandestine Service, the agency's foreign espionage unit. "Nothing is more important in the intelligence profession than cultivating different perspectives on the foreign threats and challenges facing our nation," he said Monday at a border security conference. He said that agencies need workers "of diverse ethnic backgrounds, with different languages and cultural backgrounds," to collect and analyze information to threats to national security." (Intelligence Agencies Urged to Hire Minorities; Diversity Strengthens Efforts, CIA Officials Say" *The Washington Post*, August 15, 2007, A-Section Pg. A09, by Spencer Hsu and Joby Warrick).

While this article asserts the interdependence of all Americans, other articles included zero-sum frames to describe why diversity and equity matter in the workplace. In this mode of thinking, racial equality can only be achieved at the expense of another racial group, typically white people. This counters any ideas that advocating for racial justice could mutually benefit all members of a society (i.e. emphasizing the benefits of a well educated and trained workforce). For example, in an article describing the efforts of Deval Patrick, the first African-American governor of Massachusetts, to bring more people of color into managerial positions in government, a former president of the NAACP commented that diversity in the work place and the policies they enact will "improve the lives of people of color" ("Patrick hiring diverse group to fill leadership positions," *The Boston Globe*, November 28, 2007, Metro section Pg. B1, by Lisa Wangsness). This is an extremely important goal, but it implies that these policies will come at the expense of other people. Descriptions and explanations of how diversity in government will benefit entire communities are absent. The zero-sum frame will likely lead

white readers to reject such policies if they are perceived to reduce their own resources or life chances.

As mentioned earlier, the majority of the articles related to employment covered lawsuits that charged discriminatory hiring and promotion practices or hostile work environments. Interestingly, legal remedies were *not* framed as solutions to change inequalities endemic to many institutions and work places. Rather, the solutions discussed were often confined to the individual firm or company where the lawsuit was taking place. Not surprisingly, calls for increasing diversity training was the primary solution offered for ending racial discrimination in employment contexts. For example, this article was included in the *Denver Post*.

> If you stay on the job long enough it will happen to you: one of your co-workers will make an off color remark and suddenly everyone will be dragged into diversity training. Next thing you know, you're wasting valuable time, sitting around tables, suffering lectures from consultants, role playing, taking microscopes to your soul, singing kumbaya and being forced to the realization that yes, you too are a bigot and you'd better watch it Mister Man ("Just shut up and do your job," *The Denver Post*, Business Section Pg. K-01, by Al Lewis).

While definitely a more cynical view of diversity training, this passage reflects the ubiquity of such training for dealing with racial issues in the work place. Again, because racism at work or racial disparities in hiring and promotion practices are primarily framed as a problem of individual mentalities, efforts to change beliefs and emotions about racial issues, such as diversity training, are promoted as the primary solutions to racial issues in the work place.

In another article about a Vietnamese-American and African-American who won a bias lawsuit against Seattle City Light, diversity training was touted as a way to solve the office's discriminatory practices.

> City Light Superintendent Jorge Carrasco has increased diversity training at the utility, according to city officials. When Carrasco, who is Hispanic, took City Light's top job in 2004, he said he would not tolerate discrimination. "I've been reviewing several instances of lawsuits and costly settlements and I expect them to stop," Carrasco said in a letter to City Light employees in April 2004. Sheridan said Carrasco was giving "lip service" to equal opportunity ("City Light Workers Win Bias Lawsuit" *The Seattle Times*, February 27, 2007, ROP Zone, Local News Pg. B1, by Bob Young).

Sheridan was one of the claimants in the suit and expressed the opposite sentiment of the previous article from Denver: that diversity training simply provides "lip service" for employers worried about discrimination suits. But again, despite the critical nature of both articles, training individuals to be more sensitive to racial issues is the only imaginable solution to fixing hostile work environments or unfair hiring practices.

Although less ubiquitous than in the other issue areas, newspaper articles about race and employment featured stories of individual crusaders who have fought discrimination in the workplace. For example, this article covered the story of Harlan Miller, a top workplace discrimination lawyer in the Atlanta area.

> Workplace discrimination cases are Miller's calling, inspired by his father, who was laid off after 20 years at a manufacturing plant. Miller says his father, who was in his 50s at the time he was let go, was a victim of age discrimination. "I realized how destructive it is when someone is treated unfairly on his job," Miller said on a recent afternoon in his office overlooking Peachtree Street ("Lawyer fights the big shots," *The Atlanta-Journal Constitution*, March 22, 2007, Section City Life Midtown Pg. 5JN, by Eric Stirgus).

This excerpt not only focuses on how an individual, rather than strong anti-discrimination laws, addressed racial inequities in employment. It also defines the appropriate life narrative of such an individual: i.e. that he experienced or witnessed some sort of discrimination in his life and was called to such work. Again, this crusader frame does not emphasize policies and does not explain why all people, regardless of their life histories, should care about racial equity.

In sum, while media coverage of race and employment provided more productive frames for explaining why racial disparities occur in the workplace, this alone was not enough to lead to discussions of policies that might address such disparities. While the presence of articles related to workplace discrimination law implies solutions that can go beyond individual actions, these stories were typically populated by brave people who spoke out against evil managers whose anachronistic actions were simply an aberration to the racial progress of the United States. Similar to other issue areas, solutions to workplace discrimination were limited to programs to change anachronistic beliefs, such as the much dreaded and maligned diversity training.

Conclusion

In this analysis, race and racism were constructed in diverse ways for each issue by the media. Articles about racial disparities in health were well-documented with scholarly research, addressed specific diseases and areas of health care, and most journalists explored the reasons why such disparities exist. At the other end of the spectrum, early child development was the least reported topic and disparities in developmental outcomes among children were not so much framed as race but as class issues.

Despite notable differences, the ways that dominant frames about race and racism transcend individual issue areas are interesting. First, embedded in many of the articles is the idea that the U.S. has overcome its racial past. While articles document disparities, they are framed as either atypical, as the "last bastion" of racial inequality, or as anachronistic. There is very little sense of what some scholars describe as "new" forms of institutional and structural racism and there is a generalized inability to meaningfully describe how the United States' racial past can shape the present. We believe that these frames will only intensify after the historic election of President Barack Obama. While indeed an extraordinary statement of racial progress, the notion that race is something that Americans have already overcome will likely impede efforts of advocates fighting for progressive and racially just policies.

We know from scholars like Shanto Iyengar that the news media does an extraordinary job telling compelling stories about individuals, but are not as good at telling stories about systems. Because of the media's consistent reference to individual acts of blatant racism, it is arguable that the ability to tell systemic stories about race and racism is even more imperative. When racism is confined to individual and blatant discriminatory acts, readers lose sight of how it can be embedded in systems. This does not mean that people are not a part of or do not create such systems but, as sociologist Emile Durkheim theorized a century ago, social structures are larger than the sum of their individual parts. Without this understanding, policies will be confined to fixing individual's attitudes, beliefs and mentalities and may not serve to address larger issues.

What is left out is as important as what is included in the frame. Finally, it is important for advocates to acknowledge that the news media does a very poor job of explaining *why* racially just policies are important to *all* Americans. News articles fail to explain why diversity is important in workplaces, why it is important to ensure quality health care for all Americans, or why all children should be exposed to stimulating social and educational environments. Without frames that emphasize the mutual benefit of racial equality, support for racially just policies will likely be diminished. Furthermore, the predominance of metaphors that describe many aspects of the social world as a competitive race in which one racial group will beat out others will likely make such policies seem threatening.

***About FrameWorks Institute*:** The FrameWorks Institute is an independent nonprofit organization founded in 1999 to advance science-based communications research and practice. The Institute conducts original, multi-method research to identify the communications strategies that will advance public understanding of social problems and improve public support for remedial policies. The Institute's work also includes teaching the nonprofit sector how to apply these science-based communications strategies in their work for social change. The Institute publishes its research and recommendations, as well as toolkits and other products for the nonprofit sector at www.frameworksinstitute.org.

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