Adjusting Our Focus

Current Communication
Practices and Patterns in the
Criminal Justice Sector

A Field Frame Analysis

Prepared with the help of
FrameWorks Institute

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ABOUT

The Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice

The Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School (CHHIRJ) was founded in 2005 by Jesse Climenko Professor of Law, Charles J. Ogletree, Jr. The Institute honors and continues the work of Charles Hamilton Houston, one of the 20th century's most influential lawyers, who dedicated his life to using the law as a tool to end racial inequality and discrimination. By facilitating a continuous dialogue between practitioners and scholars, he ensured that legal scholarship would resonate outside the academy, and that new legal strategies would be immediately incorporated into the training and practice of lawyers. CHHIRJ uses this model to address contemporary challenges in our increasingly multi-racial society. Our long-term goal is to ensure that every member of our society enjoys equal access to the opportunities, responsibilities and privileges of membership in the United States.

FrameWorks Institute

The FrameWorks Institute is an independent non-profit 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 communication 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.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents results from a Field Frame Analysis of influential organizations in the criminal justice reform field. It is informed by, and a part of, a larger multi-year project being conducted by the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School (CHHIRJ) and the FrameWorks Institute. The long-term goal of this project is to develop more effective ways to communicate about the challenges facing America's criminal justice system and the reforms necessary to make it more just and equitable. The project aims to provide criminal justice experts and progressive reform advocates with tools and strategic recommendations they can use to reframe their public communications for broad public understanding and support. This means moving public perceptions and policymaking away from ineffective "tough on crime" tactics that over-emphasize policing, prosecution, and prisons in favor of greater investments in programs that address the underlying social and economic issues fueling cycles of incarceration.

A Field Frame Analysis captures the patterns of communications that organizations within a given sector use to frame issues. It allows researchers to map networks of influential organizations within the field and identify the ways in which these organizations publicly discuss the issues. Since influential organizations act as "gatekeepers" for the field and shape the direction of programs and policies, the ways in which they communicate—language, frames, topic priorities and word choices—have direct implications on whether and how an issue will be more widely adopted and on the solutions that are proposed. Moreover, as reframing strategies and tools emerge, the Field Frame Analysis allows us to assess how recommendations can best be aligned with existing practices and how the field's discourse and communication practices may need to change in order to accommodate the reframing process.

Specifically, this study uses a Field Frame Analysis to address the following questions:

Reform Agenda: What are the most prominent issues on the reform agenda of influential organizations in the criminal justice field?

Conceptions of Crime and the Criminal Justice System: How do prominent and influential organizations in the criminal justice field frame crime and the criminal justice system?

Implications: What are the field-level constraints and opportunities for reframing public safety and criminal justice reform?

Using a rigorous methodology (detailed in the Appendix), we undertook a framing analysis of publications produced by 18 organizations frequently referenced in the criminal justice reform field. We coded a total of 216 documents taken from the websites of these organizations, including press releases, mission statements, reports, and blog posts. Major findings from this analysis include:

Absence of a Causal Story: The causes of crime are rarely addressed by influential organizations (only 14% of organizational documents mentioned the causes of crime). This lack of attention to cause in organizational materials leaves space for members of the public to fall back on their most dominant model of crime—that crime is an individual-level phenomenon resulting from poor decision making. This individual-level thinking has been found to block people's ability to consider the role that context plays in shaping individual and social outcomes. [1]

Competing Issue Priorities: The overall agenda of the selected influential organizations is defined by a plethora of reform issues (a total of 16 different issues were identified in the sample). [2] This cacophony of issues and priorities is likely to contribute to the public's sense of the immensity of this problem and of the lack of clear solutions that match the problem's scope. This in turn fuels an already strong sense of fatalism that the public connects to criminal justice reform. [3] Future communications research will focus on developing framing strategies that help the public and policymakers connect proposed solutions to specific policy issues.

Dominance of the Economic Efficiency Value Frame: While no one frame dominated the field's discourse, the value of economic efficiency is the most frequently evoked frame in discussing criminal justice problems (19%) and presenting solutions (22%). Given the current public discourse on the economy, and the difficult budget choices that legislators are making, it is understandable why organizations invoke this frame in discussing potential reforms. Unfortunately, past FrameWorks research has found that using the economic efficiency frame can backfire. It may trigger a consumerist response in which the public considers reforms only to the extent that they save money, thus pushing out of consideration the importance of reforms that improve the system's fairness and effectiveness. We propose to explore the effectiveness of the economic efficiency frame in advancing support for progressive criminal justice policy reforms.

Presence of the Youth Development Frame: Although infrequently cited, a youth development frame is used to communicate problems (8% of all documents) and solutions (17% of all documents) when discussing juvenile reform. When using this frame, organizations discuss causes of crime in developmental terms by drawing on principles of brain plasticity, emphasizing the early and protracted way in which environments and experiences shape brain architecture and have life-long impacts on a wide range of outcomes. The analysis shows that there are multiple opportunities to strengthen and elaborate on this frame—particularly when explaining why juveniles, as a population, are so receptive to rehabilitation, and why it is so important that their treatment is developmentally appropriate.

The Quandary of Addressing Racial Bias in the System: Most progressive advocates would likely agree that the current systemic biases against certain racial groups—which are evident from arrest to detention to prosecution to sentencing—are a major problem and that addressing these biases is a reform priority. Yet, in the field's *materials*, racial bias is infrequently depicted as a major problem (appearing in only 6% of the documents reviewed in the analysis). When it is discussed, racial bias most often appears as one in a long list of other serious problems with the system. The project will be exploring the best way to present facts about the system's biases and the most effective ways of gaining public support for reforms that address these biases.

Dominance of a Government Accountability Frame: The government accountability frame features prominently in the organizational materials included in this study's sample—appearing in 46% of all documents. The use of this frame clearly implies that government action is necessary to reform the system and improve outcomes. However, the highly critical perspectives employed in discussing government responsibility may backfire by cuing powerful American cultural models of government as monolithic, dysfunctional, and ineffective—thereby depressing support for system- and policy-level change.

The results of this Field Frame Analysis point to areas of challenge and opportunity for the criminal justice reform field, particularly now, as a broad, national effort aimed at dismantling mass incarceration is gaining steam. In order for advocates to achieve wider public support for progressive reforms, it is important that they have access to empirically tested frames that they can use to produce the effects on public thinking that they wish to evoke. Continued research and collaboration between FrameWorks and CHHIRJ will test the efficacy of specific frames in advancing a progressive criminal justice reform agenda, and develop recommendations and communication tools for the criminal justice reform field. Here we describe current practice in the field and consider its connection to the "pictures in people's heads," as documented by previous research. [4]

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In 2010, the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race & Justice at Harvard Law School (CHHIRJ) joined forces with FrameWorks Institute, a communications research organization, to initiate a project aimed at creating new communication strategies and messages for promoting progressive reforms in the field of criminal justice. CHHIRJ believed that a growing public awareness of the flaws in our criminal justice system—combined with fiscal issues at the state level, and growing bipartisan support for certain reforms—had opened a window of opportunity for realizing fundamental shifts in public safety, social service delivery and investment structures.

Using new methodologies in communication science, this project employs a cognitive approach to communications that first unearths the cultural models (or ways of understanding the world) that Americans bring to the issues and subsequently uses a multi-method empirical approach to test effective communications recommendations. During the initial phase of this research, FrameWorks produced several foundational research reports that illustrate the nature of the public discourse in the United States, and identify both gaps and opportunities to reshape the public's thinking. Given the research conducted so far, we now know:

- ▶ the key components of the experts' core story, as told by justice advocates across 70 of the most influential criminal justice organizations around the country;

- ▶ the architecture of public thinking around criminal justice issues—essentially, how the public understands crime, the criminal justice system, and policy options;

- ▶ the traps in public thinking (that lead to support for punitive policies) and the gaps in public thinking (where public thinking is shallow as compared to experts); and

- ▶ the dominant frames that play out in social discourse among peers in a community.

In the project's second phase, as we move toward developing and testing "reframes" that support the core story advocates hope to tell, we use a Field Frame Analysis to identify influential organizations in the criminal justice field and map out the top issues and communicative patterns evident in their organizational literature. The analysis captures both the explicit and implicit patterns of communications—or frames—within a sector and points to potential opportunities and field-level constraints for promoting a progressive reform agenda.

METHODS AND DATA

The first step of the Field Frame Analysis involved a link analysis to identify influential organizations in the criminal justice reform field. Communication materials, including mission statements, press releases, blog posts, and reports were then gathered from these organizations to form a sample for the inquiry. These materials were subjected to a frame analysis which identified patterns used in presenting information and discussing issues. Drawing on findings from the cultural models interviews, we looked particularly closely at how influential organizations discuss the root causes of crime, and the common problems and solutions for criminal justice system reform. Once identified, these patterns were compared with results from previous FrameWorks research on how experts and the public think about public safety. This comparison allowed researchers to detect ways in which existing communications may help or hinder further adoption of progressive reform issues. A more detailed explanation of Field Frame Analysis methods and data used for this study is provided in the Appendix.

RESULTS

This section presents the results of the frame analysis. Part A provides an overview of the issues that figure prominently on the reform agenda of influential organizations in the field. Part B identifies how these organizations communicate about the causes of crime. Part C looks at the commonly cited problems and solutions. We identify three emerging narratives of problems and solutions from this data and explore the implications of these narratives for promoting a progressive agenda. Lastly, Part D documents to whom accountability for reform is attributed.

Issues on the Reform Agenda

What are the most prominent issues on the reform agenda of influential organizations in the criminal justice field? To answer this question, we analyzed the prevalence of the primary issues mentioned in the document sample, and found 16 separate issues mentioned in the selected materials of the 18 influential organizations sampled:

1. Cost Efficiency — 17 %
2. Juvenile Justice — 13 %
3. Prisoner Services — 11 %
4. Families and Children Support Services — 9 %
5. Prison Overcrowding — 7 %
6. Victims' Rights — 7 %
7. Racial Disparities — 6 %
8. Community Issues — 5 %
9. Sentencing Reform — 5 %
10. Violent Crime — 4 %
11. Immigration — 3 %
12. Death Penalty — 2 %
13. Non-Violent Crime — 2 %
14. Class Bias — 0.5 %
15. Police Misconduct — 0.5 %
16. Prosecutorial Misconduct — 0.5 %

While a plethora of criminal justice reform issues were identified in the document sample, we found that the causes of crime and social disruption are rarely articulated in these documents.

How Does Crime Happen?

1. No Cause Mentioned — 86 %
2. Child Development Factors — 6 %
3. Ecological (Community) Factors — 5 %
4. Individual Factors — 3 %

Instead of explaining the conditions, policies and practices that contribute to criminal activity, the analysis showed that organizations are more likely to talk about specific problems and solutions with the current system, leaving the public to come to its own conclusions about the causes of crime. As detailed more fully in Section IV, *Implications*, unless provided with an alternative story about the causes of crime, the public is likely to revert to its dominant frame of attributing crime to the "bad" choices made by individuals. This frame tends to lead to increased support for harsh punishments and can hamper communication efforts to advance a progressive criminal justice reform agenda.

From a communications perspective, this is a significant finding. Outside of their organizational materials, progressive advocates often point out that the causes of crime are complex and ecological, deeply related to opportunities provided in education, jobs, family environment and other environmental factors. And, because of that, they argue the need to revamp budget priorities, so as to increase the social and economic opportunities that lead to reduced criminal activity. In the organizational literature, however, these explanations are infrequent (only 5% of documents discuss ecological causal factors and only 6% cite developmental factors) and in the vast majority of cases (86%) no cause of crime is articulated.

Problem and Solution Frames

The following table presents the most often cited frames used to discuss problems and solutions within the criminal justice system.

Main problem with the CJS	Count	Percent
No Problem Mentioned	83	39
Ineffective/Overcrowded/Costly	41	19
Legal Bias	21	10
No Youth Development Perspective	18	8
Lack of Prisoner Programs/Services	14	7
Race Bias	11	5
No Violence Threshold	8	4
Lack of Community Services	6	3
Offender Accountability/Prevention	6	3
Victims' Rights	6	3
Class Bias	1	0

Main solution for reform for CJS	Count	Percent
No Solution Mentioned	53	25
Cost Efficiency	47	22
Legal/Evidence System Reform	39	18
Developmental/Behavioral Solutions	37	17
Restorative/Community Justice	12	6
Violence Threshold Legal Reform	12	6
Community Services/Programs	9	4
More Police/Corrections	4	2
Rehabilitative Solutions (job training, education)	3	1

Within these problem and solution presentations there is an important set of frames at work. We outline these below:

A Dominant Economic Efficiency Frame: The economic efficiency frame is the most often cited for discussing criminal justice problems (19%) and solutions (22%). This frame is used primarily to discuss problems related to an overcrowded, costly and inefficient system and solutions aimed at increasing cost efficiency and improving management. Consider the following example of how the economic efficiency frame is used in these documents:

> "The size and cost of America's prison system has skyrocketed during the last few decades, largely as a result of laws and policies that put more offenders behind bars and keep them there longer. Yet recidivism rates remain stubbornly high, and crime still is a major public concern. State policy makers across the nation are asking whether soaring prison budgets are the best path to public safety. Increasingly, they are finding the answer is 'No.'" [5]

This frame primarily tries to suggest that a leaner system should be the goal of reforms. Reforms are important, according to this frame, because they will save money and make the system more effective, not because they will address the system's biases or the root causes of crime.

In implementing this frame, advocates tended to cite a "laundry list" of statistics about the costs of the current system and the numbers of Americans currently in the system. We provide three examples below to illustrate the phenomenon:

> "The Bureau of Justice Statistics routinely monitors correctional statistics. When they reported that the number of U.S. adults in prison had reached 1 in 100, the alarm finally sounded. More disquieting is the fact that 1 in 31 adults is under some form of correctional control." [6]

> "Prisoners released in 2009 served an average of nine additional months in custody, or 36 percent longer, than offenders released in 1990, according to a report released today….The study found that for offenders released from their original sentence in 2009 alone, the additional time behind bars cost states $23,300 per offender, or a total of over $10 billion, more than half of which was for non-violent offenders." [7]

> "According to the report, it costs states between $18,000 and $30,000 per prisoner per year, and of the 2.3 million people incarcerated nationally, the vast majority are housed in state prison systems. Over the past 25 years, state corrections spending has grown 674 percent, according to the report, outpacing the growth of other government expenditures and making corrections the fourth-largest category of state spending. The report also finds that since the late 1980s, 14 states have doubled their spending and 30 states have increased their spending by half." [8]

Another common pattern in this narrative is the tendency to use investment language about costs and benefits of the system. The following examples illustrate the use of this type of language:

> "With this growth in prison population has brought rising costs. Across states, investment in corrections has jumped more than 300 percent in the past two decades, with expenditures now totaling more than $5 billion annually, or 7.3 percent of all state general fund spending." [9]

> "These troubling national figures should accelerate the trend toward policies that will give taxpayers a better public safety return on their massive expenditure on incarceration." [10]

When it comes to talking about solutions through an economic efficiency frame, organizations mention three types of approaches. Those include policies based on cost-benefit analyses, less expensive incarceration alternatives, and the use of surveillance technology. Using the economic efficiency frame, the range of solutions offered are centered primarily on reducing costs, not necessarily on making the system more fair.

Legal and Racial Bias Frames: The legal bias frame is sometimes used to discuss problems (10%) and solutions (18%) within the criminal justice system. This frame is relatively straightforward. In these documents, there are discussions of a law that is considered unfair and/or injurious and the solution is to change or eliminate it. The majority of these discussions are related to drug laws.

While race is not the specific focus, the legal bias frame is often used to discuss policies that are considered unfair to certain groups. This appeared most often in discussions related to legal bias and reform concerning marijuana use. For example:

> "Despite marijuana having been decriminalized since 1977, tens of thousands of mostly black and Latino young people are arrested after a police officer asks them to take marijuana out of their pocket during a stop-and-frisk,' said Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito. 'These reforms will go a long way to change that, ending the unjust criminalization of our youth." [11]

Organizations specifically discuss racial bias as a major problem in the criminal justice system in 6% of the total documents. In these documents, the racial bias frame almost always refers to African American and/or Latino men. These discussions often invoke the "prison pipeline" phenomenon in which African American and Latino male youth are systematically discriminated against at multiple touch points. For example,

Black men and boys face major racial disparities, unequal opportunities, and achievement gaps at nearly every stage in life including early childhood, primary and secondary school, college, and employment. For example, by 2004, 50 percent of black men in their 20s who lacked a college education were jobless, as were 72 percent of high school dropouts; 42 percent of all black boys have failed an entire grade at least once and only 18 percent of black men ages 20-21 are enrolled in college. The Bureau of Justice Statistics projected that 28 percent of black males in America will serve some time in state or federal prison. [12]

The Developmental Frame: Although less frequently cited, the youth development frame is used with some regularity to communicate problems (8% of all documents) and solutions (17% of all documents) for criminal justice reform. In these documents, there is a clearer causal linkage between the problem with the current system (lack of a developmental perspective) and the appropriate solution (reforms based on principles of developmental and prevention science).

Developmental frames are used to emphasize the role of supportive environments and early experiences in preventing juvenile crime—a pattern closely aligned with the more ecological story on how environmental, social, and individual factors interact to cause juvenile crime and delinquency. For example,

"We can't have a public health response to youth violence unless the health system steps up to meet the mental health needs of D.C. children," said Shannon Hall, Executive Director of the D.C. Behavioral Health Association. In addition, many of these youth are exposed to traumatic experiences ranging from abuse or neglect, to exposure to community violence, to loss of a caregiver, which can impact how a child responds to stress, resulting in behaviors that lead to encounters with the justice system. In 2011, over 40% of juvenile arrests occurred in wards 7 and 8." [13]

The economic efficiency frame is sometimes evoked in conjunction with a developmental frame to discuss developmentally based reforms of systems and policies for justice-involved youth. That is, while the solutions described are still either explicitly or implicitly based on developmental principles, the application of these principles to the juvenile justice system is often justified by references to cost-savings and improved effectiveness. One can see how this discourse shows up in the following two examples:

"Despite their exorbitant daily costs, youth corrections facilities are typically ill-prepared to address the needs of confined youth. Many of these commitments are motivated by the court's desire to address the needs of young people (e.g., mental health conditions, learning disabilities, substance abuse). However, few if any of these facilities actually offer high-quality services and the correctional environment itself is generally antithetical to therapeutic endeavors." [14]

"The incarceration of juvenile offenders in ineffective and violence-plagued correctional institutions harms juveniles and fails to deter youth crime while costing taxpayers $88,000 per youth annually…" [15]

The Government Accountability Frame: The analysis also examines the ways in which influential organizations discuss accountability for reform. We present the results of that analysis below:

Who is responsible for reform?	Count	Percent
Government Only (Federal, State, and/or Local)	99	46
No Accountability Mentioned	72	34
Government and Communities Together	36	17
Community Only	6	3

The most frequently evoked attribution of responsibility is the government accountability frame (46%). This frame is used to discuss the roles that federal, state, and/or local governments play in stimulating and implementing reform. Sometimes this frame is used to communicate a positive role for government in implementing reform and spearheading innovative legislation, as illustrated in the following example:

> "The Missouri Model: Reinventing the Practice of Rehabilitating Youthful Offenders …presents the rationale for reform based on better outcomes for youth and more cost effectiveness for states. The report also provides a comprehensive analysis of the 'nuts and bolts' of the model used by the Missouri Department of Youth Services (DYS) so others can similarly improve their juvenile facilities." [16]

In this example, the Missouri state government is portrayed as a leader in implementing reforms that lead to better outcomes for youthful offenders. While most documents that attribute responsibility for reform to government actors portray government in a relatively positive light, some describe government as an *ineffective* agent of reform. They describe how government's inefficiency and dysfunction hamper reform efforts, as illustrated in the example below:

> "Last night, lawmakers in Albany failed to reach agreement on legislation to reduce the staggering number of unlawful, biased arrests for marijuana possession in New York. The proposal, unveiled by Governor Andrew Cuomo two weeks ago and introduced in the Assembly by Assembly member Hakeem Jeffries, was widely seen as a responsible measure to address the inconsistency and unfairness in the marijuana possession laws in New York. Yet Senate Republicans refused to take up the matter, appearing shaken and frightened by threats from Conservative Party Leader Mike Long, who declared he would pull the Conservative Party line from anyone who supported the measure. The Senate – in what can only be called a stunning failure of leadership – then refused to take up the legislation, undermining reform." [17]

In this section, we have presented the communicative trends among influential organizations in the criminal justice field. In the next section, we dig deeper into the implications and opportunities for telling a reframed story and identify frame elements that merit testing in further stages of research.

IMPLICATIONS

Complexity of the agenda contributes to the public's sense of the issue's intractability. Clearly there is a complex program and policy agenda here. With no issue dominating even 20% of the documents, identifying overall reform priorities for influential organizations in the criminal justice field is extremely difficult. The plethora of issues discussed in these materials also increases the likelihood that criminal justice reform will be perceived by the public as too complicated and the problems too numerous to address.

FrameWorks' prior research on the "policy overload" agenda of progressive advocates illustrates this phenomenon. [18] Author Frank Gilliam writes, "The sheer magnitude of policy proposals confuses the public about a reform agenda. Moreover, it splits the reform constituency and oftentimes pits reformers against each other." [19] Given that both decision-making organizations and progressive advocates communicate a "laundry list" of policy issues in their communications materials, it is easy to see how the public arrives at the conclusion that problems with the current criminal justice system are intractable. [20]

Missing cause leaves room for default cultural models. When organizations present incomplete explanations of a socio-political problem, the public uses its readily available ways of understanding—what anthropologists call the dominant cultural models [21]—to interpret that information. In other words, unless a clear ecological or systemic cause of crime is articulated, the American public remains entrenched in its rational actor/individual accountability "default setting." This setting leads to decreased support for the systemic reforms that criminal justice reform advocates seek.

Economic efficiency frame may impede arguments about non-financial system outcomes. The economic efficiency frame can be applied to almost any problem within the criminal justice system. Any expense is too much expense. Unfortunately, those programs that may be most effective at addressing systemic issues, such as therapeutic residential settings for at-risk youth, may be considered "too costly" when considered through this frame. In addition, the notion of reinvesting funds diverted from incarceration into communities hardest hit by violence and crime may be devoured by this message. Clearly, further evidence is needed about the framing effects of this common communications practice.

Discussions of government present mixed implications. The messages put forth by progressive advocates and experts clearly imply that government action is necessary for reform. Some also state the need for communities and governments to work together. However, there is a tendency for these discussions to get caught in a trap of describing government's failings—its corruption, waste and ineptitude. FrameWorks' research has shown that this way of looking at government is easy for Americans to adopt but highly unproductive in efforts to increase public support for progressive reforms. [22]

OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND DISCUSSIONS OF PROGRESSIVE REFORM

The absence of one dominant issue or frame across the documents analyzed here creates an opportunity to introduce a new story. In this section, we discuss potential frame elements that we will be testing in the prescriptive phase of our research process. These constitute hypotheses about effective ways to tell a story that capture the understanding of experts and increases public support for progressive reform.

Opportunity #1: Can a causal story strengthen public connections between social determinants and public safety?
We hypothesize that, by communicating the underlying, systemic causes of crime, we can deepen the public's appreciation for more progressive and realistic reforms. Such a causal story would link larger social and economic factors with the problems of the current system. Bringing in the causal story enables the public to consider viable solutions with wide societal benefits. In framing terms, this is called using an "explanatory chain." An explanatory chain begins with the initial factor of the problem, explains how the problem is complicated through mediating factors, and then describes the final outcome. So, as an example related to the issue at hand, a causal story begins with an initial factor (unemployment among young men in low-income communities), mediating factors (increased police presence and drug possession laws), and a final consequence (more low-income, young men in prison). We strongly suspect that, once we have established the initial factor, it will be easier for the public to conceive of a systemic solution (increase job opportunities in low-income neighborhoods).

Opportunity #2: Can the values of prevention and cost efficiency contribute to better understanding of the economics of reform?
It is clear that the field has endorsed the value of cost efficiency as a way to drive home the need for reform. It will be important to understand the effects that evoking such a value has on a broad range of progressive reform policies. In the past, FrameWorks' research has found the value of societal prevention to work effectively when systems reform is at issue. We intend to include both of these values in an upcoming survey experiment. Their inclusion in the experiment will help experts and advocates understand the relative impacts of these values and adjust their communications practice accordingly. Put simply, this experiment will help criminal justice reform advocates determine what societal goals to link to this issue in order to advance public thinking.

Opportunity #3: Can the value of "fairness between places" be used to communicate racial biases in the system?
Talking about racial biases in the system is a difficult challenge. Advocates have received highly contradictory information and guidance concerning how and when to address race, especially when communicating about the criminal justice system. In recent years, as the stark racial disparities that exist at every phase of the criminal justice system—from arrest to detention to adjudication to sentencing—have become clear, many advocates have argued that, rather than downplaying the racial inequities within the criminal justice system, these should be highlighted. Indeed, some argue that over-incarceration of African Americans, in particular, should be viewed as the civil rights issue of our time. [23] FrameWorks has found the value of "fairness between places" to be particularly helpful in getting people to see that inequities are built into systems, not merely administered by faulty individuals who lack judgment.

The "fairness between places" frame is imbued with systems thinking and identifies solutions that will reduce disparities across communities. When framed as being about place, in other words, the concept of fairness works to structuralize the issue of disparities. The effects of the "fairness between places" frame on support for race-based policies are significant and consistent. As executed in our research, the "fairness between places" frame suggests that certain communities are struggling because they are not given a fair chance to do well and that programs and services are not fairly distributed across all communities. The solution is to level the playing field so that all communities have equal access to the resources they need to thrive. [24]

We propose to test this values frame to see if it can enable Americans to look at the systemic biases built into the criminal justice system that affect citizens in all communities. [25]

Opportunity #4: Can talk about the science of early child development build support for juvenile justice reforms?
The Field Frame Analysis shows that the field is beginning to use a developmental perspective in communicating about juvenile justice reform. We are interested to know whether this perspective can be strengthened through the introduction of tested frame elements that emerge from framing the science of early childhood development. [26] These might include explanations of: sensitive periods of brain plasticity, the effects of toxic stress on brain architecture and long-term behavioral outcomes, the process of "serve and return" in building healthy brain architecture, or the critical development of executive function (the brain's "air traffic control system") in early childhood. [27] Such frame elements might be repurposed to help the public and policymakers understand why preventing juvenile crime requires providing children in all communities with access to stable and supportive environments. It may also help the public understand why it is so critical that children and youth who are court-involved receive developmentally appropriate treatment that differs significantly from treatment provided to adults. Existing research from the project suggests that this is a promising strategy. [28]

Having now mapped the opportunities and hypotheses that emerge from examining the communications practices of influential decision-making organizations in the field, the project will use these findings to develop tested frame elements in the prescriptive stage of the project.

CONECLUSION

A recent report titled *Ending Mass Incarceration: Charting a New Justice Reinvestment* [29] documents the critical moment in time in which the criminal justice reform movement finds itself. Due to the successful efforts of advocates, many states have adopted common-sense reforms aimed at safely reducing the historic levels of incarceration in this country. There is now a growing movement across political ideologies to enact reforms aimed at curbing some of the policies and laws that contribute to such high rates of imprisonment (such as mandatory minimum sentences for drug use). On the other hand, the nation has been steadily building the infrastructure to support mass incarceration for decades, and efforts to dismantle those structures will be met with fierce resistance by powerful constituencies. The report concludes that a robust and sophisticated public communications strategy is needed to ensure that advocates continue to successfully push for meaningful reforms aimed at safely reducing our prison population and at reinvesting these funds in the communities that need them the most.

It is our belief that this analysis can contribute to that larger effort by illustrating how written materials produced by the "gatekeepers" of the criminal justice reform movement (including press releases, reports, blog posts, and mission statements) might strengthen public support for such reforms. To do so, the organizations producing these materials need to help shift dominant public thinking away from "tough on crime" and "individual actor" frames to more systemic analyses of structural impediments and societal implications for maintaining current levels of incarceration.

How exactly they might do this lies beyond the framework of this report. However, by examining current practice in detail, and comparing this to our own body of existing research on framing effects, we are able to make a series of hypotheses about reframing opportunities that can be tested. Ultimately, we hope that this analysis and subsequent findings will contribute to the development and implementation of an effective, coordinated and disciplined messaging strategy that is widely embraced by those seeking a humane, equitable, and effective criminal justice system.

APPENDIX—METHODS

An organizational field represents "those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life."[30] In the criminal justice field, several types of organizations, including non-profits, member associations, government agencies, for-profit companies, foundations, research organizations and education institutions play a role in shaping programs and policies, and constitute the "field." While these organizations can be said to share the overall goal of improving the criminal justice system, there are marked differences in ideological perspectives on how to achieve this end. As such, the criminal justice reform field is in an "episode of contention," in which new forms of action and meaning are continually being proposed and negotiated.[31] These groups, therefore, are engaged in framing struggles as they vie for consensus around particular policy positions and conceptions of their field and its work and goals. A Field Frame Analysis is designed to capture and interpret the implications of these framing struggles for those advocating specific issues and positions.

To identify specific organizations and assess their relative influence and reputation within networks, researchers are increasingly turning to link analysis.[32] Link analysis uses hyperlinks on organizational websites as raw data to determine issue networks and organizational prominence within those networks. This social science method is based on the premise that "modern communication is increasingly organized around computer-mediated technologies," and that the Internet serves as a public repository for information about organizations and their goals, activities, networks and relative influence.[33] On the Web, an organization's influence is "strongly correlated with the organization's reputation for providing reliable and credible information."[34] This reputation can be measured through the density of links between organizational sites as a proxy for the reliability and credibility of that information.

In the current study, we used Issue Crawler software to identify organizations from which to draw materials that would form our sample. Issue Crawler "crawls" an identified set of organizational sites, looking for links and outlinks to other sites. The software then compiles these as data for analysis.[35] Issue Crawler must first be provided with a set of organizations from which to begin a particular crawl. In this case, the research team (in consultation with criminal justice experts) generated a list of over 146 organizations active in the education reform field.[36] These included governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, foundations, research organizations, member associations and for-profit companies. The team then provided Issue Crawler with the URLs from each of these organizations and began the crawl.

Issue Crawler identified all the outgoing and incoming links from each organizational site, and then compiled the shared links (or co-links) between organizations. From this list of shared links, Issue Crawler generated a "sociogram" of the relationships between organizations most actively linked to in the criminal justice reform field.

Each node in the sociogram depicted on the oppostie page represents an organization. The size of the node indicates the number of times that an organization is linked to by other organizations in the field. In this way, the size of the point associated with each organization provides a proxy for that association's reputability and influence in their network.[37] It should also be noted that Issue Crawler detects the use of social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook and Vimeo, which are used as intermediary platforms for sharing links between organizations. In the sociogram above, Twitter has the largest node. This does not mean that Twitter is necessarily an influential organization in the network, but rather that it is a "middle man" frequently used by organizations in this network to share information with one another.

PUBLIC SAFETY ORGANIZATIONS
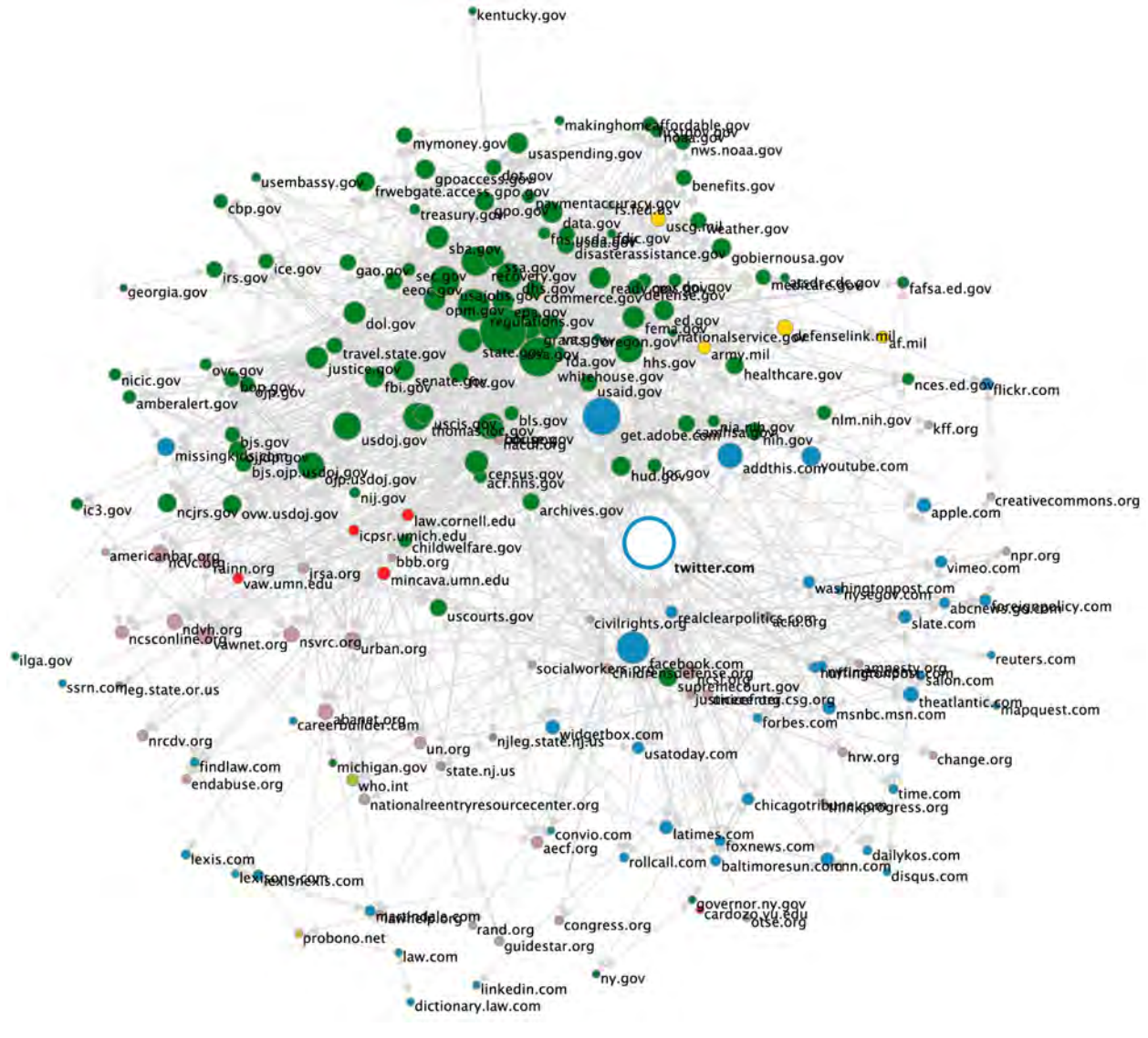
A group of criminal justice experts were then consulted to triangulate the Issue Crawler results and winnow the number of organizations that the crawl had identified as "influential." From this triangulation and refinement process, we selected 18 organizations to include in our content and frame analysis.

These are:

- ► The Sentencing Project
- ► Bureau of Justice Statistics
- ► Justice Policy Institute
- ► Vera Institute of Justice
- ► U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs
- ► U.S. Department of Justice Federal Bureau of Prisons
- ► U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
- ► American Civil Liberties Union
- ► Drug Policy Alliance
- ► Urban Institute
- ► National Center for Victims of Crime
- ► American Probation and Parole Association
- ► Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- ► Annie E. Casey Foundation
- ► Open Society Foundations
- ► Pew Charitable Trusts
- ► NAACP
- ► Right on Crime

These organizations can be classified in the following way:

Government Agencies:	4
Foundations:	3
Membership Organizations:	4
Non-Partisan Policy:	2
Advocacy NGOs:	5

The research team then formed a sample of materials for analysis by collecting the following from each of the organizations that emerged from this multi-method identification process: 10-12 randomly selected press releases related to criminal justice reform programs and policies, two recent reports, and the "about us" information on the organization's website. In total, the sample consisted of 216 materials drawn from these organizations.

The next step was to construct a codebook that could be used to gather data from the sample of materials. The codebook was constructed based on a qualitative thematic analysis of a randomly chosen sub-sample of 40 materials from the larger sample of 216. Our codebook included coding categories drawn from prior FrameWorks research on common understandings among the public and experts about crime and criminal justice reform. Additionally, we subjected the sub-sample to a qualitative thematic analysis that used a grounded theory approach to identify primary issues, policies and programs regularly mentioned in the criminal justice reform field.

After the codebook was developed, two researchers were trained in its application and participated in an inter-coder reliability test through Dedoose qualitative software. After achieving a satisfactory measure of inter-coder reliability, the full sample of documents was coded out. All materials were coded at the document level. The quantitative data that resulted from this coding process were statistically analyzed to examine code frequencies. The final part of our research involved a frame analysis in which we qualitatively examined the language patterns used to communicate the causes of crime, problems and solutions to the criminal justice system, and reform accountability.

Because several advocacy organizations also regularly produce and release reports that are aimed at legislators, the media, and the public, we also searched for distinctions between the language and framing they use in widely re-leased written reports and the way in which they discuss the criminal justice system amongst other advocates. In this analysis, we identified and discussed the discrepancies between the "story" that advocates would like to tell and the implications of the language and framing that they use in their written materials.

ENDNOTES

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36   Link analysis is used to maximum effect, however, when triangulated with established research methods to validate a sample of influential organizations. As critics have noted, there are several social factors that underlie link creation that may hinder a completely quantitative framework for assessing and sampling influential organizations based on link analysis. Thelwall, M. (2005). Interpreting social science link analysis research: A theoretical framework. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 57(1), 60-68. In order to remedy these shortcomings, we used link analysis in conjunction with a snowball sampling method with established education reform experts and scholars.

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