National Voices Project

Understanding barriers  
Measuring opportunities  
Informing initiatives for change  

For children - through the voices of adults in their communities

Impact Report:  
Framing and Narrative Strategies to Promote Racial Justice in Education
Introduction

In March/April 2014 the National Voices Project conducted a survey in partnership with Race Forward. The survey research questions were designed to examine framing and narrative strategies to promote racial justice in education.

The National Voices Project (NVP) is conducted in partnership with GfK, an international survey research organization that maintains KnowledgePanel®, a nationally representative web-enabled panel of adult members of households across the United States. Survey respondents included 2,400 adults from 50 states and D.C. that work or volunteer with children. 1,253 respondents have jobs that affect education, healthcare, economic opportunities, or community and civic engagement for children. Another 1,147 respondents volunteer in ways that affect education, healthcare, economic opportunities, or community and civic engagement for children.

The March/April 2014 NVP survey was also fielded in Spanish via a supplemental panel who preferred to answer in Spanish. Overall, 943 individuals participated by using the Spanish-language version and 206 were eligible to complete the full questionnaire.

Background

In collaboration, we developed a series of questions to examine narrative framing strategies to promote racial justice in education. The framing strategies were identified by Race Forward; the NVP team designed vignettes to correspond with each framing strategy.

We generated a measure of the framing story's overall impact by measuring the proportions of respondents who found a particular story to be "helpful" in addressing barriers to increasing resources for schools that serve low-income students and students of color, among individuals who identified specific barriers in their communities. Narrative frames were presented to respondents using a randomized study design, in which respondents were shown one frame and asked to indicate whether they thought that the vignette they read would be helpful in addressing barriers to increasing resources for schools that serve low-income children and children of color.

If the perceived barrier is...  The most helpful framing story was...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segregation</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Appealing to public's budgetary self-interest</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Segregation is &quot;normal&quot;, and naturally produced by personal preferences.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>Ensuring that &quot;hero&quot; stories have structural focus</th>
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<tr>
<td>There is not enough good education to go around.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Parents not committed</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Telling the stories of young people</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents of color are not committed to their children's education.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Not hardworking</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Telling the stories of young people</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students of color are not hardworking, and are therefore undeserving of resources.</td>
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<th>Government involvement</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Telling the stories of young people</th>
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<tr>
<td>Government should be less involved in public school education.</td>
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There was no single framing story that was perceived as most effective in addressing the broad array of perceived barriers. Among respondents who reported segregation as a barrier, 72% say that story B ("budgetary self-interest") would be helpful to address this barrier. Only 47% of adults who reported barriers related to perceptions of students of color as "not hardworking" said that story B would be helpful, with higher proportions endorsing story A and story C.

When weighted by the prevalence of perceived barriers and analyzed across a variety of key respondent demographic characteristics (see above), it was evident that each of the stories had salience, but for different sociodemographic groups within the population. This demonstrates the complexity of a narrative frame's effectiveness in addressing different barriers, across different communities.

Narrative frames may be used to promote social justice related to educational opportunities for children of color.

The diversity of perceptions about barriers to public support of education means that multiple narratives will be required to engage the full spectrum of community members effectively.

Racial/ethnic identity was frequently a factor among respondents in determining the frame of greatest likely impact.

Analyses like this one, designed to test the effectiveness of narrative framing strategies, can inform training efforts for racial and social justice advocates and educators to advance racially just outcomes.

Narrative frame studies could be used to examine the potential impact of a sequence of narrative frames, rather than just one. It is possible that some individuals may be more positively affected through hearing multiple frames, while other individuals may be distracted.

It would also be possible to assess whether giving respondents the opportunity to choose their narrative frame (e.g., as a choice of news "headlines") will lead to more positive impact of narrative on perceptions of barriers.
Mission of the National Voices Project

Led by researchers at the University of Michigan, the National Voices Project is an effort to bring the perspectives of thousands of people in communities across the United States to the national dialogue about opportunities and barriers for children related to race/ethnicity. For more information, visit the project website: NationalVoicesProject.org.

The National Voices Project team is grateful for the support and collaboration of the W.K.Kellogg Foundation, through the America Healing Initiative.

For this survey on framing and narrative strategies, NVP partnered with Race Forward. The mission of Race Forward is to build awareness, solutions and leadership for racial justice by generating transformative ideas, information and experiences. They define racial justice as the systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all and they work to advance racial justice through media, research, and leadership development.

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