



Reframing Affordable Housing

Turning communication backfires into a blueprint for framing
research

Invited by
Housing Virginia

June 6, 2017

Mackenzie Price, PhD, *Associate*
Research Interpretation and Application Unit

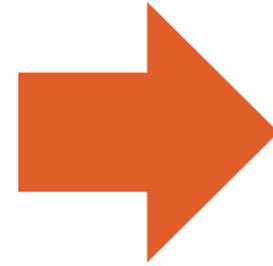
What is a **Frame**?

Frames are sets of choices about how information is presented:

What to emphasize, how to explain it, and what to leave unsaid.

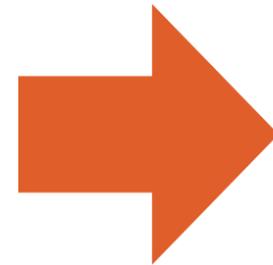
Understanding Is Frame Dependent

Given the importance of free speech, would you favor allowing a hate group to hold a political rally?



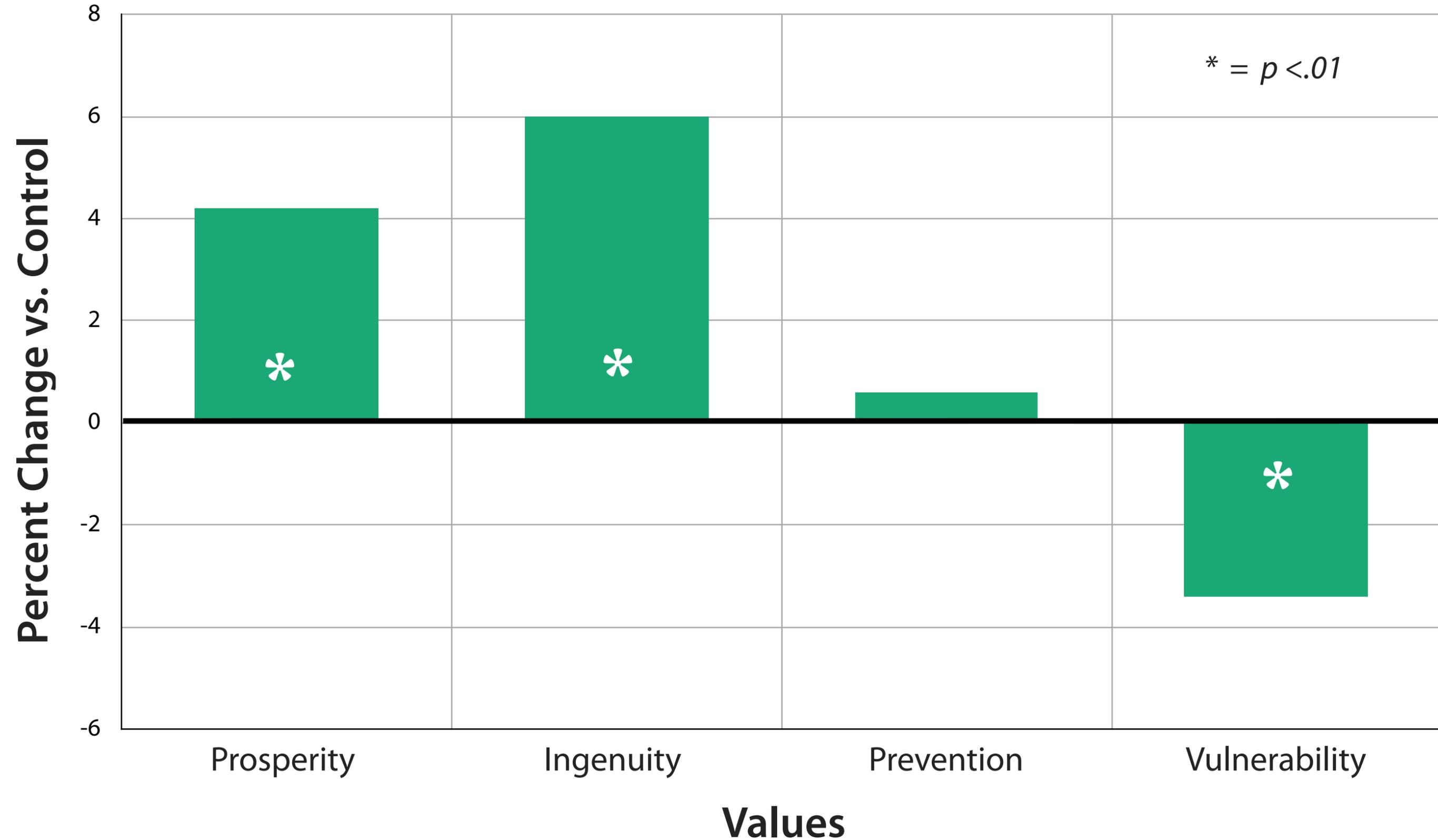
85% in Favor

Given the risk of violence, would you favor allowing a hate group to hold a political rally?

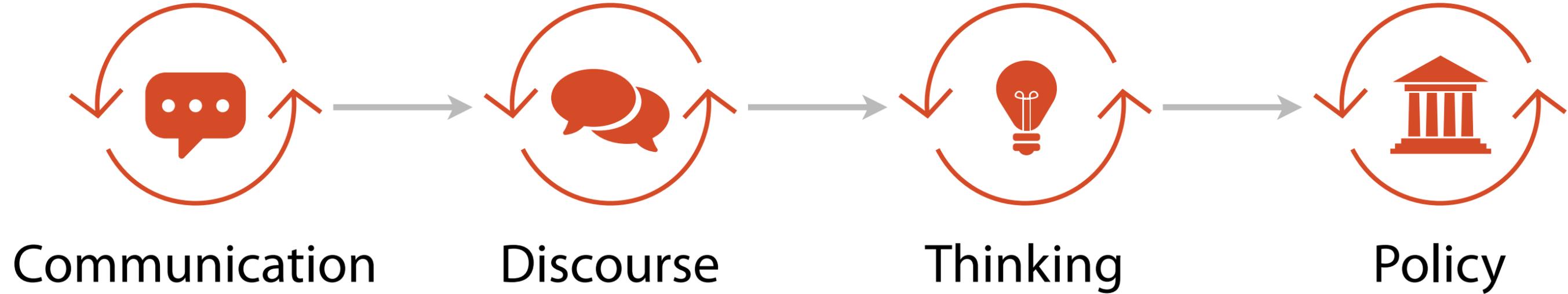


40% in Favor

Understanding is Frame Dependent



Frames Can Help Make Change



You Say ... They Think

CULTURE!

It's not fair that are groups p
country who simply cannot
housing. It's important that
policies and design progr
quality housing affordable
these people.

community have housing.
rd and it may be difficult,
I know has four walls and
head. Why should another
ity to pay their rent be my

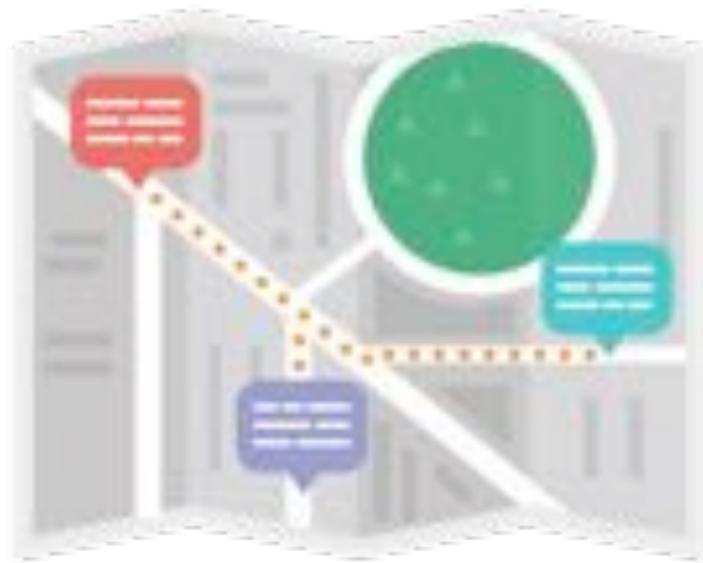


Expert/Advocate



Public

What does it take to reframe an issue?



Understand What
You're Up Against



Map the Gaps



Develop/Test
Frames and Stories

**Backfires are one step of
reframing work**

Backfires reflect patterns in thinking

**Patterns can
block issue
engagement**

- 📌 Mobility, Personal Responsibility, and Self-Makingness*
- 📌 Separate Fates and Zero-Sum Thinking*
- 📌 Thin Understanding of Cause and Effect*
- 📌 Crisis and Fatalism*
- 📌 Segregation is Natural*
- 📌 Facts Don't Fit the (Pre-existing) Frame*

**“Housing” =
Assisted Housing**

Fatalism

Individualism

- Mentalism
- Individual Responsibility
- The Good Old Days
- Evil Slumlord

Government

- Responsible for Regulating Rentals
- Inefficient and Corrupts

What's in the swamp of...

Housing

Context

- Protection from Outside World
- What Surrounds Us Shapes Us
- Open Children

Consumerism

- Rising Costs
- Just the Basics
- Segregation is Natural

Housing as Threat

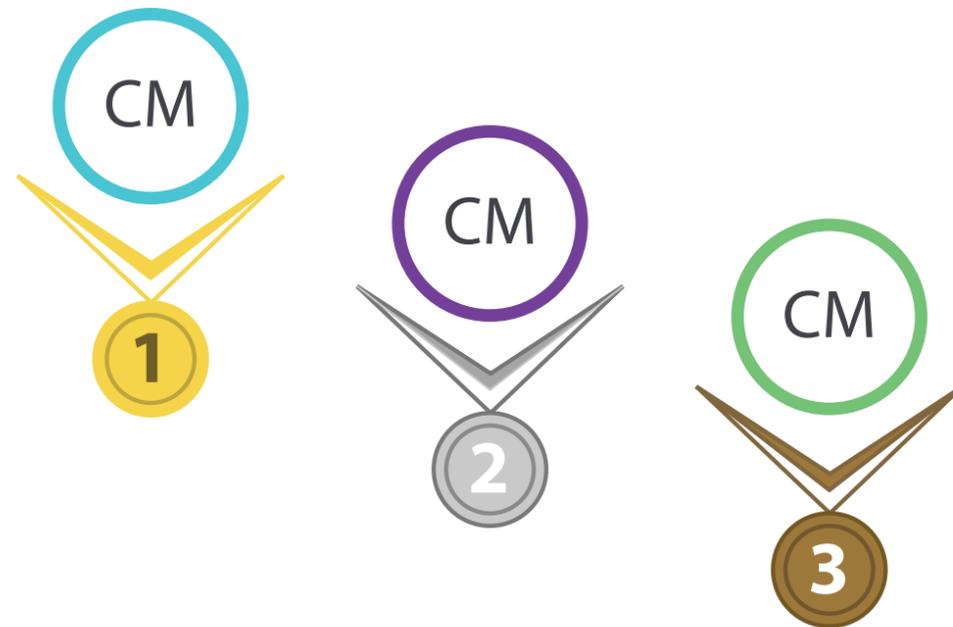
- Healthy Housing = Do No Harm
- Visible Contaminants
- Stress Affects Health

Cultural Models:

The Basis of Strategic Communications



Multiple models available



Some are more productive than others



Choose the cues that activate productive models



Tools to Navigate the Swamp



Frame Elements Shape Understanding

tone establishes the issue as explanatory and reasonable and for “everyone,” not just those who already agree with the point of view being expressed.

values remind people of what’s at stake, helping them connect their existing ideals and principles to an issue.

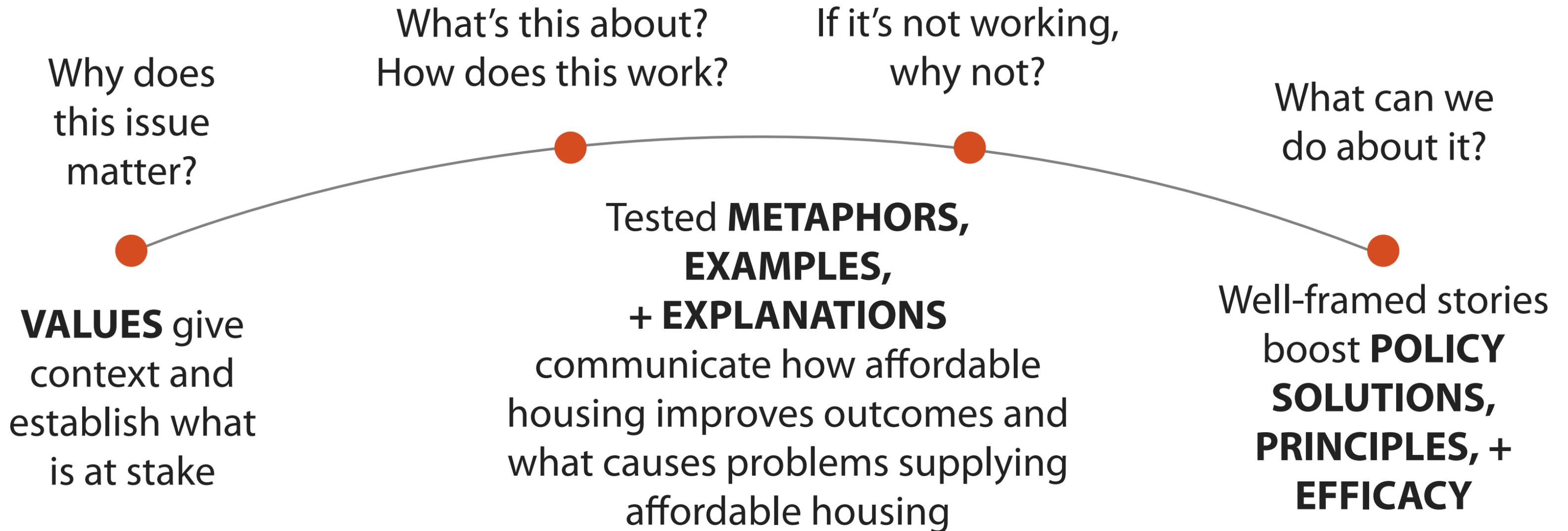
EXPLANATORY METAPHORS recruit people’s everyday knowledge to help them understand how social issues work and reason more effectively about public solutions.

EXPLANATORY CHAINS illustrate and illuminate a concept, focusing on aspects that deepen understanding, motivate engagement, and drive policy support.

NARRATIVE uses familiar cognitive paths to lead people to a new, but satisfying, understanding.

A narrative for affordable housing

Answering the public's big questions



Housing Affordability Explanation

The current lack of affordable rental housing is the result of problems with the housing market. In recent years, tight standards for mortgage loans and high home prices have made it impossible for many people to buy homes, causing more people to become renters. Large numbers of renters and a scarce supply of rental housing have driven up rents. As rents have increased, wages for low- and middle-income households have not, which forces more families to spend larger portions of their incomes on housing, leaving less money for other needs, like nutritious food, good healthcare, and quality childcare. To make sure people can get decent housing at reasonable costs, we need to take steps to fix these problems with the housing market.



Diffusing *Consumerism*

Within a *Consumerism* frame



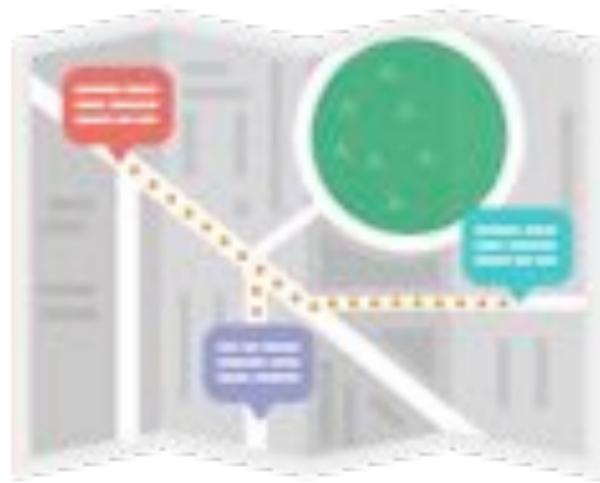
- “You get what you pay for” thinking is naturalized
- Disparities in housing quality are natural and acceptable
- The suggested solutions are often individual (e.g. financial planning education)
- **Framing Recommendation:** Talk about community/neighborhood level solutions. Avoid framing individuals as consumers and a focus on housing choices.

Field Notes: Peer Discourse Sessions



- Conversations about affordable housing often slip into conversations about employment.
- Data and unframed facts cue fatalistic thinking.
- *Opportunity with Interdependence* values messaging can redirect away from consumerist and individualist thinking.
- **Framing Recommendation:** Provide examples of policies that increase affordability.

What Else Does it Take to Reframe an Issue?



Map the Terrain



Develop a Strategy to
Navigate to Higher Ground



Build a Caravan,
Equip the Travelers,
and Start Moving

Thank you!



www.frameworksinstitute.org



@FrameWorksInst



FrameWorks Institute

© 2017 FrameWorks Institute.

Slides in this presentation were developed by the FrameWorks Institute for individual use and cannot be represented, adapted or distributed without the express written permission of FrameWorks. All images in this presentation are licensed for the purpose of this presentation only and may not be reproduced elsewhere.