A Tale of Two Counties: An Analysis of Language from Ensuring Opportunity
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Introduction

We all want to believe ourselves creatures of reason, swayed chiefly by the facts before us. But much of the mechanism used to process information, the means by which we formulate judgments, lies beyond our conscious awareness and thus outside our deliberate control. We know only what we *think* that we think; experimental evidence shows that a turn of phrase, ordering of an argument, particular messenger shifts what we deem "true" and desire as social policy.[1]

Looking at the linguistic mechanics of discourse on POVERTY,[2] it's common to see ideas implied at odds with communication objectives. Take, for illustration, the tendency to suggest antagonism toward POVERTY itself, even as you desire to make the case for changing the rules that create or exacerbate economic hardship.

How should advocates put forth arguments? How do we argue that people in Contra Costa must have the resources they need to thrive?

To answer, we must first consider how we currently speak about POVERTY and related issues. Findings here are from over 1000 data points from your own advocacy on this issue, including 25 one on one interviews. This analysis rests upon extensive research into how people make sense of and come to judgments on issues such as INEQUALITY.

After introducing the methodology, I highlight some broad conceptual challenges you face. From there, I explore what you convey about poverty and how you're articulating your goal to your audiences. Next, I turn to the issue of over-reliance on passive voice and examine the core metaphors at work in broader discourse on poverty, more specifically. Finally, I look at language about "the poor."

Language analysis represents a "you are here" dot — pointing out how people reason. It's heavy on diagnosis and light on cure, a necessary element of this stage of the work. This said, I've included separately a document summarizing proven approaches for communicating on these issues.

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[1] The most comprehensive, among many sources, on this is Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011)

[2] Throughout, small caps are used to designate a concept as opposed to standard usage of a word.

Methodology

Using a variety of techniques from *cognitive linguistics*, a field dedicated to how people process information and communicate, I've examined how people reason and come to conclusions about social issues.

Principally, these conclusions emerge from *metaphor analysis*. This involves cataloging common non-literal phrases in discourse. Noting patterns in these expressions reveals how people unconsciously make sense of complexity. Each metaphor brings with it *entailments*, or a set of notions it highlights as "true" about a concept.[3] Priming people with varying metaphors has been shown to alter the ways they decide, unconsciously, what "ought" to be done about a given topic. We judge a metaphor's efficacy on how well it advances and amplifies what advocates wish the public got about an issue.

For example, researchers at Stanford University showed that individuals primed with a metaphor of crime as disease (*plaguing* our communities, *spreading* around) came up with preventative solutions for crime such as after school programs and preschool. Conversely, subjects exposed to crime as opponent (*fight* crime, *beat back* homicide) thought harsher punishments were the answer.[4] These results suggest it best for us to liken crime to a disease and avoid opponent evocations. A 3-strikes advocate would want to do the opposite.

Even single words can make a detectable difference in audience responses. In another study, investigators asked participants whether they'd *vote* in an upcoming election and others whether they'd *be a voter*.

Where just over half of those asked about voting intended to do so, 87.5% of those asked about being a voter desired to get to the polls. Voting records showed 96% of those surveyed about being a voter actually pulled the lever.[5]

A simple word difference, from "will you vote" to "will you be a voter" is also a conceptual shift from action to identity, from *what you do* to *who you are*. The words we use shape what's true for our audiences.

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[3] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

[4] Paul Thibodeau and Lera Boroditsky, "Metaphors We Think With: The Role of Metaphor in Reasoning", *PloS One*, February 23, 2011.

[5] Christopher Bryan, Greg Walton, Todd Rodgers and Carol Dweck, "Motivating Voter Turnout by Invoking the Self," *Proceeding in the National Academy of Sciences*, June 22, 2011.

Core Conceptual Challenges

Before we turn to language on POVERTY, we'll briefly examine core conceptual challenges at play. These are common to communication about social issues:

The abstraction problem
The human brain is wired to latch onto the tangible and shy away from the abstract. It's hard to see, smell, hear and thus have a visceral reaction to "widespread inequities." Systems are not visible and stand as insufficient rebuttal to arguments about what individuals ought to do.

When we say, for example, "economic hardship" we can't count on this penetrating against the characters in anecdotes of the invented "welfare queen" living large off food stamps.

This is an immense challenge for discourse on POVERTY, especially in a highly stratified and geographically immense county. At the outset, these are about *population level* issues, not individual ones. Further, in our worldview, it's about differences attributable to *systemic flaws*, not personal failings.

The causation problem
Effects of POVERTY are visible, albeit not adequately so — especially in Contra Costa County. The *causes* behind why some groups more frequently face lack of material goods where others have them in abundance is subject to debate. A debate that dictates the viability of solutions to what we term a problem.

Worse yet, our brains seek out evidence to confirm preconceived ideas, rejecting anything contrary. If we already have a hypothesis that differences in wealth result from differential behavior, arguments that reinforce this carry greater weight than evidence that negates it.

The Just World Hypothesis problem
It is not merely a convenient pathology of those who favor further concentration of power to insist the enormous inequality that leads to material deprivation for many is a product of individual failing. Extensive research shows a need to believe in what social psychologists call the Just World Hypothesis.[6] In brief, this

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[6] Montada, L. & Lerner, M.J. (1998). Preface, in Leo Montada & M.J. Lerner (Eds.). *Responses to Victimizations and Belief in a Just World* (pp. vii–viii). Plenum Press: New York.

is the idea that our society is fundamentally fair and thus observed outcomes have justifiable causes.

Not surprisingly, greater attachment to this theory correlates to more conservative preferences. Thus, an appropriate strategy may be to dismiss devotees of this thinking and relegate them to the committed opposition bin.

However, it is also the case that the need to believe in some basic rightness of the universe, or at least American society, is a widely-held and psychologically comforting facet of modern life. It's critical that we remain mindful of this in characterizing why, to be glib, bad things happen to good people. Treading too far into the inequities of our society, risks sending the message that nothing better is possible. Our current deplorable state cannot be improved upon.

With these common conceptual challenges as background, we turn now to consider the communication issues specific to your challenges and goals.

The first place we enter this conversation, is examining the idea of POVERTY itself.

POVERTY AS OPPONENT

In previous research on perceptions of POVERTY, especially as it overlapped with the 50th Anniversary of the "War on Poverty", I found reams devoted to the notion of "fighting" this issue. While the timing of the data collection surely played a role, the tendency to profile POVERTY as an ENEMY or OPPONENT is common, including from you:

> If I could rename poverty, I would call it a **silent killer**.

> **Our chief weapons** in a more **pinpointed attack** will be better schools, and better health, and better homes, and better training, and better job opportunities.

> It was not **a war** but rather a **collection of skirmishes**, although it is also true that the energy it unleashed created an important sense of empowerment in low-income communities.

> The **war on poverty** must be won in the field, in every private home, in every public office, from the courthouse to the White House.

This metaphor exacerbates the tendency to personify POVERTY, suggesting it alone causes harm. This eclipses from view the actual people, making daily decisions, that are the source of harms rendered to the poor.

Further, it says next to nothing about the conditions of poverty — what it is like to live day to day without sufficient resources. POVERTY AS OPPONENT is largely conveying messages of how to interact with poverty. It's not indicating much at all about what POVERTY *is* or where it comes from.

POVERTY AS DISEASE

Another common way of construing POVERTY is to liken it to an AILMENT. President Obama relied upon this idea when he said, "Promise Zones gets **the prescription right**." Politicians on the right are prone to the magical thinking that "hard work **cures** poverty." Other examples of this framework include these:

> This is a particularly note worthy critique given research which shows the harmful effects on children of growing up in **poverty-stricken** neighborhoods
> Our aim is not only to relieve the **symptom of poverty**, but to **cure it** and, above all, to **prevent it**.
>
> It also glosses over the reality that economic injustice is not, in fact, limited to the developing world but **plagues** our own country as well.

Thinking through what we immediately know about DISEASES or ILLNESSES and applying these to POVERTY leads to the following conclusions:

1. Disease can often be prevented through measures like hand washing and vaccination :: Individuals can take steps to not become poor.

2. Treating diseases is possible but generally more challenging and resource consuming than prevention :: Poverty can be managed or removed in individual cases through concerted efforts.

3. Diseases are often communicable :: Poverty can be spread via contact; remaining among the non-poor is your best bet for not "coming down with" economic malaise.

4. Diseases are generally not contracted nor spread intentionally — you just come down with a cold, for example :: There's not necessarily any human agency in creating poverty.

This is a mixed-bag, at best. Awareness of prevention is surely a plus; one that's absent from the ways we think about an OPPONENT. However, it's likely that our default assumptions around DISEASES are conditioned to be individualized — you keep yourself well or seek treatment when you're not.

Finally, it is common to see POVERTY described as an ENCASEMENT — a structure from which people cannot escape. Here's a sample of this metaphor from you and others:

> The **new poverty is constructed** so as to destroy aspiration; it is a system impervious to hope.

> Policies and prevention strategies to help more families **exit poverty** or avoid it in the first place, so that over time, fewer families need safety net services.

> Unfortunately, many Americans live on **the outskirts of hope**--some because of their poverty, and some because of their color, and all too many because of both.

> For those who live in **the shadows of life**, for those who are the least among us.

> Wander through **a border land** of struggle

> Back from **the brink**

> **Breaking away and moving a comfortable distance** from poverty seems to require a perfect lineup of favorable conditions.

> An **exit** from poverty is not like showing your passport and crossing a frontier. There is a broad strip of **contested territory** between destitution and comfort, and **the passage** is not the same distance for everyone.

In its most compact iteration, we hear this metaphor in words like "marginalized." Even something as simple as the preposition *in* evokes this metaphor. For example, from an interviewee, "I think it is, in certain **geographic pockets**, it makes it easy for those who don't live **in** poverty to not be exposed to or aware of those who are living in poverty." In fact, the reference to *pockets* was common to almost every respondent.

We can also express this CONTAINER metaphor in the inverse, from you, for example, "So it needs to be structured in a way that helps them get out of poverty, but keeps them **out** of poverty. And I don't necessarily see that. I think that's our biggest problem here in this county, is our system is not set up to keep people out of poverty." It also gives us expression like "deep poverty."

The CONTAINER metaphor gives a sense of the inherent problematic and intractable nature of POVERTY. Perhaps more than any other within this metaphor, the words "trapped" and "confined" transmit this CONTAINER is no cozy cocoon.

This model lends itself beautifully to vivid characterizations of life *in* poverty:

> ...the sheer loneliness of poverty, the fact that profound economic hardship pushes people to the psychological and physical **margins of society** — **isolated** from friends and relatives; **shunted into** dilapidated trailer parks, shanties, or ghettoized public housing; and removed from banks and stores, transit systems and cultural institutions.

> Her tiny pension and Social Security income can't save her from a **crushing** poverty that could soon have her living on the streets.

> It feels like **falling in the ocean** and treading water for years with no real ladder to a ship **to get out** and get stable and warm.

From the interview respondents, we see equally powerful language employing this frame:

> There are land use policies that have created these **poverty zones**. And it's real **hard to get out of them**.

> It's not **segregated** by edict the way that it was when I was growing up, but it has the same flavor.

> It's almost like a **natural divide** in terms of those who live in **certain pockets** there's a lack of resources, lack of access for daily living – transportation, education, list could go on in terms of people's **ability to access** things they need.

> To me the **poor are kind of hidden**; the people who call the shots are property owners and business owners, engaged in government functions. And the people who are poor are the people who take care of those other people.

> There are **zones**. There are areas that are...everyone in that area has **restricted** income, and you don't really have, even **within** those neighborhood, you might have a nicer slum house than another slum house, but you just really— you just feel how depressed the area is.

> There are certain patterns that have developed in Contra Costa over time, again, where if you have those types of beliefs, then **some people can move**

into communities and **some people can't**; some people are able to get **access to jobs and resources** and other people don't.

All the things that I just referenced, the areas that have **extreme pockets of poverty**, the areas of extreme party tend to be in West County — Richmond and San Pablo and East County, and far east, beyond Antioch, farm communities.

POVERTY AS CONTAINER provides us a sense of what life is like within this category. Where, as we saw, POVERTY AS OPPONENT is silent about the lived experience of poverty and hunger. It's less clear whether POVERTY AS DISEASE paints this picture for audiences.

Best of times, worst of times
The notion of a container seems especially resonant in describing your community. Interviewees almost universally described Contra Costa as encompassing two realities: one for the rich, one for the rest.

> Poverty, to me, is also relational; you could lack something, but it's not a problem because everybody lacks. But when you lack something…and then there's others who just have everything, it can be an emotional, psychological, depressing kind of thing.

> Well, I think you'd have maybe shoes that were uneven: you've got one foot that is very well off, and expensive shoes, and then on the other foot you'd find something that was more affordable.

> Injustice in communities where people cannot partake of all of the abundance in a community.

> I think the lack of integration we are seeing across socio–economic levels is actually really unhealthy for the society of Contra Costa County.

Martin Luther King Jr. described an African American as living "on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity… languished in the corners of an American society and…in exile in his own land." This aptly sums up respondents' assessment of your community and messaging around becoming **one** community may prove pivotal for your campaign.

Further, this metaphor does the critical work of conveying that bad economic conditions are a deliberate construct. We generally think of containers and traps as manufactured, not natural. This allows us to grasp the poor not as failures but rather as recipients of impossible circumstance. As one interview put it, "I think that we've come to realize that in order to really effect change around issues of poverty, you need to be looking at systems and structures, and policies and procedures, and political decisions that have been made—and are being made—that either **push people into poverty or keep people in poverty**."

Who does what to whom?

Altering descriptions of events influence how audiences assess blame and determine desired remuneration. In one experiment, using the infamous "wardrobe malfunction" during the Super Bowl Halftime Show in 2004, among other situations, researchers found that respondents who read that a named agent "tore" another's clothing ("bodice") attributed blame and sought to levy at least 53% more in indecency fines than those who read about the incident described as "the bodice was torn." This is especially telling because all the participants first watched video footage that clearly showed the performer ripping his colleague's clothing.[7]

This research and its antecedents bring into focus a major challenge any social justice-seeking organization faces in communication: defining the problem it seeks to solve. Here is an indicative sample of you trying to do just that:

> Poverty is a state that **individuals find themselves in** when they're not able to live and operate in the world self–sufficiently.

> Many Californians **are still struggling** in the aftermath of the Great Recession.

> **Poverty is more common** among children than for the population as a whole.

> In East Contra Costa, the number of people living in poverty **has grown** 70% in the past decade.

> In the 50 years since the War on Poverty was launched, much effort has been invested in launching a variety of programs and policies, yet **poverty continues to rise**.

> The possibility of negative outcomes for children (social, educational, economic) **are heightened** if exposed to trauma early in life

Embedded within this communication challenge is the need to convey the real *harms caused*. As is clear above, the tendency is to do this via abstraction. And while this is a problem, the major obstacle in explaining why people face all the difficulties they do, why harms exist and persist, is **frequent use of non-agentive constructions.** In all of the examples above, and the many others I could add to them, there is never a single villain, or even actor, named. If needs are denied and

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[7] Caitlin Fausey and Lera Boroditsky, Subtle linguistic cues influence perceived blame and financial liability," *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 2010, 17 (5), 644-650

people "experience" deprivation, this has no clear cause. And, it follows, no solution.

In fact, many interviews remarked upon the manufactured nature of poverty in Contra Costa, and beyond:

> Years and years and years of impoverishing black folks in the sense that they couldn't become educated, could never rise to anything, because they were always—a certain class of them were always going to be slaves. Then under Jim Crow, all the laws, even throughout the North, were **designed to keep people** from advancing in a lot of ways, or from integrating into community.

> Folks are **left out** of the economic system as its been set up by government – over the history of the United States some folks have had greater access to things that make you wealthy, while others were **shut out** of that system **intentionally by law and other methods**.

Unless we convince our audiences that **people making deliberate and at times nefarious decisions** are behind outcomes witnessed, we can't make the case that other outcomes are possible. If we do not insist that current problems are person-made we can't expect to prove the case that men and women can fix them.

Admittedly, it's challenging to name names when there may not be a clear set of actors to signal or when you need to keep those very actors in your good graces. However, make no mistake, without a pointed explanation of why the problems you tackle exist, the sense that deliberate, significant, changes could ameliorate those problems is hard to accept.

Establishing, to be glib, *people do things*, is key. Almost universally, interviewees referenced not only this issue of causation but, more specifically, the need to articulate it. Here's just one example from an interviewee: "[Poverty] doesn't need to exist. We have the power to impact that. It's not a condition of nature, it's a human made condition."

What is the goal?

Almost all the discourse on POVERTY is geared toward *stopping* some harm. Obviously, this is borne of well-meaning attempts to draw attention to the numerous challenges many face in just trying to survive. But by sticking to the framework of problem, we miss our chance to highlight that our efforts are an

opportunity to do something good. In naming your campaign *Ensuring Opportunity*, you've avoided this common debility.

In general, aspirational messaging — or putting forth effort to create a positive — is more effective than negative messaging. While the latter has been demonstrated to successfully garner donations and armchair activist, sustained and impassioned support requires you to invite participation toward making something new and good in the world.

However, your name, most critically, and other articulations of your goal are troublingly vague. Further, they tend to skirt naming the cause of current harms — an issue we'll address in depth momentarily. You frequently say, for example, you seek to "cut poverty." This begs the questions, by how much and what date?

Both "ensuring opportunity" and "cut poverty" don't tell us the source of harms. And, as mentioned above, the human tendency is to attribute causation to the individual. In other words, anyone poor in Contra Costa County isn't working hard or smart enough.

If not poverty, what?

It's a particularly insidious tactic of our opponents to just deny poverty exists, or affects any significant numbers. However, the recession and, in some places, increasingly punitive legislation denying people's basic needs has at least made these claims less credible. Americans are much more aware of and sensitive to poverty than even one year ago, let alone pre-recession. But this is a low bar to feel excited about passing.

There's a seldom uttered necessary condition to accepting your analysis poverty is a problem that not only can be fixed but *must be.* For someone to want to act to improve people's conditions — they'd have to believe there is a certain baseline standard below which no one should fall. In other words, they'd have to believe poverty shouldn't exist in America.

This begs the question, what are the contours of a Contra Costa County life? Do they include three square meals a day, permanent shelter, accessible medical care and good public education?

Consider, for example, the shift from "minimum wage" to "living wage." This is only inching to an idea that people should be able to survive — and even this is deemed radical by many.

Without minimum standards, we're left in a battle about whether or not people are capable of lifting themselves or kept from doing so through law, custom and institutions. The absence of discourse about how things ought to be leaves us with phrases like "food insecure", "get by" or "easing the plight." "Food insecure" implies not having some amount of calories isn't good. The quality of foods, accessibility, means to prepare and consume them in a safe way doesn't even register.

Our lack of a floor, let alone vision of just life for all, keeps us on defense against attacks that the poor are victims of their own behavior. If you believed that everyone in your gets to eat three nutrient rich meals a day, no matter where he is or what she's done, we wouldn't be engaged in a battle defending deservingness.

This question of what life ought to be like where you live is quite revealing. Over and over, interviewees described a sense of artifice or things not being as they seem in Contra Costa County:

> I think—and this goes for a lot of places—if Contra Costa were a pair of shoes, they would be very nice, high–end designer shoes, maybe not as designer as over in Silicon Valley or San Francisco, but they'd be nice shoes, real nice shoes, that have a lot of holes in 'em. And they need some patchwork.

> They're the kind of shoes that look nice, but once you try them on, and you're in it and wear them, they fall apart and break on you.

> Probably some really expensive loafers – looks really good, looks comfortable but isn't. And I think are hideous. Because they're trying to look comfortable but they aren't, they're not supportive – they look like something they're not.

> It's a nice pair of, wing tips is what used to be fancy but kind of worn, heels a little bit worn. Perception wise, incredibly rich county, really industrial jobs, good economy, but there are a lot of areas you go into that aren't so great. Issue of poverty not as visible – we look really good from the outside, there's crack in soles of the shoes.

> On the surface and in terms of what people had brought to it—amazing. It's an amazing county, amazing set of resources, amazing groups of people, a lot

of caring people. So these shoes, I guess, were bought by caring people. But problem is that there's a lot of neglect at the same time because there's not enough people paying attention to the holes in the shoes, and there's a lot of need for fixing—for filling in the gap. And understanding why—maybe even understanding why the gap is there is as important as understanding that there is one, and making a commitment that regardless of where it came from, we need to repair the holes.

The idea of becoming what you seem or, conversely, confronting this disconnect between appearances and reality may prove a fruitful messaging direction for you.

Who are the poor?

Just as critical as knowing how to speak about POVERTY, the question of how to describe the people for whom you advocate looms large. In this, it's useful to first consider the broader category of "the poor." Colloquial expressions about the poor, "hard-up" "dirt poor" "needy" and even "deserving poor" are generally about *characteristics* not *belongings*. Thus, poor is likened to an internal mode or trait, as opposed to a circumstance.

The almost universal tendency to talk about "the poor" as opposed to *people who are poor* suggests some inherent quality to membership in this category. And the essence conveyed is not a positive one.

Progressive language tends to profile helplessness among THE POOR, in an earnest attempt to direct attention, support and resources to them. Any number of common expressions from the economic justice field demonstrate this tendency, for example, "people are **sinking economically**" "**predatory** lending" and "this is an **unmitigated disaster** for real people." Underwater, struggling to keep it together, victimized -- this suggests THE POOR have no agency.

Surely this isn't advocates' intent, but in speaking about POVERTY in such dire and disempowering terms, it's challenging to then portray THE POOR as equally capable of taking charge of their own lives as anyone else.

Talking about poor people in a way that highlights what has and continues to impoverish them, while also asserting their drive and abilities as equal to anyone's, is a huge communication challenge. We need more said about the possibilities THE POOR present for enriching society. Poor people work hard and

exemplify making it in the face of inconceivable odds. Where's the credit for all they do for our communities?

Especially in Contra Costa County, where cost of living, lack of public transit and affordable housing exacerbate economic hardships, the poorer members in your community could teach graduate seminars on tenacity, perseverance and budgeting — among other life skills. These positive achievements and potential lessons must form part of the narrative lest we reinforce all too common, and toxic, stereotypes. You may want to consider messaging around *making it work* in your admittedly expensive community.

> Go from plural to singular
> The tendency to stereotype the poor as lazy and incompetent makes implying POVERTY is an inherent characteristic, not a situation, even more toxic. A proven way to mitigate automatic population-level assumptions and reasoning about groups on the basis of anecdote, is to use the **singular plus indirect article** (a/an). Instead of, "the poor..." say "a poor person..." Better yet, specify with a detail like "a poor mom" or "a poor waiter." This will sound jarring at first; but it's critical to break down people's mental defaults.

Existing messaging research urges steering clear of terms like "poor", "low income" and "marginalized." Instead, terms like "struggling to make ends meet" "striving to provide" and "working for family" tested much more favorably, especially among people at or below the federal poverty line. Again, these emphasize the agency of the effected groups.

In addition to noting the aspirations and achievement of the poor, one thing we must fix is **the relative silence of the poor themselves**. Most language is about "them." Not only does this smack of paternalism and lead us to craft policy on behalf of a constituency that may not favor it, it implies a very dangerous thing.

Finally, given the importance of geography in your county-based efforts, it's critical to link back to the advantages and limitations of place. It's critical to stop saying "poor people" and instead say *people in the poorest places/parts of the county*.

Pocket book persuasion

Advocacy for economic justice often appeal to economic expediency. For example, we hear arguments for raising the minimum wage as a means to increase GDP. Or, we profile how *investments* in early childhood services *pay off* by preventing greater *expenditure* down the road.

The appeal of these fiscal responsibility and saving public money down the road pleas is clear. They are a reach across the aisle, reasoned argument for the sensible policies you're promoting. However, in making them, you risk diluting your brand and forsaking the establishment of a long-term world view for a potential short-term win.

When we signal to our audiences that the purpose for our actions is financial, it suggests that the correct basis from which to make decisions is economic. In other words, we accept that saving money or enlarging the economy is the absolute best and perhaps only relevant goal. In reality, the values underlying your efforts can only be realized if we learn to treat people as assets, not commodities.

Concluding Thoughts: Not If But When

Social cognitive theory dictates that not all behaviors observed will in fact be mimicked. Four specific conditions must be met to maximize potential participation or action: attention, retention, production and motivation. Listeners must take note of the message or intended behavior enough to have it inform their actions, they must have ready recall of the action at the moment it's relevant, they must be able to perform the intended behavior and finally they must be motivated enough to act despite possible deterrents.

The opportunity costs for advocacy, especially among the currently unengaged, are many. To overcome fear, timidity, exhaustion, lack of resources and a whole list of other impediments, it's critical participants feel they are committing time and energy to something achievable. Anchoring a new effort to a recent or important win helps bring a sense of the possible.

Lab experiments and some real world campaigns show us that *messaging from inevitability* is a critical and winning proposition. This means filling in details and being affirmative. Not, for example, "cut poverty" but make it history. Maximizing the potential of this wonderful approach requires that you convey that any seemingly audacious claim is a foregone conclusion. Even small language tweaks, like replacing *ifs* with *whens,* can go a long way.