

Combined Disparity and Asset-Framing Preambles

HSRI believes in promoting fairness and justice

To promote fairness and justice, we call out policies and programs that are not fair. One reason that policies and programs in our society are not fair is because of systemic racism. “Systemic racism” refers to systems that favor white groups of people over other groups of people. Most often, this shows up in policies or practices where white communities have an easier time accessing resources they need to thrive than Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities. “Systems” describes ways that resources are organized to support the needs of people in communities. Some examples are:

- Health care systems
- Disability support systems
- Education systems
- Child welfare systems
- Housing systems
- Criminal legal systems

HSRI uses “asset-framing” to describe communities by their strengths

We believe all communities deserve opportunities for good health and wellbeing. We want to lift up the voices and strengths of the communities we work with. We do not just focus on challenges they face. “Asset-framing” is a style of communication that describes groups of people by what their strengths are. It was created by Trabian Shorters. At HSRI, we use asset-framing to positively describe the communities we work with. We also use asset-framing to show how structural racism and unfair policies harm communities.

HSRI uses “asset-framing” as a tool to frame data

Data on access to systems and quality of life can show differences between groups of people. In data, differences between groups are called disparities. Disparities are often a result of discrimination or racism. We use asset-framing to learn whether disparities between groups of people are because of systemic racism and discrimination.

Often, we explore disparities by people’s racial or ethnic identity. However, people have multiple identities—ways they express who they are or what they want. Some other examples of “identities” are:

- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Nationality and citizenship status
- Preferred language
- Disability
- Age

We frequently see disparities when we look at data by the above identities. It is also important to look at how different identities can intersect because this can increase barriers to accessing systems and supports. This intersectional lens informs all of the work at HSRI. Asset-framing can help frame the root causes of disparities as systems, not identities. By showing disparities between or within groups, we can develop solutions for a fairer, stronger society.