Reframing Poverty

Six Ways to Open Minds

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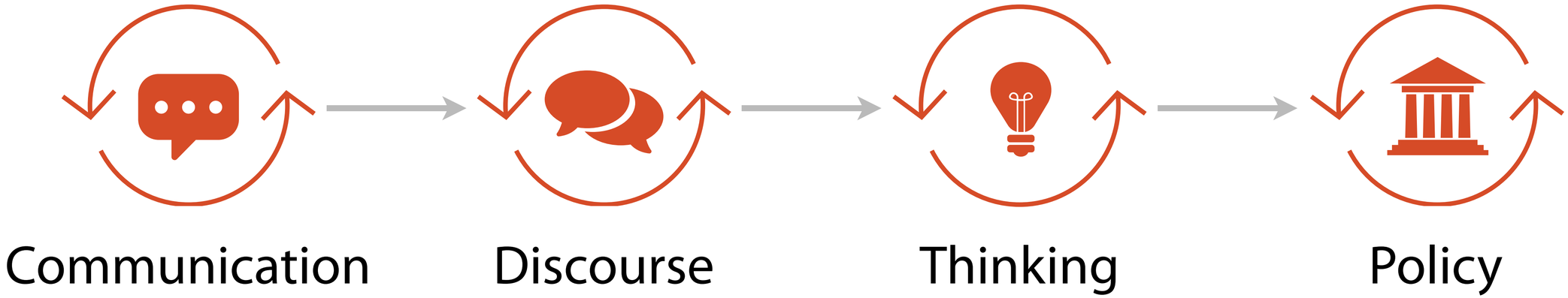
We have a problem

You Say...They Think

Persistent stress can derail development and have negative long term effects on health and wellbeing.

BBB

Because public opinion drives and preserves policy change

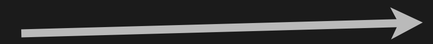

Communication
Discourse
Thinking
Policy

Framing for change

…is making choices about how we present information:

- What to emphasise
- How to explain it
- What to leave unsaid

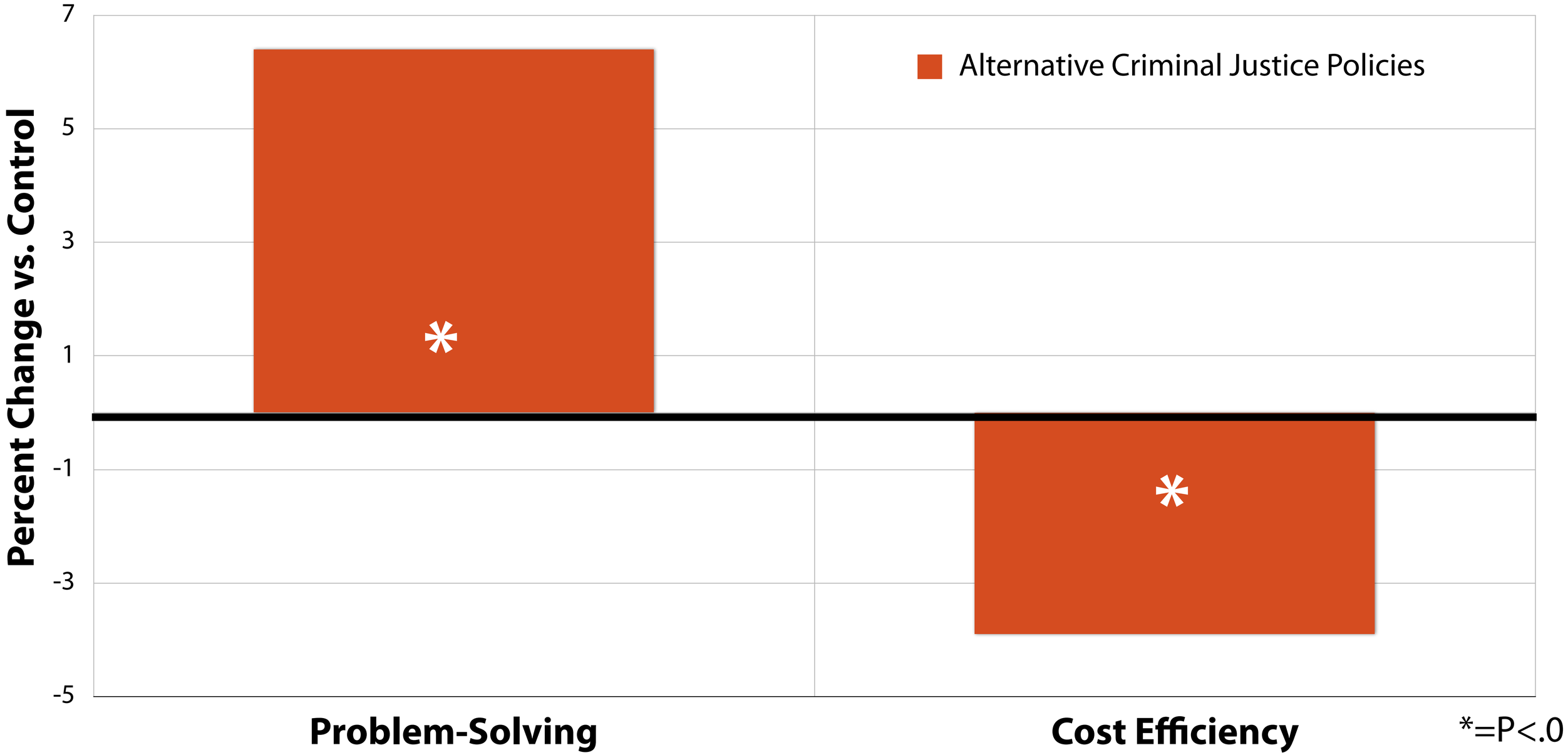
Charity only for the deserving



Shared human experience

Understanding is frame dependent

Reframing Criminal Justice



Reframing Poverty in the UK

#1

Understand what you're up against - and get strategic.

You Say...They Think

Poverty in the UK is a major problem and urgently needs to be addressed. It exists right here, right now and we desperately need to do something about it.

How do people think about

poverty in the UK?

RESPONSIBILITY

Self-Makingness

Culture of Poverty

Government Responsibility

NOSTALGIA

Poverty Romanticism

CRITERIA

Non-Negotiable Needs

Post Poverty

How do people think about

poverty in the UK?

FATALISM

Economic Naturalism

The Game is Rigged

SOLUTIONS

Nothing

Tighten Benefits

Provide Core/Basic Support

Education

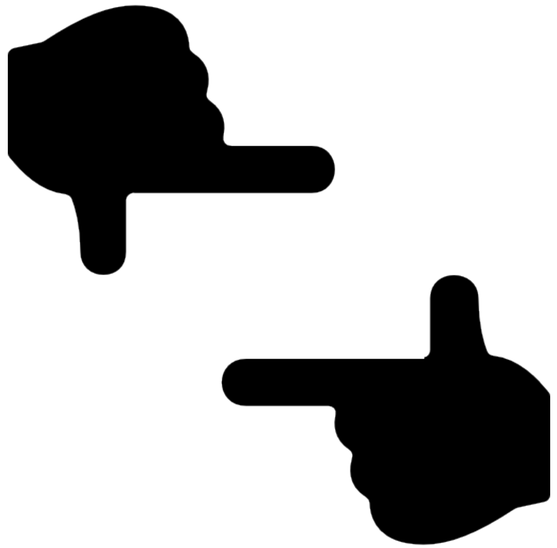
CONTEXT AND STRUCTURE

Opportunity Structures

Spectrum of Self-Determination

#2

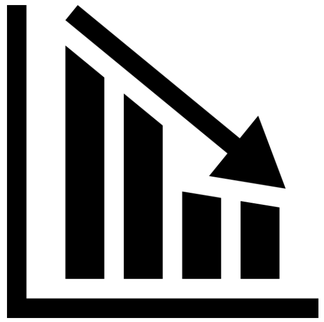
Cue the right issue.



Dominant Issue Frames

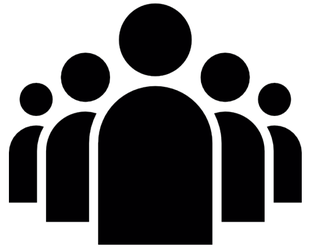
Poverty

Poverty is increasing for the first time in two decades. More and more people are struggling to get by.



Economy

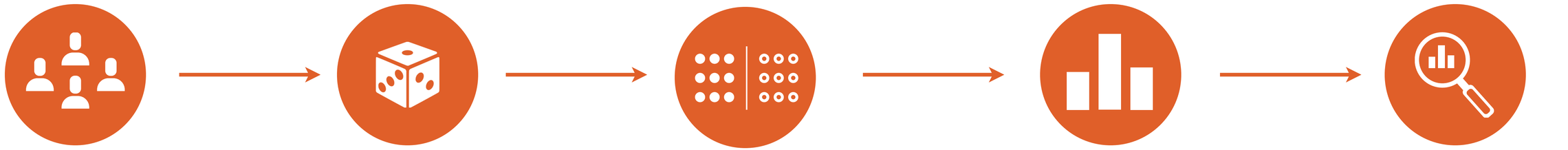
The economy is not working. Zero hours contracts, unstable work, and low wages are creating impossible situations for people.



Benefits

Our benefits system is failing our society's most vulnerable people and many are experiencing extreme hardship as a result.

Frames that Work



Sample

+15,000 people

(nationally representative sample)

Random assignment to treatment group

Treatment groups

1. Poverty
2. Economy
3. Benefits
4. Control

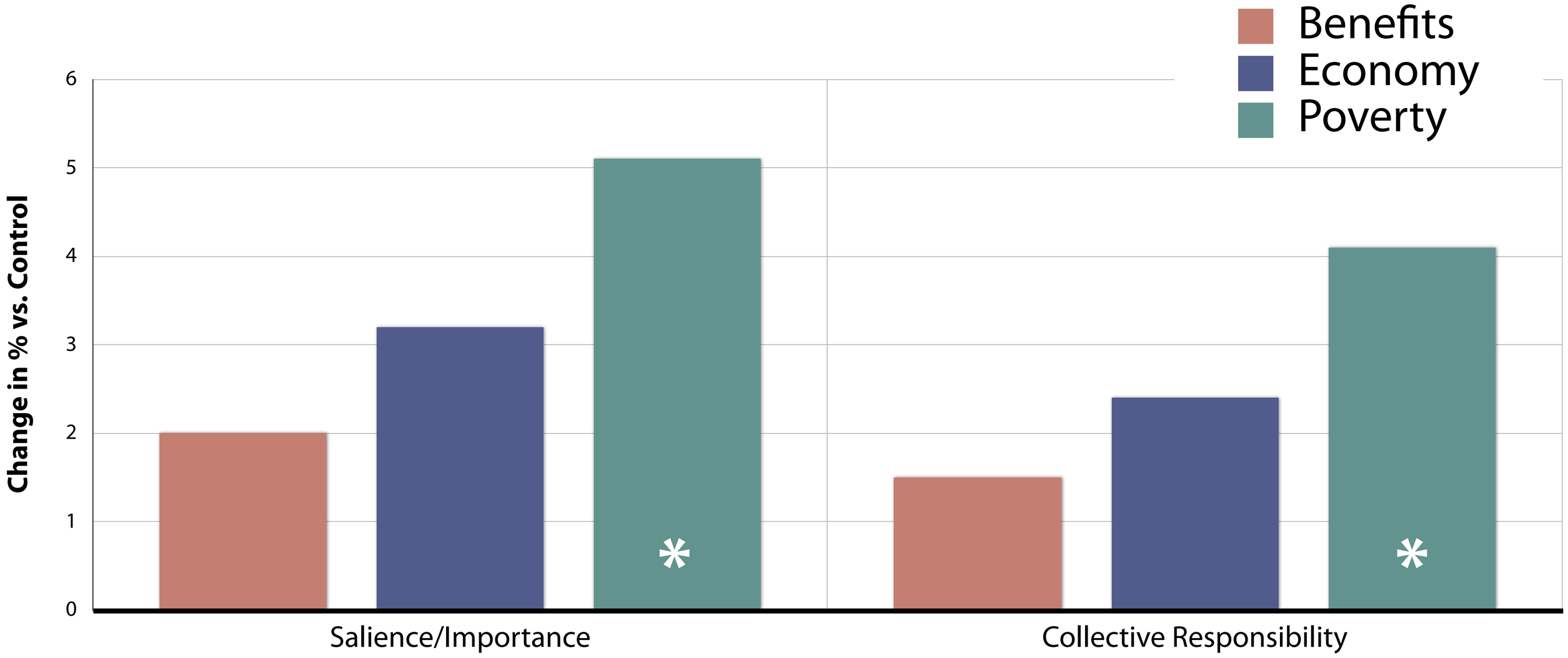
Outcome measures

- Salience/ Importance
- Collective Responsibility
- Support for benefits
- Willingness to Engage

Analysis

Differences between treatment and control groups (controlling for demographic variability)

Testing Issue Frames



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#3

Connect with values to shift thinking.

Compassion/Justice

In our society, we believe in showing compassion towards others, and protecting each other from harm. Yet, right now, many live in poverty. We share a moral and social responsibility to ensure that everyone in our country has a decent standard of living.

Strategic way to redirect:

- *Self Makingness*
- *Culture of Poverty*
- *Poverty Romanticism*

Moves thinking towards:

- *Salience/Importance*
- *Social Responsibility*

Use this by asserting:

- *Our **shared** values and morals*

Words that Work

“In our society we believe in doing the right thing. We look out for each other. We have decent public services for everyone – especially those who are in greatest need.”

“whatever happens, as a society we are in this together”

“it’s just not right”

“we need to put this right”

“morally wrong”

“our sense of decency”

“our society’s principles”

“simply not acceptable"

“we won’t stand by and let this happen in our society/ country”

“we won't stand for that”

“not on my watch”

“out of order”

“we’re not ok with this”

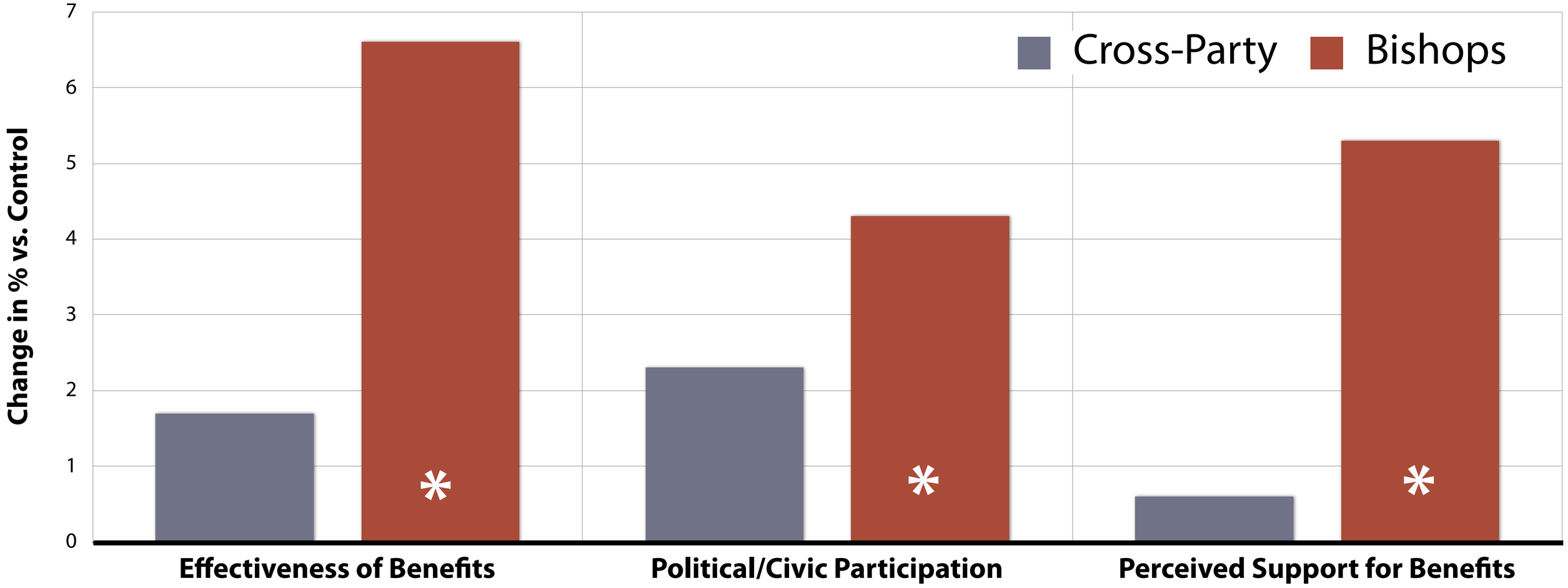
Measured

Strident

#4

Messengers matter. Align to amplify.

Testing Messengers



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#5

Use metaphor that sticks and shifts.

Restricts & Restrains

Our economy is locking people in poverty. Low paid, unstable jobs mean more and more families can't put food on the table. With the economy driving up the cost of living, many are caught in a daily struggle to make ends meet, unable to think about a different future. It is hard to break free from the constraints our economy places on people.

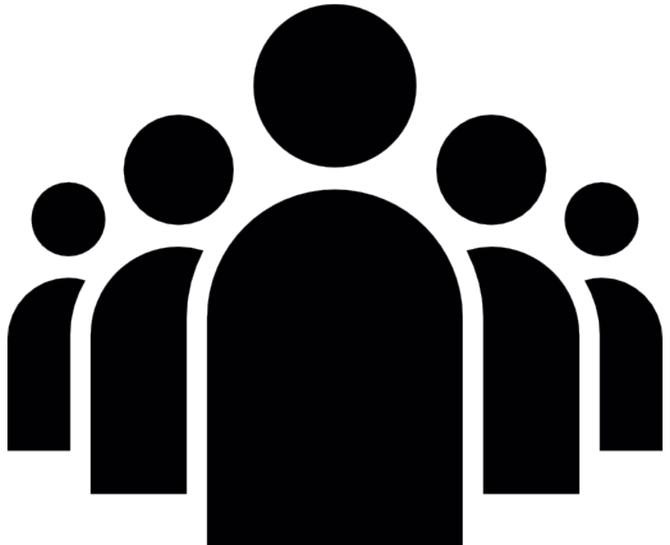
Currents

Things like low wages and rising living costs create currents that can pull people into poverty. And sometimes things happen that threaten to pull us under, like losing a job, coping with a disability, or leaving our home to get out of an abusive relationship. We need a benefits system that anchors people so they don't get pulled into the current and pushed into poverty.

Primed with Restricts and Restrains

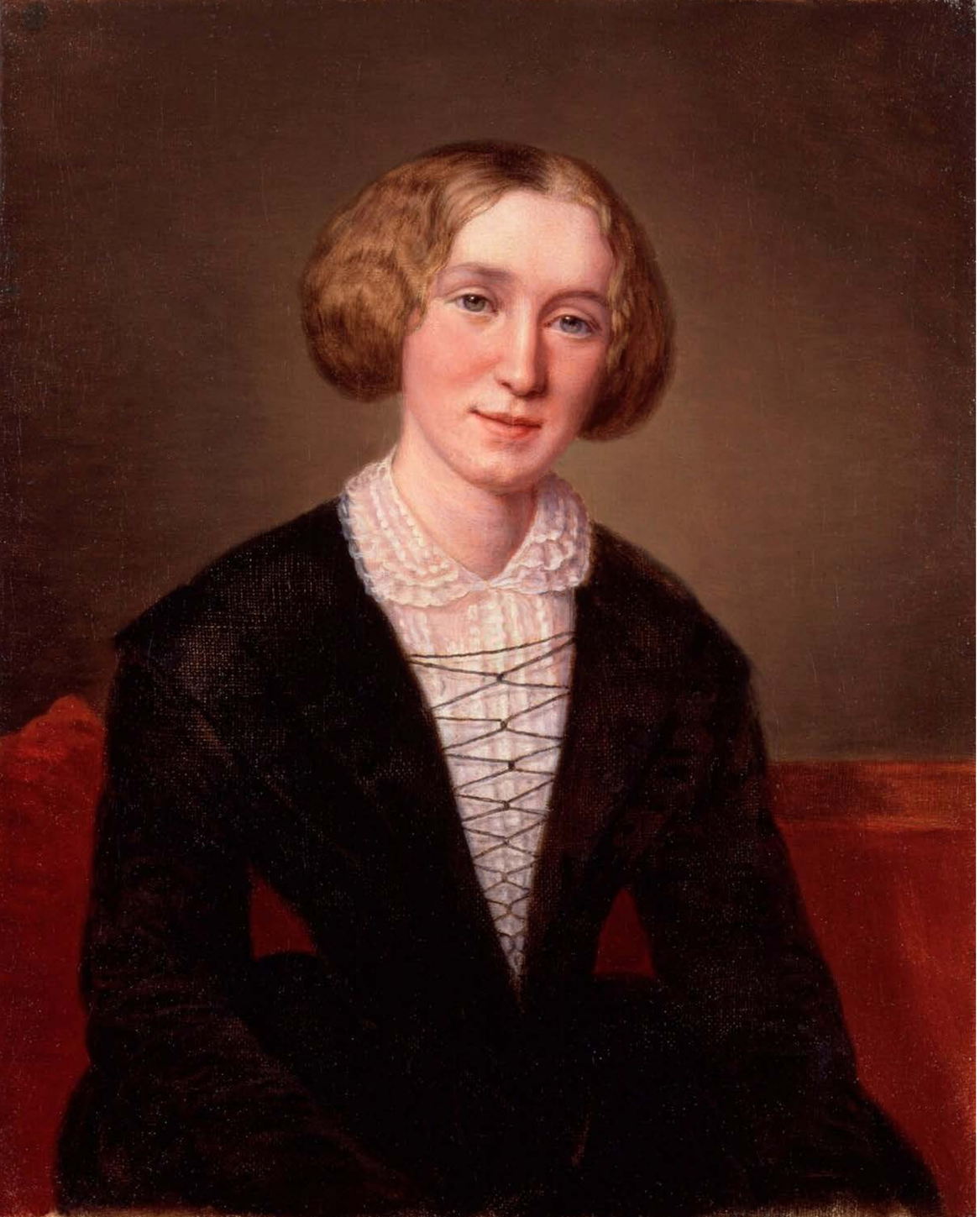
#6

Position benefits as a solution.



Before:
The benefit system is **broken** and must be **fixed**.
Benefits are vital for people in poverty – including those who work.
We need to stop cutting benefits so the system is fit for purpose.

After:
We can solve poverty by **loosening its grip on people**.
Benefits **help release people from the restrictions** our economy places on them, such as low pay and high housing costs.



I'll tell you what's the greatest power under heaven, and that is public opinion - the ruling belief in society about what is right and what is wrong, what is honourable and what is shameful. That's the steam that is to work the engines.

George Eliot

Thanks for listening.

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