Framing fundamentals

- Framing is about filling in your audience’s cognitive holes, so they don’t do it for you.
- People have multiple assumptions about any social issue, and some are more helpful than others.
- Which frames work to build public understanding of and support for an issue is an empirical question.
FrameWorks' multi-method research tests which frames work

**Descriptive**
- **Expert Interviews**
  - What needs to be communicated?
- **Cognitive Interviews**
  - How does the public think?
- **Media Content & Field Frame Analysis**
  - What frames are in play already?

**Prescriptive**
- **Tool Design**
  - What reframes are plausible?
- **On-the-Street Interviews**
  - Which reframes seem to work?
- **Controlled Experiments**
  - Which reframe drives policy preferences?
- **Persistence Trials**
  - How will this frame fare in the world?
Frame elements shape understanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTEXT</th>
<th>NUMBERS (DATA)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXPLANATORY CHAINS</td>
<td>ORDER</td>
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<td>EXPLANATORY EXAMPLES</td>
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<td>EXPLANATORY METAPHORS</td>
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<td>MESSENGERS</td>
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When a frame “works,” it moves thinking in multiple ways.

Elder abuse is preventable; as a society, it is realistic that we can put systems in place to prevent elder abuse.

Reducing elder abuse in the United States should be a priority.

Employment policies should be changed to provide greater support for those who provide care for older people. Solutions like community based care during the day would support both older people, and their family caregivers.
Communications tasks and tools
Elder Abuse

What’s in the Swamp of...

Elder Abuse

Elder + Abuse

- Elder abuse is unacceptable
- Self-neglect doesn’t qualify
- Sexual abuse doesn’t compute

Deterioration

- Dependency = vulnerability
- Paternalism

Solutions

- Nothing can be done
- Surveillance and prosecution
- Awareness & education
- Support for caregivers

Modern Life is the Problem

- Caregivers pushed to limit
- Cultural devaluation of older people
- Nursing homes as unfortunate necessity

Spotlight on Individuals

- Greed and laziness
- Moral character
- Sickos
- Payback
- Older people are difficult
- Everyone’s responsible/no one’s responsible

Presented at the Gulf Coast Elder Abuse Conference by FrameWorks Institute, June 25-26, 2018. Please do not reproduce or distribute.
Communications challenges

- Elder abuse is not seen as a national priority. Addressing and preventing elder abuse are not seen as collective responsibilities.

- Elder abuse is seen as an individual problem, as opposed to a public problem; perpetrators and victims are the primary focus.

- Financial exploitation can be difficult for the public to identify as a type of elder abuse.

- Cuing sympathy does not do enough to inspire public support for policy change.
Addressing communications challenges

1. Use the *Justice* value to explain why elder abuse must be addressed; when older adults are at a higher risk of abuse, they are not being treated as equal members of the community.

2. Use the *Social Structure* metaphor to explain how integrated services and community members prevent elder abuse, in the same way that reinforcing beams hold up a building.

3. Use the *Justice* and *Social Structure* concepts together to introduce examples of elder abuse, (like financial exploitation, family violence, or neglect).
Framing with values
Justice

Your issue matters because:

A just society treats older people as equal members of our society and makes sure that people are connected to our communities so we can prevent and address elder abuse.

Redirect public perceptions away from:

• Paternalism
• Us vs. Them
• Individualism

Move public thinking towards:

• Equal status of older people
• Collective responsibility for dealing with elder abuse
• Connecting older people to our communities
The *Justice* value is an alternative to strategies like...

- Emphasizing vulnerability of older adults.
- Leading with the prevalence of elder abuse.
- Leading with a description of demographic change.

**Appeal to a shared belief in equal treatment and justice alongside these strategies!**
Framing Practice
Using the *Justice* value creatively

Bringing the *Justice* value to life means finding additional ways to express it. Work with a partner to generate a list of ideas, words, and visuals for bringing *Justice* (a shared belief in equal treatment) to life in your communications.

- Synonyms
- Nouns
- Adjectives
- Verbs
- Antonyms
- Images and visuals
- Sayings and expressions
Framing with metaphors
The Explanatory Metaphor

A Translation Device

Brain Architecture

Brain Development ≈ Building/Architecture

By clarifying how something works, metaphors help people see how to affect it.
**Social Structure**

The story you are telling:

Society, like a building, needs solid support beams. As we age, one of the most important beams is social support. It allows us to participate fully and live free from abuse.

**Strategic way to redirect public perceptions away from:**

- Spotlight on Individuals
- Everyone’s Responsible/No One’s Responsible
- Paternalism

**Move thinking toward:**

- Structural causes of elder abuse
- Meaningful solutions beyond family intervention
- Elders as agents
Recap of today’s session

• Language choices shape thinking about social issues like elder abuse.

• Tested framing strategies help explain elder abuse in a new way.

• The Justice and Social Structure concepts explain why elder abuse needs to be addressed, and how different pieces come together to support older adults.
Reframing Elder Abuse, Part II
Applying evidence-based communications strategies
Gulf Coast Elder Abuse Conference

June 26, 2018

Mackenzie Price, PhD, Senior Associate
Research Interpretation and Application Unit
Framing messages
Building a well-framed story

Communicating about addressing frailty

How does this work? If it’s not working, why not?

Why does this matter?

Value: Justice

Metaphor: Social Structure

What can we do about it?

Sample Solution: Prevention or Response
Communications challenges for framing frailty

- Crisis messaging and imagery may backfire.

- Frailty can be tied to (unproductive) understandings of disparities, social determinants of wellbeing, and aging as a period of decline and vulnerability.

- *Individualism* and *Health Individualism* are patterns that dominate thinking about causes and solutions. This can reinforce the idea a poor outcomes in older age are the result of willpower and personal choice.
Applying tested strategies to frailty

- Failing to support community members as they age, is a form of unequal treatment. Because we value older adults in our communities, we need to take steps to prevent or reduce frailty as a way to prevent elder abuse.

- We need to strengthen and maintain our infrastructure for long term care and supports for frail adults

- Health providers who are more aware of geriatric needs or can identify signs of abuse are a community support for older adults.
Framing key messages

[Insert message here]

Why does this matter?

How does this work? If it’s not working, why not?

What can we do about it?
Framing key messages

Social isolation makes health management difficult for older adults

How does this work? If it’s not working, why not?

Why does this matter?

Social connections are a pillar of wellbeing. But nearly half of adults with chronic conditions are not connected to someone who can help manage their medical needs. This means that our social structure is incomplete.

Our society does not function if not all people have a chance at wellbeing. Right now, we are excluding older adults.

What can we do about it?

Home visiting programs are keep older adults connected to good health. Home visitors can help manage chronic conditions.

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Framing key messages

The elder justice movement should include more older adults

Why does this matter?

Aging is a dynamic process, but some older adults are shut out of healthy aging.

How does this work? If it’s not working, why not?

Empowered and engaged older adults who advocate for their community are social supports. Their experience, energy and commitment make our entire society stronger.

What can we do about it?

Our network of elder justice advocates is reaching out to older adults to join our mission. We want adults to be safe, secure, and flourishing at every age.
Framing key messages

Domestic and family violence supports should reflect elder abuse across the lifespan

Why does this matter?
People of all ages need equal treatment and respect.

What can we do about it?
Eligibility requirements for victims’ services and supports, like housing assistance, need to be expanded to account for elder abuse.

How does this work? If it’s not working, why not?
Our current system for addressing elder abuse and family violence needs repair and remodeling.
• Transportation support for older adults, or communities with older residents

• The home health care workforce is underpaid, needs training, and lacks professional development support.

• Caregivers can also experience social isolation.

• Undiagnosed hearing and vision problems can lead to isolation.

• Expanding eligibility guidelines for domestic and family violence to recognize elder abuse.
Pick a topic to frame

Use the *Justice* or *Social Structure* concepts to sketch out an elevator speech on one of these topics

- Transportation support for older adults, or communities with older residents
- The home health care workforce is underpaid, needs training, and lacks professional development support.
- Caregivers can also experience social isolation.
- Undiagnosed hearing and vision problems can lead to isolation.
- Expanding eligibility guidelines for domestic and family violence to recognize elder abuse.
Framing key messages

[Insert key message here]

How does this work? If it’s not working, why not?

Why does this matter?

What can we do about it?
How to review and revise messages

1. Check for language that cues up unproductive assumptions (e.g. individuals perpetrators = bad apples, “there’s nothing we can do”, surveillance is the only solution).

2. Use the *Justice* value (our society is committed to equal treatment for all) early on to establish the issue as a collective concern.

3. Use the *Social Structure* concept (our society needs strong support beams to prevent abuse) to connect a solution to supporting older adults.

4. Bring solutions into the conversation. Explain why they work to strengthen social structures.
Reframing Aging (in brief)
Key recommendations from the Reframing Aging Project

**The Ingenuity value** frames preparing for and adapting to demographic change as important opportunities.

**The Building Momentum** explanatory metaphor compares aging to gaining speed in order to help people think about the positive aspects of aging.

Solutions like **Intergenerational Community Centers** illustrate how problems can be addressed through collective action.

**The Justice value** reminds people that unequal treatment goes against shared ideals.

Examples of ageism like **Workplace Discrimination** are easy to remember and make solutions visible to the public.
Defining Ageism

Ageism is discrimination based on prejudices about age. When ageism is directed at older people, it often involves assumptions that older people are less competent, less attractive, and less vigorous than younger people. Ageism has a huge negative impact on older people, throughout all areas of life.
A three-step explanation of ageism

1. Define ageism, e.g., “discrimination against older people due to negative stereotypes.”

2. Follow up with a concrete example that shows how ageism is a structural problem requiring a public response. An example like workplace discrimination is easy to understand and prompts people to think about ageism as a public problem; health care discrimination also works well.

3. Explain implicit bias: this helps people to see that ageism arises from a common process that works automatically, but it can be disrupted.
A just society is inclusive of all of its members. Yet, we often fail to treat older people as equal participants. Ageism — discrimination based on negative assumptions about age — has a big impact on older people’s lives. Take the workplace: Employers commonly use age-based assumptions to evaluate résumés, without even realizing they are doing it. This “implicit bias” makes employers less likely to interview job candidates whose graduation dates indicate they’re 50 or older.

When the skills and contributions of our society’s most experienced workers are not realized, everybody loses out. Fortunately, once we know about these unintentional biases, we become less likely to make “snap judgments” and more likely to treat people fairly regardless of age. We can also change our practices, for example by not requiring that resumes contain age-identifying information, or by offering bias-prevention trainings. Taking these steps will not only decrease ageism in the workplace, but also lead to a more inclusive, just society for us all.
The next step in reframing is equipping a field

- When a field has framing tools, they can speak in one voice to reset how that issue is seen by the broader public.
- A shared strategy can amplify a message, rather than dilute it’s impact.