Reframing Aging and Elder Abuse

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FrameWorks is on a mission...

to advance the nonprofit sector's capacity to frame the public discourse on social problems.
We conducted a comprehensive investigation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expert Interviews</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Model Interviews</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Content &amp; Field Frame Analysis</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-the-Street Interviews</td>
<td>146</td>
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<tr>
<td>Persistence Trials</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usability Trials</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Experiments</td>
<td>11,300</td>
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Sample Size: 12,185

Why Does Framing Matter?
What is a Frame?

Frames are sets of choices about how information is presented:

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

Understanding is Frame Dependent

Support for Evidence-Based Addiction Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Support relative to control</th>
<th>N=6,000</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interdependence</td>
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<td>Ingenuity</td>
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<td>Empathy</td>
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Because There is a Problem.

You Say...They Think

AAA

Expert/Advocate

BBB

Public
Elder abuse is very common but usually goes unreported. We need to take immediate steps to prevent this problem by empowering older people and integrating them into networks of support.
A Peak in the Swamp
Elder Abuse

What's in the Swamp of…

**Elder Abuse**
- Elder abuse is unacceptable
- Neglect doesn’t qualify
- Sexual abuse doesn’t compute

**Deterioration**
- Dependency = vulnerability
- Paternalism

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

**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
Cultural Models: The Basis of Strategic Communications

Multiple models available

Some are more productive than others

Choose the cues that activate productive models

Key Reframing Tasks

• Cultivate thinking about older people as subjects
• Generate understanding of systems and institutions
• Promote a collective, public orientation toward solutions
• Boost the public’s sense of efficacy
Narrative: The Structure of Justice
Cultivating Systemic Thinking about Elder Abuse

Why does this matter?
Value: Justice

How does this issue work?
Metaphor: Social Structure

What keeps it from working?
Explanatory Individual Cases: Concrete Cases that Illustrate Broader Themes in Systemic Context

What can we do about it?
Explanatory Chains: Prevention and Response

Effects of Structure of Justice Narrative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Scales</th>
<th>Percentage-Point Change vs. Control</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence and Priority</td>
<td>***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collective Efficacy</td>
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<td>Policy Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cause-Solution Connection</td>
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p < .10 = *
Values

A broad category of cherished cultural ideals: enduring beliefs that orient individuals' attitudes and behaviors.

Values help to establish why an issue matters and what is at stake.

As a frame element, values do the work of:

- Priming people to take a collective approach
- Tapping emotions that work for policy thinking: curiosity, concern, and can-do

ME vs. WE

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
An apt comparison invites rethinking

Brain Development ≈ Building/Architecture

Support Structures

Strategic way to redirect public perceptions away from:

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

Move thinking toward:

- Structural causes Meaningful solutions
- Elders as agents

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.
Social Structures Shapes Thinking
AVOID

This is a problem for the vulnerable
Olders = Others
Utterly dependent elderly
Moral failings of perpetrators
Is anyone responsible?
No solutions save surveillance

ADVANCE

This is a matter of principle
As we age, we...
A just society respects people’s agency
Blind spots and problems with policy
Here’s how we can take responsibility
Meaningful solutions

Additional research and resources

• Gaining Momentum: a FrameWorks Communications Toolkit
• Frame Brief: Framing Strategies to Advance Aging and Address Ageism as Policy Issues
• Gauging Aging: Mapping the Gaps between Experts and Public Understanding of Aging in America
• Aging, Agency, and Attribution of Responsibility: Shifting Public Discourse about Older Adults
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Thank you!

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