

# 3 Narratives for Reframing Aging, Ageism, and Elder Abuse

Offered in coordination with the Tri-State Learning Collaborative on Aging

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## Our Agenda

- 1. Brief introduction to framing
- 2. What you're up against
- 3. A proven communications strategy
  - Narrative #1: *Embracing the Dynamic*
  - Narrative #2: **Confronting Injustice**
  - Narrative #3: *Structure of Justice*
- 4. Time for Q&A

# Intro to framing





# FrameWorks is on a mission...

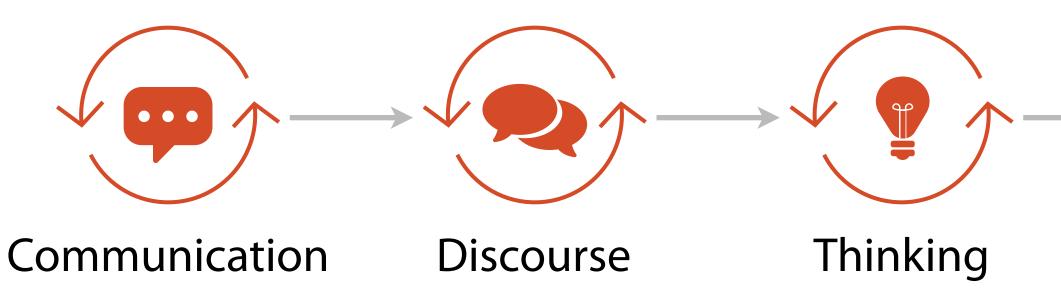
to advance the nonprofit sector's capacity to frame the public discourse on social issues.

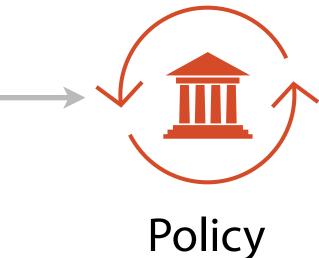
# Frames are sets of choices about how information is presented:

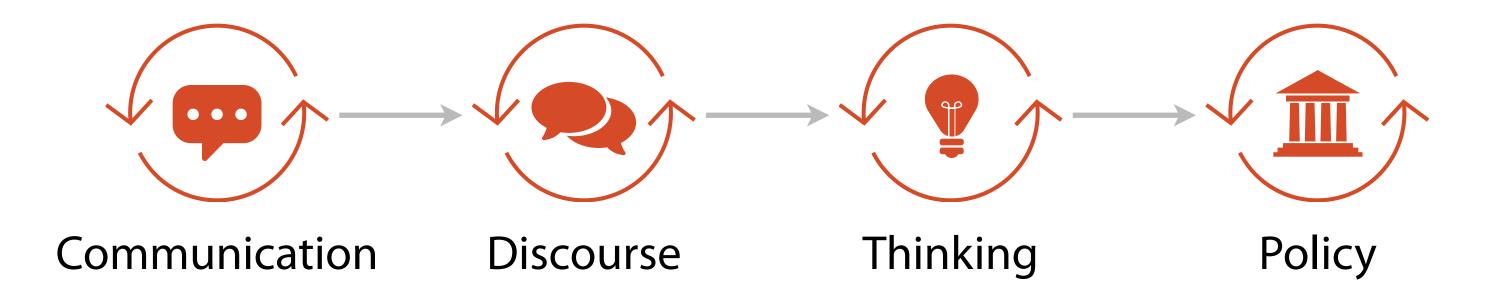
What to emphasize

- How to explain it
- What to leave unsaid

# Frames can drive broad social change







- National Human Services Assembly how to build support for a range of social services and reframe the conversation about supporting healthy development across the lifespan
- DentaQuest Foundation how to advance access and equity in oral health, across the lifespan
- Enterprise Community Foundation how to talk about affordable housing and its connection to life trajectories and outcomes
- John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation how to change attitudes toward government and taxes, and make the case for public budgets that meet society's needs
- Harvard University Center on the Developing Child how to translate science of early childhood brain and biological development to inform sound policy

## These organizations recognized a shared challenge



american federation for aging research



Grantmakers In Aging





HE AMERICAN GERIATRICS SOCIETY

eading change. Improving care for older adults.





## Work was sponsored by these generous funders











THE RETIREMENT RESEARCH FOUNDATION





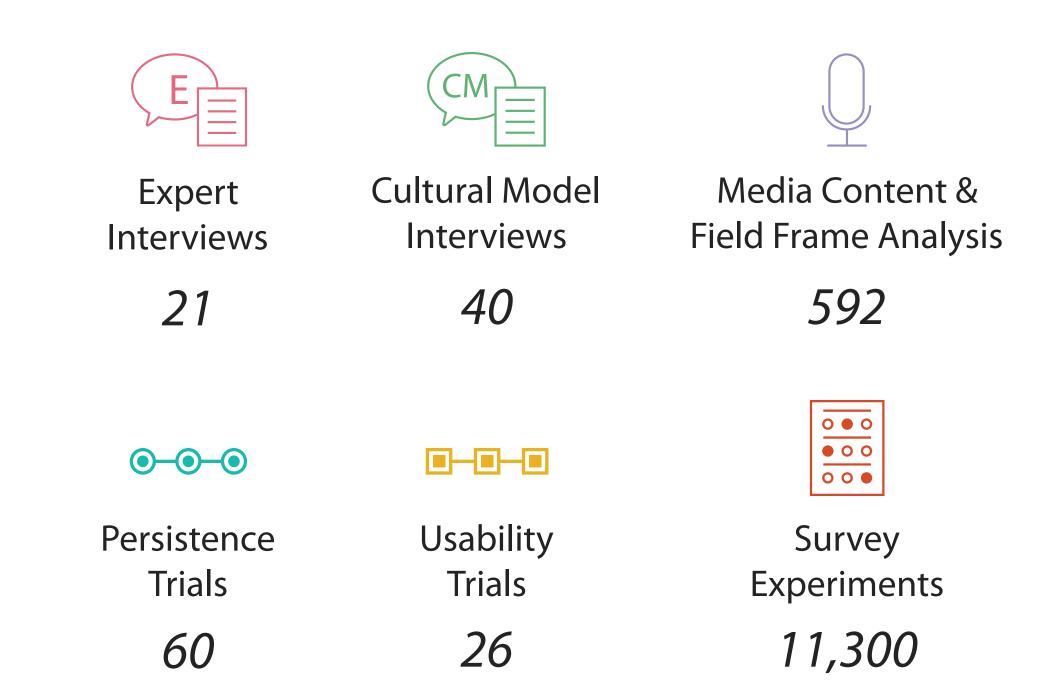
The ATLANTIC Philanthropies

# NDATION

# **Strategic Framing =**

Knowing What You're Up Against + Using Empirically Vetted Strategies to Navigate

## We Conducted a Comprehensive Investigation





#### On-the-Street Interviews

#### 146

# Sample Size: **12,185**

# What you're up against



# A Peek Into The Swamp of Aging

#### Ideal.

- Accumulated wisdom
- Self-sufficiency
- Staying active
- Earned leisure

#### **Perceived** "Real"

- Deterioration
- Loss of control
- Dependency
- Determinism

Collective Responsibility

**Problems Can Be Solved** 

VS.

#### **Solutions**

 Better individual choices & planning More education & information • Fatalism: Nothing can be done

Ageism

What's in the Swamp of... Aging

"Us" vs "Them"

• Digital incompetence

• Older as "other"

• Zero sum

- Family dispersal

#### Individualism • Lifestyle choices Financial planning

#### Social **Determinants**

#### **Threat of Modernity**

• Economic challenges Social Security is doomed

> What Surrounds **Us Shapes Us**

# A proven strategy: 3 Narratives



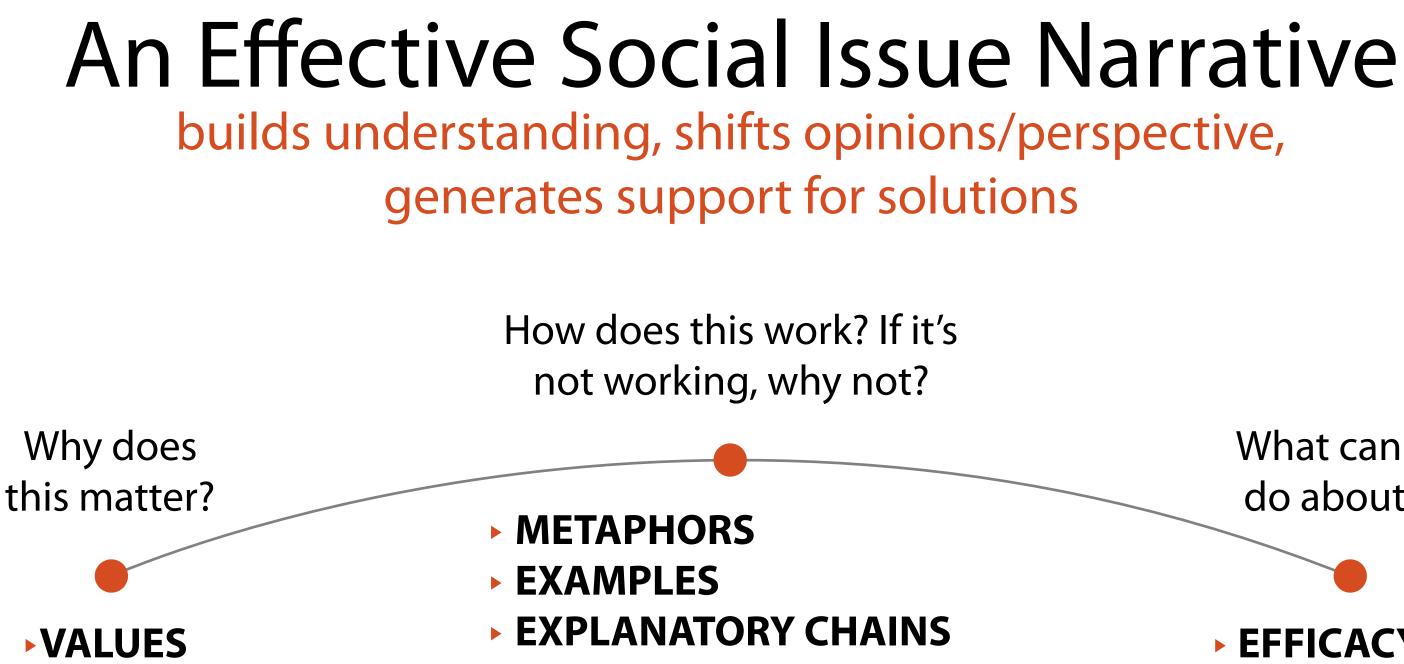




Use Narrative #1 (*Embracing the Dynamic*) to tell a new story about <u>aging</u>

Use Narrative #2 (Confronting Injustice) to put <u>ageism</u> on the map and generate support for solutions

Use Narrative #3 (*Structure of Justice*) to cultivate systemic thinking about <u>elder abuse</u>



#### What can we do about it?

#### EFFICACY PRINCIPLES SOLUTIONS

# Narrative #1: Embracing the Dynamic



How does this work?



Ingenuity: Let's use innovation to re-envision aging in the US.

advance toward new goals. This energy powers up our society and moves our communities forward.

• **Solutions:** e.g., inter-generational community centers can boost older people's participation in our communities.

# Testing Embracing the Dynamic



Studies show that Experience Corps works. After one year, many students who work with Experience Corps volunteer tutors achieve as much as 60% improvement in critical literacy skills compared to their peers. Volunteers provide an average of 6-15 hours of support each week throughout the school year.

The Experience Corps approach is simple, but effective. As an anti-poverty strategy, AARP Foundation Experience Corps is helping to provide both older adults and children with opportunities to enrich their lives through literacy.

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# Value?



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Solving our society's challenges requires us to think creatively about what resources we have available.

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**Explanation?** 

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Solving our society's challenges requires us to think creatively about what resources we have available. One resource that we can't afford to leave untapped involves the knowledge and skills we continually develop over our lifespans.

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# Solution?

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Experience Corps offers an innovative way to harness an aging community's potential. Volunteers are older adults who provide tutoring to students each week. After one year in the program, many students improve their critical literacy skills by as much as 60%. By tapping into the talents and energy of older adults, the Corps helps people of all ages to thrive.

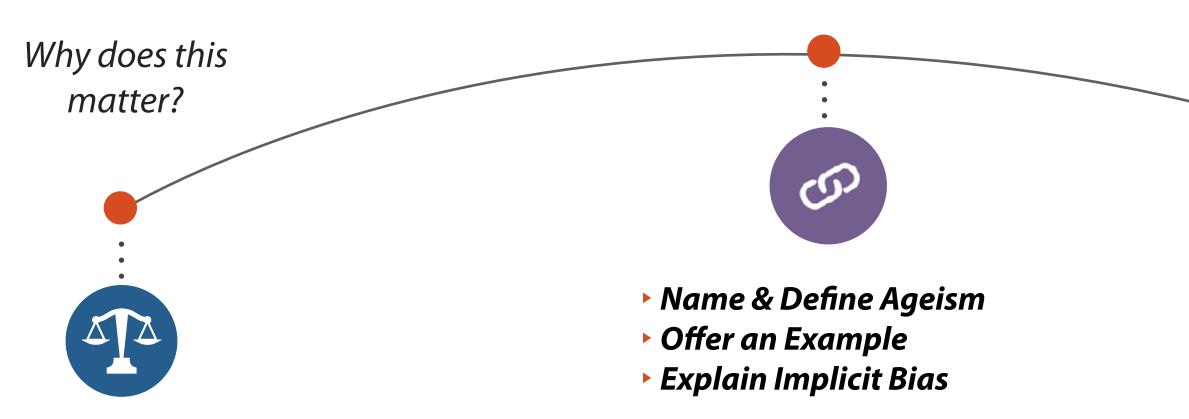
# **Narrative #2:** *Confronting Injustice*





## The **Confronting Injustice** Narrative Putting ageism on the map

How does this work?



Justice: A just society treats people of all ages equally, and ensures that everyone has meaningful opportunities to contribute.

Solutions: We need to address ageism head on. We can do this, e.g., by having better workplace rules and systems, trainings to combat implicit bias, and ways to report problems.

#### What can we do about it?



## A three-step explanation of ageism



**Define ageism.** Be sure to use a definition that makes room for people to see structural causes and consequences.



**Follow up with a concrete example** that shows how ageism is a serious problem requiring a public response. The example of workplace discrimination is readily understood and highly effective in prompting people to think about ageism as a public issue; health care discrimination also works well.



**Explain implicit bias** to show the public that there is a place for intervention: ageism arises from a common process that works automatically, but it can be disrupted.

# **Definition + Example + Explanation**

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 – 1 has a big impact on older people's live. Take the workplace: Employers commonly use agebased assumptions to evaluate resumes, 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 ageidentifying 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.

# Testing Confronting Injustice



# Narrative #3: Structure of Justice



# A Peek Into The Swamp of Elder Abuse

#### **Elder + Abuse**

• Elder abuse is unacceptable

- Self-neglect doesn't qualify
- Sexual abuse doesn't compute

#### Deterioration

Dependency = vulnerabilityPaternalism

## What's in the Swamp of... Elder Abuse

#### **Spotlight on Individuals**

- 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

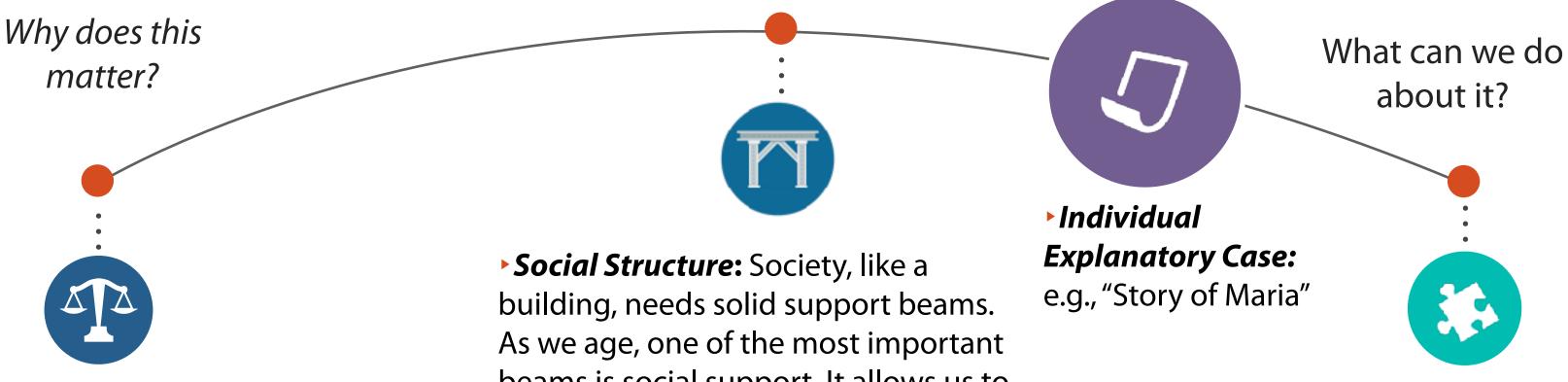
# Elder as Agents Consent

## Modern Life is the Problem

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

## The **Structure of Justice** Narrative Cultivating systemic thinking about elder abuse

How does this work?



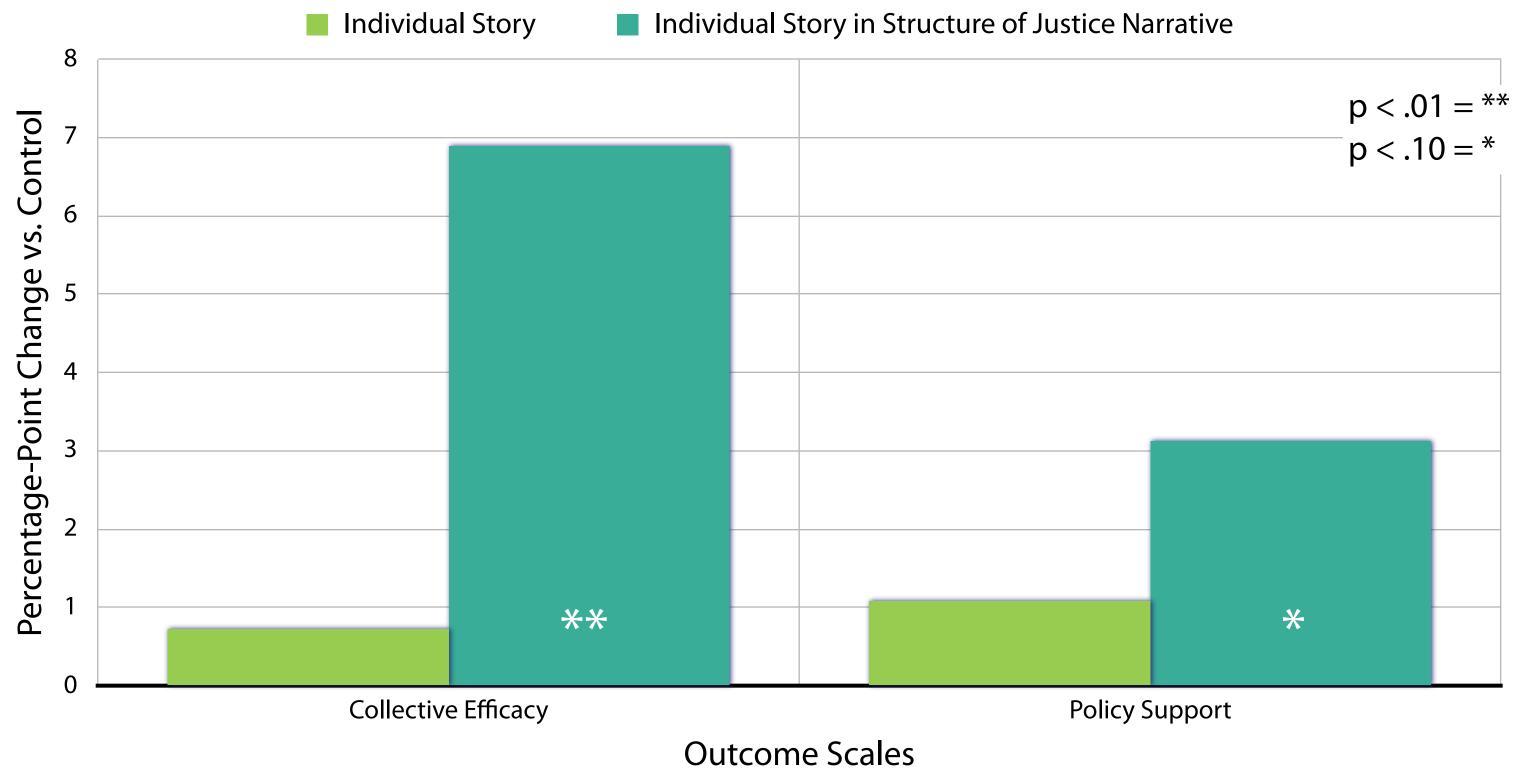
• Justice: A just society keeps older people connected to our communities so we can prevent and address elder abuse.

beams is social support. It allows us to participate fully and live free from abuse.

#### • Prevention and Response: There

are things we can do, e.g. through social programs and policies, to prevent social isolation and address elder abuse when it occurs.

## Effects of messages with stories about individual cases



# Structure of Justice in action

#### Visit our website for more recommendations and resources.

# Thank you!



#### www.frameworksinstitute.org

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