



Communications on Purpose

An Evidence Based Approach to Reframing Aging

LeadingAge DC Annual Meeting - "Life on Purpose"

October 5, 2018

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FrameWorks is on a mission...

to advance the nonprofit sector's capacity
to **frame the public discourse** on social and scientific issues

What is a frame?

Frames are sets of choices
about how information is presented:

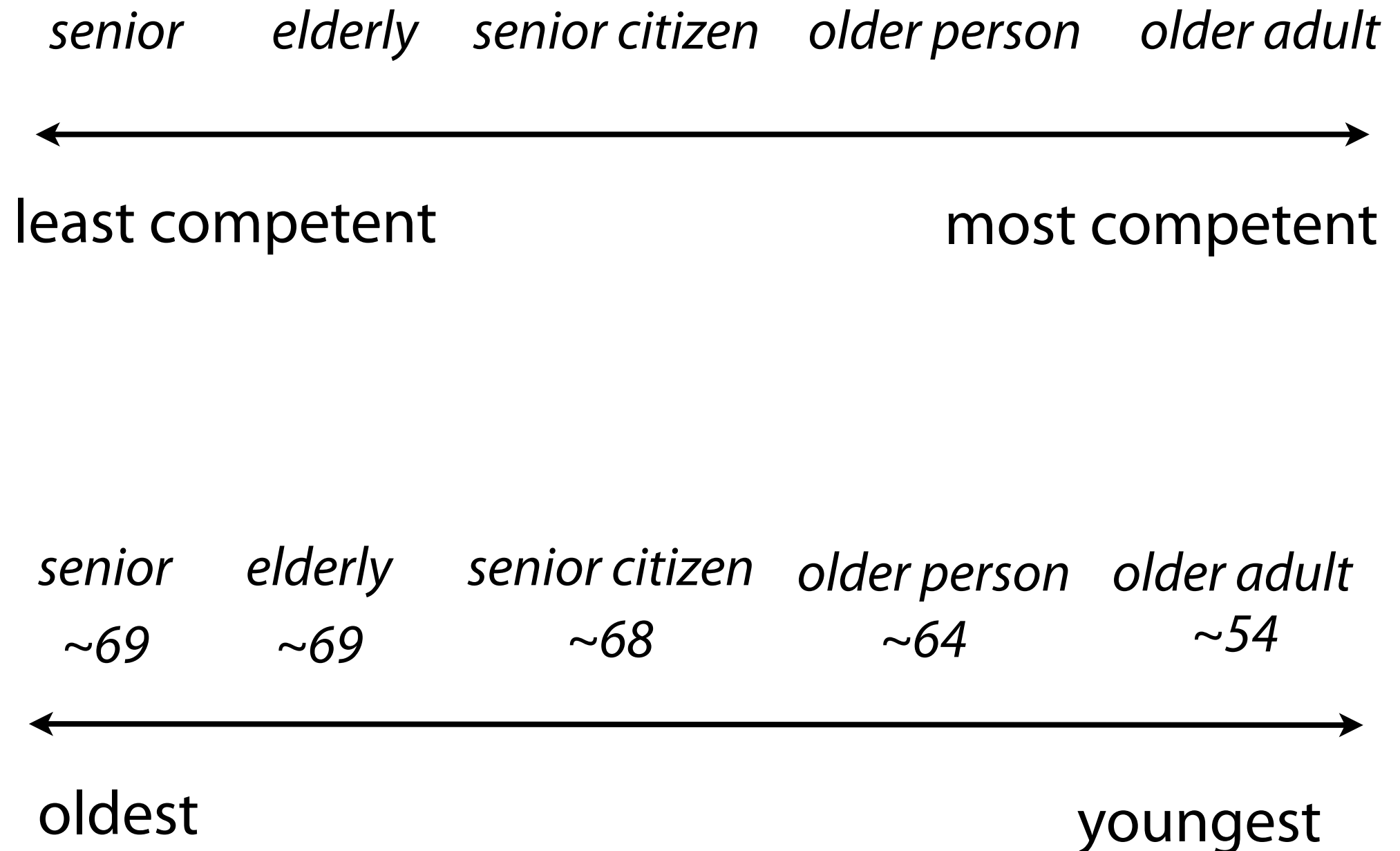
What to emphasize, how to explain it, and what to
leave unsaid.

When differences in presentation lead to
differences in responses, this is a *frame effect*.

Names are part of frames

Researchers ran an experiment exploring the public's associations with a few common reference terms for older adults

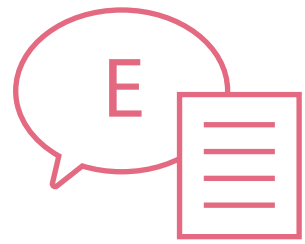
The recommendation:
Use the terms *older person/people*.
It cues both
"over age 60" and "competent."



These organizations recognized a shared challenge



We investigated the communications aspects of aging advocacy



Expert
Interviews

21



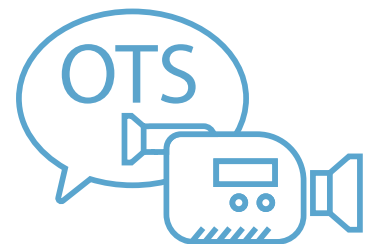
Cultural Model
Interviews

40



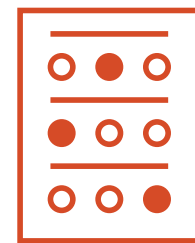
Media Content &
Field Frame Analysis

592



On-the-Street
Interviews

146



Survey
Experiments

11,300



Persistence
Trials

60



Usability
Trials

26

Sample Size:
12,185

know the story you're in

insist on evidence

change the story you tell

frame with friends



Know the story you're in



Public thinking about adult aging



In public discourse,
we found two major types of
narratives on aging

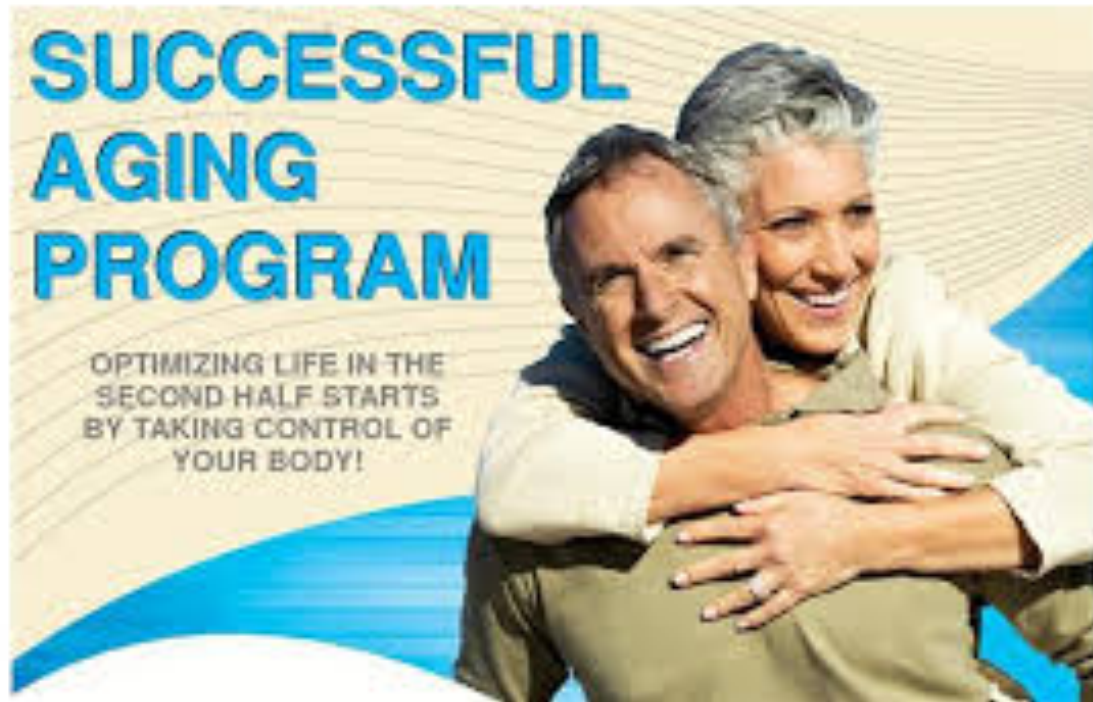


Idealized



Problems without solutions

Neither advocates nor the media talk much about the social supports involved in healthy aging



These ideas - and stories - limit good policy

If people believe that aging is
“just” a process of decline...

...they are less likely to identify as “aging”

...they are less likely to support good aging policy

...they are less likely to connect aging
to other social issues



Insist on evidence



Correcting their mistakes doesn't work

Flu Vaccine
Facts & Myths





Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

MYTH "The flu isn't a serious disease."
FACTS Influenza (flu) is a serious disease of the nose, throat, and lungs, and it can lead to pneumonia. Each year about 200,000 people in the U.S. are hospitalized and about 36,000 people die because of the flu. Most who die are 65 years and older. But small children less than 2 years old are as likely as those over 65 to have to go to the hospital because of the flu.

MYTH "The flu shot can cause the flu."
FACTS The flu shot cannot cause the flu. Some people get a little soreness or redness where they get the shot. It goes away in a day or two. Serious problems from the flu shot are very rare.

MYTH "The flu shot does not work."
FACTS Most of the time the flu shot will prevent the flu. In scientific studies, the effectiveness of the flu shot has ranged from 70% to 90% when there is a good match between circulating viruses and those in the vaccine. **Getting the vaccine is your best protection against this disease.**

MYTH "The side effects are worse than the flu."
FACTS The worst side effect you're likely to get from a shot is a sore arm. The nasal mist flu vaccine might cause nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat and cough. The risk of a severe allergic reaction is less than 1 in 4 million.

MYTH "Only older people need a flu vaccine."
FACTS Adults and children with conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and kidney disease **need to get a flu shot**. Doctors also recommend children 6 months and older get a flu shot every year until their 5th birthday.

MYTH "You must get the flu vaccine before December."
FACTS Flu vaccine can be given before or during the flu season. The best time to get vaccinated is October or November. **But you can get vaccinated in December or later.**

For more information, ask your healthcare provider or call **800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)** Website www.cdc.gov/flu

MYTH "The flu shot can cause the flu."

FACTS The flu shot cannot cause the flu. Some people get a little soreness or redness where they get the shot. It goes away in a day or two. Serious problems from the flu shot are very rare.

Study of myth-fact structure found:

People misremembered the myths as true.

- Got worse over time.
- Attributed false information to the CDC.

Source: Skurnik et al 2005, Journal of American Medical Assoc

Misconception 1 – Brain Power Disappears with Age

While many older adults will struggle with mental conditions, like dementia, that decrease their short-term or long-term memory, the truth is that verbal/math abilities and abstract reasoning can actually increase with age. The key to strengthening these abilities is engaging the brain and [exercising mental faculties](#) to combat degenerative conditions. Physical exercise and social interaction are also important factors that can contribute to keeping the brain active and sharp.

Misconception 2 – Aging Robs You of Your Happiness

Though many people associate old age with depression, loneliness, and misery, getting older does not mean your loved one will lose their joy for life. In fact, [recent happiness studies](#) indicate that people are happiest at retirement age. Today, with the wealth of opportunities available for older adults, this can still ring true for adults who have been retired for many years. Getting older can mean having time to enjoy hobbies and interests that bring true happiness, rather than having all of one's time engaged in obligations.

Misconception 3 – Older Adults Are Lonely

In today's world, there is not only a multitude of social activities available for older adults, but also a [variety of senior living options](#). Volunteer opportunities, club memberships, senior centers, and time with family and friends can provide human interactions and social connections that can support an older adult through the aging process and any challenges that come along with it. Living in an assisted living community can also provide a great sense of family and belonging to residents.

After spending many years living alone, losing friends or family, and feeling socially isolated in the later years of life, the lifestyle in an assisted living community can be a great solution for preventing loneliness and depression. [Assisted living communities provide vital opportunities](#) for conversation, camaraderie, and companionship, allowing many adults to enjoy their senior years as the most social years they have had in a long time.

Misconception 4 – Older Adults Have Multiple Health Conditions

While our bodies do wear down with age, growing old does not necessarily mean losing all of your independence and visiting the hospital every week. While some older adults may develop health conditions that require close monitoring and intervention, many health conditions can be avoided by maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Taking care of your health as you age and staying active through [proper exercise](#) will help prevent falls, improve balance and circulation, and help increase overall independence.

Misconception 5 – Aging Limits the Ability to Learn New Skills

Learning new skills as an older adult is a different process than learning in your younger years, but that doesn't mean older adults should avoid trying new things. In fact, learning and processing new information or [taking up a new hobby can help keep the mind sharp](#) and provide something interesting to enjoy throughout the day. You can, and should, learn new skills as you age.

Many people fear getting older because of these misconceptions, but the aging process should not be considered something to be afraid of, but rather, something to explore. If you stay active and engaged, your later years of life can be some of the best in your life!

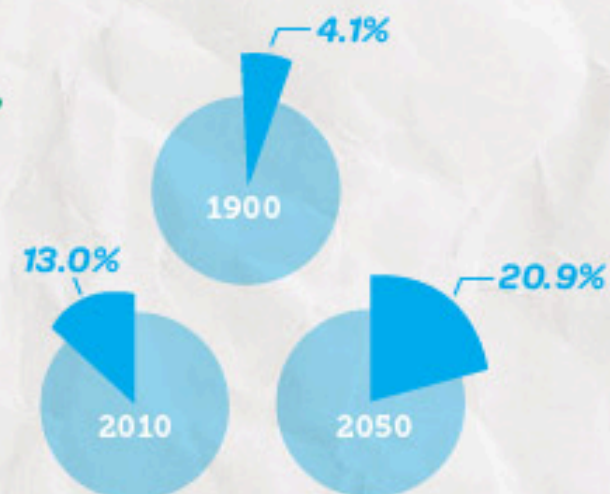
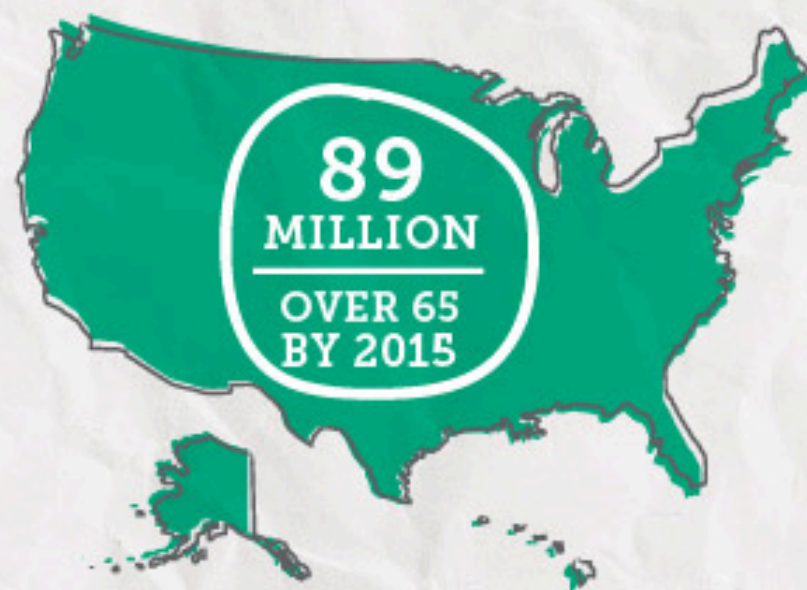
Providing more data doesn't work



THE COST of AGING IN AMERICA

As baby boomers age, the sheer number of older adults will be unprecedented in U.S. history. The portion of the population living on fixed incomes with high medical expenses will increase as the proportion of seniors – especially those older than 85 – grows. As a result, the health care system and federal programs such as Medicare and Social Security will come under increasing financial strain.

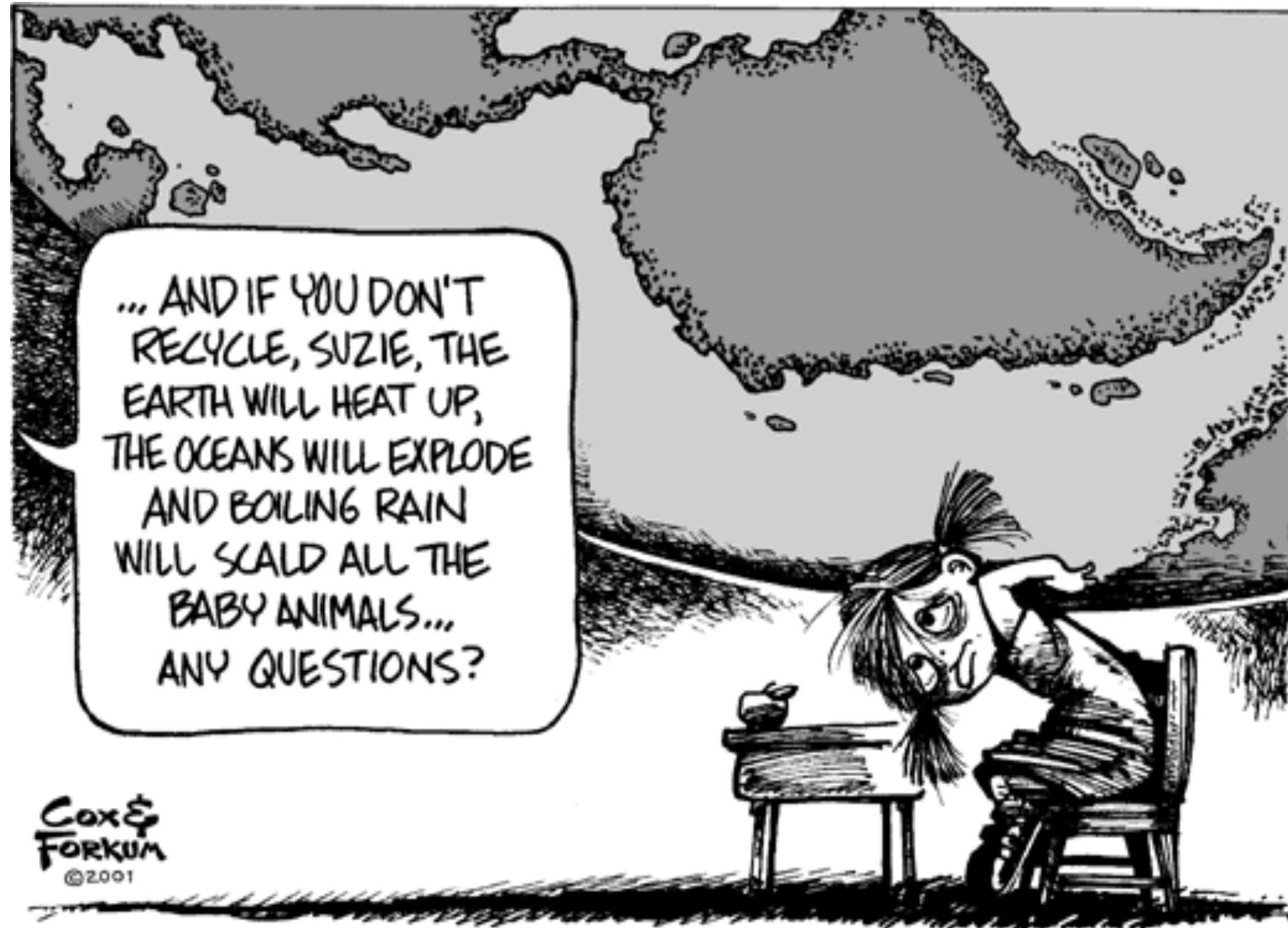
In 2010, there were already 40.3 million people aged 65 and older – 12 times the number in 1900.



AARP reports that the 85 and older population – those most

Between 2012 and 2050, the number will triple, increasing by **224%**.

The crisis story has its limits



“A talent for speaking differently,
rather than arguing well,
is the chief instrument of
cultural change.”

-Richard Rorty





Change the stories you tell



“Othering” cues to clear out of the field’s vocabulary

“them,” “they”

aging population

elderly

seniors

senior citizen

help

assist

vulnerable

burden of aging

fighting aging



AVOID



Older = Other

ADVANCE



We Are All Aging

Framed with *Older = Other*

Those receiving home-delivered meals often are isolated from community institutions, friendships, and family relationships.

Without regular contact with a Meals on Wheels volunteer, **this population** would be at severe risk for social isolation. As our **aging population and the healthcare burden** increases, Meals on Wheels and similar programs offer critical support that **permit senior citizens** to stay in the community.

Reframed with *Aging = Us*

As more Americans live longer lives, it's time for **us** to figure out ways that **we can all** stay connected to our community **as we age**. Home-delivered meals can be an important way to ensure that if **we** develop mobility challenges in **later life, we** can still count on **being included in our communities**. Initiatives like Meals on Wheels and similar programs are important ways to to reduce the risks that social isolation poses to **our health**.

AVOID



Crisis

ADVANCE



Possibility

Ingenuity



“Americans are problem-solvers. When we see an opportunity, we figure out how to seize it – and when we see that something isn’t working, we rethink our approach. Replacing outdated practices with new, smarter ways of doing things is the key to our nation’s ingenuity.”

Shifts thinking away from:

- *Fatalism*
- *Us versus Them thinking*
- *Solutions = More Information*

Moves thinking toward:

- *Collective responsibility*
- *Problems can be solved*

Framed with *Because Demography*

Since 1900, the percentage of Americans aged 65 or older has more than tripled. Two years ago, they numbered 46.2 million and made up 14.5 percent of the total population. Flash forward to 2040 and 21.7 percent will fall into that category. Even more remarkable, each and every day, 10,000 US residents turn 65.

Reframed with *Ingenuity*

As Americans live longer, healthier lives, we need **innovative** approaches to make sure that older people can continue to contribute to our communities, our economy, and our culture. By **rethinking** policies that were developed in an earlier era, we can make sure that the systems that shape our everyday lives - from transportation to health to workplaces - are **updated** and suited for a society with more older people.

Building Momentum



“As we get older we gather momentum, which powers us to take up new ideas and advance toward common goals. This energy powers up our society and helps move our communities forward.”

Shifts thinking away from:

- *Us Versus Them*
- *Aging as Discrete Categories*
- *Decline and Deterioration*
- *Aging as a “battle” or “fight”*
- *Dependency*

Moves thinking toward:

- *Aging as opportunity*
- *Aging as “us”*
- *Policies support well-being as we age*
- *Older people as contributors to the collective good*

Framed with
Could Be Good, Will Probably Be Bad

The graying of the U.S. population is a phenomenon that has been a long time coming, but that we remain largely unprepared to confront. The fact that science has basically doubled lifespans in the past century and a half is maybe the most extraordinary accomplishment in the history of mankind. But unless we shift our attitudes and responses to aging, it will go from being a miracle to a crisis.

Reframed with *Building Momentum*

Thanks to scientific and medical progress, Americans are living longer and healthier lives. This modern miracle can change our society for the better - but only if we make some adjustments. People build momentum as they age, with the accumulation of experience and insight pushing them forward. If we adapt our workforce policies in creative ways, our economy and our civic life can be powered by this momentum. If we don't, we run the risk of wasting that energy.

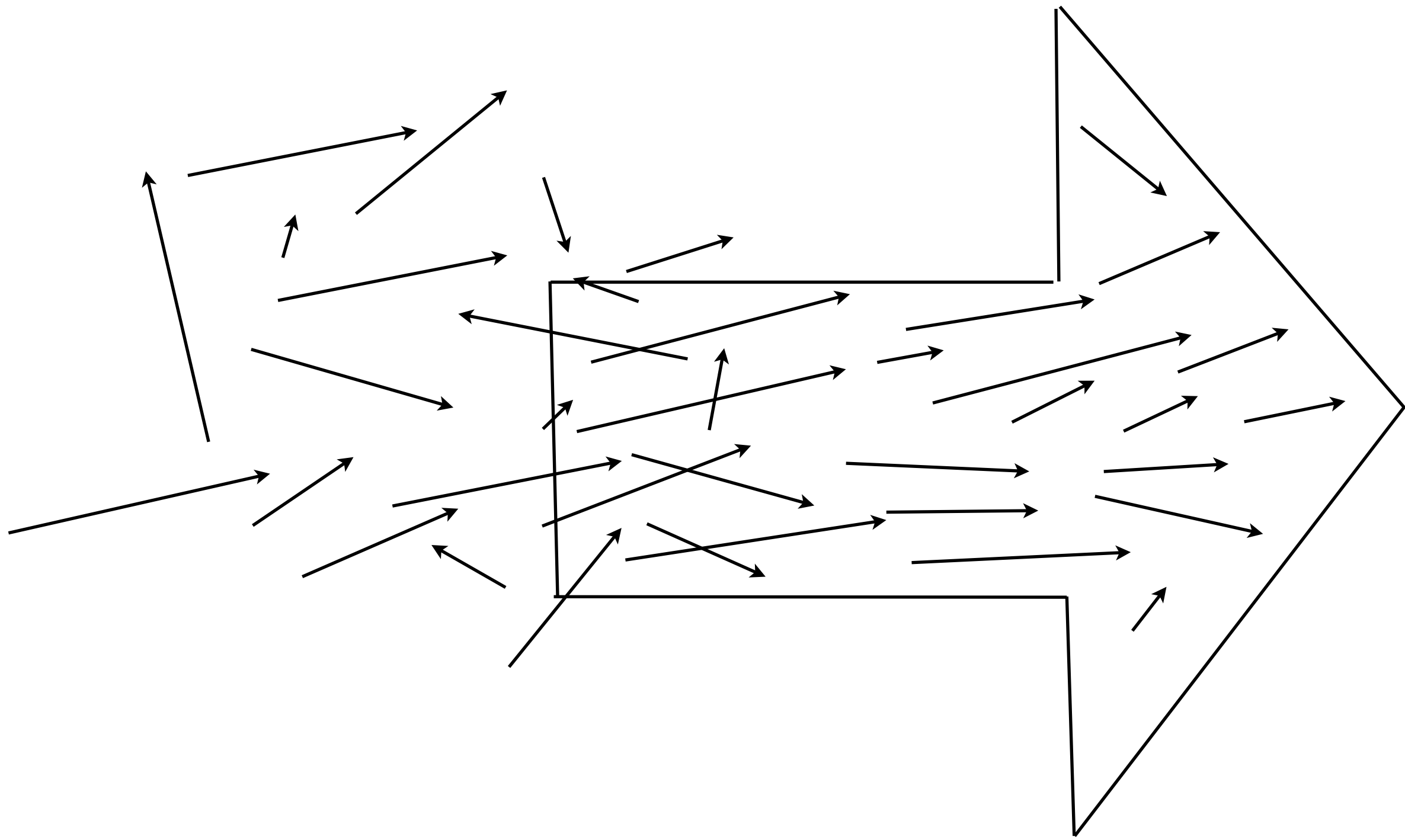
Reframing public thinking



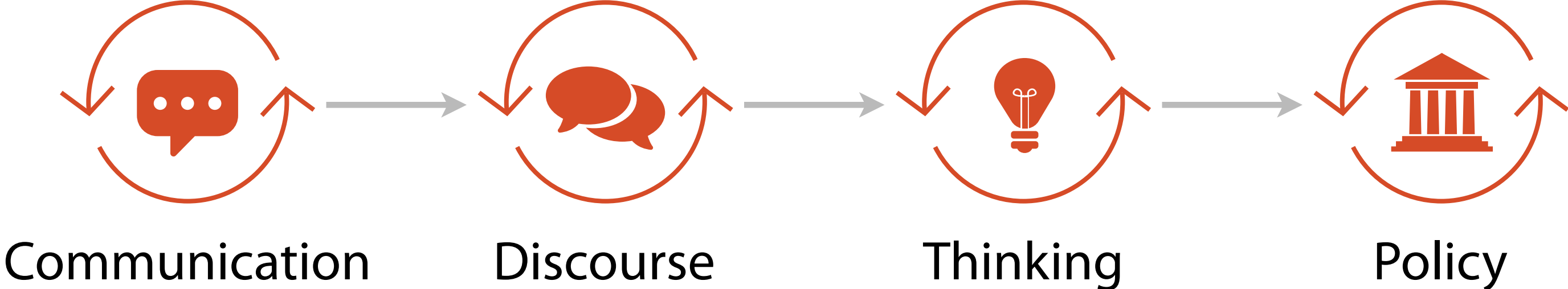


Frame with friends





Frames can drive broad social change



When It Comes to Older Adults, Language Matters: *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* Adopts Modified American Medical Association Style

Watch your thoughts, for your thoughts become your words. Watch your words, for your words become your actions.

—Unknown

You are probably wondering what ancient proverbs and a style change for the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (JAGS) have in common. More than you might think, as we have learned from the American Geriatrics Society's (AGS's) work with the FrameWorks Insti-

words like (the) aged, elder(s), (the) elderly, and seniors should not be used. This is because such terms connote discrimination and certain negative stereotypes that may undercut research-based recommendations for better serving our needs as we age.²

Perhaps more importantly in this era of instant public access to scientific research, this guidance acknowledges that these terms do not sit well with the public. For several years now, the AGS has partnered with seven

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GUEST COMMENTARY

Whether 'senior citizen' or 'older adult,' don't let words get in the way of the message about aging

BY NANCY E. LUNDEBJERG
Special to The Star
 March 12, 2018 08:30 PM
 Updated March 12, 2018 11:31 PM

I've been following with interest exchanges in The Kansas City Star on the language we use when referring to older adults, such as one letter writer who called the word "senior" an "antiquated term."

I am one of the authors of an editorial referenced in these exchanges: "[When it Comes to Older Adults, Language Matters](#)," published in the July 2017 issue of *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*. I also am CEO of the AGS, the American Geriatrics Society.

I'm happy to see we struck a chord with readers in Kansas City and elsewhere, so I want to provide some background on why we changed the language we use. That decision grew out of work commissioned by experts at the Leaders of Aging Organizations, or LAO. Like me,

National Senior Center Month | September 2018

SENIOR CENTERS: BUILDING MOMENTUM

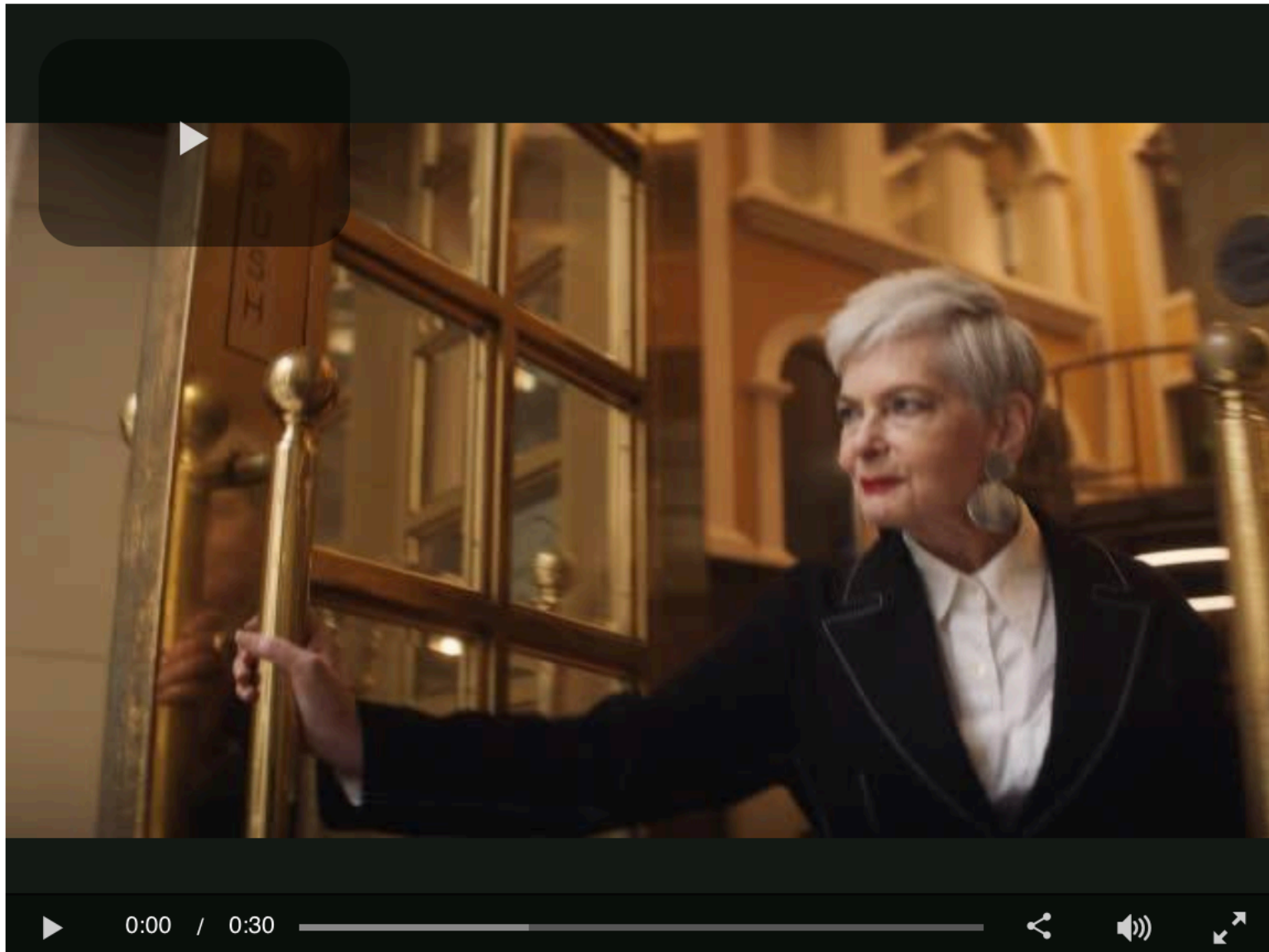
Growing | Learning | Giving | Connecting

ncoa
 National Institute of Senior Centers

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CVS DEBUTS BEAUTY CAMPAIGN FREE OF AIRBRUSHING

By [Adrienne Pasquarelli](#). Published on April 19, 2018.



WELLNESS

Allure Magazine Will No Longer Use the Term "Anti-Aging"

BY MICHELLE LEE @HEYMICHELLELEE

🕒 AUGUST 14, 2017

NCOA Blog

Public Policy & Action

By [Marci Phillips](#) | 7.3.2018

Straight Talk for Seniors®: Congressional Committees Preserve Aging Services Funding for 2019

Congressional appropriators have moved their FY19 bills quickly through the committee process, with only the House version of the Labor-HHS-Education (Labor-HHS) bill still waiting for full committee approval.

There is generally good news for aging services programs in both bills. They each reject cuts and eliminations proposed by the Administration and largely maintain funding at current levels, keeping the increases that were secured for many programs in last year's fiscal year. A few small increases also have been proposed.

We invite you to join the #ReframingAging effort!

The Big Picture

Quick Start Guide

Framing is the process of making choices about what to emphasize and what to leave unsaid. Here's a quick tour of themes to avoid and alternatives to advance.

Instead of these words and cues:

"Tidal wave," "tsunami," and similarly catastrophic terms for the growing population of older people

"Choice," "planning," "control," and other individual determinants of aging outcomes

"Seniors," "elderly," "aging dependents," and similar "other-ing" terms that stoke stereotypes

Try:

Talking affirmatively about changing demographics: "As Americans live longer and healthier lives..."

Emphasizing how to improve social contexts: "Let's find creative solutions to ensure we can all thrive as we age."

Using more neutral ("older people/Americans") and inclusive ("we" and "us") terms



Research & resources at

frameworksinstitute.org/reframing-aging.html

Online framing courses at

frameworksacademy.org

With gratitude to our national funders...



“Neither revolution nor reformation can ultimately change a society. Rather, you must tell a more powerful tale, one so persuasive that it sweeps away the old myths and becomes the preferred story, one so inclusive that it gathers all the bits of our past and present into a coherent whole, one that even shines some light into our future so that we can take the next step..

If you want to change a society, then you have to tell an alternative story.”

–Ivan Illich

Thank you!

Let's continue the conversation.

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