Why Initiate ReFraming Aging?

The Collaborative
The Funders

1. AARP
2. The Archstone Foundation
3. The Atlantic Philanthropies
4. Fan Fox/Leslie R. Samuels Foundation
5. John A. Hartford Foundation
6. Retirement Research Foundation
7. Rose Community Foundation

Reframing Aging:
Seeing What You’re Up Against and Finding a Way Forward

May 5, 2015
Susan Nall Bales, Founder and President
Nat Kendall-Taylor, Ph.D., Vice President for Research
Examples of FrameWorks’ Work

• Harvard University Center on the Developing Child – how to translate science of early childhood brain and biological development

• The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation – how to change the public conversation about immigration reform

• Alberta Family Wellness Initiative – how to talk about the science of addiction; training researchers, practitioners and policymakers to use frames to close the research/practice gap

• National Science Foundation – how to help people understand climate change, ocean acidification; training zoo and aquarium interpreters to engage ordinary citizens

• Ford Foundation/The National Academy of Sciences – how to use frames to communicate expert information about mass incarceration, immigration, 21st century skills and educational assessment

• The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children – how to use communications as part of an innovative strategy to prevent child maltreatment in the UK

Salience is Superficial
Caring Teachers
How People Model Matters

“The cultural models available to understand global warming lead to ineffective personal actions and support for ineffective policies, regardless of the level of personal commitment to environmental problems.”

—Kempton, Boster & Hartley, Environmental Values in American Culture (MIT Press, 1995)

Framing is the 20th Century Paradigm Shifter

System 1: “creates a coherent pattern of activated ideas in associative memory; is adept at finding a coherent story that links the fragments of knowledge at its disposal.”

System 2: “deliberate, effortful, orderly thinking; is lazy but can be surprised into thinking when System 1 doesn’t have a (coherent) answer.”

Daniel Kahneman (2011) Thinking, Fast and Slow
Support is Frame-Dependent

![Graph showing support for evidence-based addiction policies]

N=6,000

Diffusion is Frame-Dependent

Aging ➔ Demo. Change ➔ Econ. Dev. ➔ Housing ➔ Health ➔ Public Understanding
Diffusion is Frame-Dependent

Frames Drive Discourse

The New York Times

Opinionator

Protecting Children From Toxic Stress

By DAVID KOBLE

TOXIC STRESS
THE EFFECT ON YOUR BODY
CALIFORNIA SENATE PASSES RESOLUTION ASKING GOV TO LOOK AT INTERVENTION POLICIES TO ALLEVIATE "TOXIC STRESS" IN CHILDREN

Frames Drive Policy
How to Re-Frame an Issue

1. Distill the Untranslated Story
2. See The Swamp
3. Map the Gaps
4. Describe the Discourse
5. Develop and Test the Tools
6. Train to Reframe

Untranslated Expert Story of Aging

What is aging?
- Normative and lifelong: Aging is a normative process that extends across the lifespan.
- Cumulative: Educational, financial and social experiences and contexts of childhood and middle age predict well-being in older adulthood.
- Distinct from disease and decline: While physical and cognitive changes are a normative part of growing older, aging does not necessarily mean disability.

What characterizes older adults?
- A growing population with increased and unprecedented longevity: Older adults are living longer and healthier lives, and their numbers are growing.
- Highly heterogeneous: There is enormous variation in health, functional ability and financial status. Disparities exist along the dimensions of income, gender, race/ethnicity and education.
- Social and economic impact: Older adults hold a disproportionately large share of our country’s wealth, represent an enormous source of consumer spending and economic productivity, and contribute in myriad ways (e.g., support to grandchildren, child care) to family and community life.

What are the policy needs and implications of an aging society?
- Public institutions and infrastructure: Successful adaptation to an aging society will require adjustments in all sectors of public life (e.g., employment, retirement, health care, transportation, urban planning, housing, etc.).
- Civic and social contributions: Redesign social policies to facilitate the contributions of older adults and expand opportunities for lifelong learning and service.
- Public spending: Manage and spend resources more efficiently in order to provide for the health care and retirement income security of older adults.
- Retirement security: Ensure retirement income security for older adults (e.g., by expanding and strengthening Social Security) and rethink workplace policies.
- Healthcare workforce and long-term care: Improve geriatric training for all healthcare workers to prepare them to meet the needs of an aging population, and provide public insurance options for long-term care.
- Caregiver support: Provide better institutional, social and financial supports to family caregivers.
- Research investment: Invest in research to better understand the aging process and the economic, civic and social implications of an aging society.
- Ageism: Ageism, incorporated into policies, programs and practices, prevents older adults’ full participation in society.
See the Swamp

Ideal vs Perceived “Real”

Accumulated wisdom
Self-sufficiency
Staying active
Earned leisure

Deterioration
Loss of control
Dependency
Determinism

“Us” and “Them”

Zero-Sum
Older as “other”
Digital incompetence

What’s in the swamp of...

Adult Aging

Nostalgia and the Threat of Modernity

Family dispersal
Economic challenges
Social Security is doomed

Individualism

Lifestyle choices
Financial planning

Solutions

Fatalism/Crisis--nothing can be done
Better individual choices & planning
More education & information
1. Demographic Trends
Uneven knowledge that country is aging. Inattention to need for policy and infrastructure adaptations.

2. Social Determinants
Race, gender, residential location, & immigration status are not part of thinking.

3. Ageism
Inattention to discrimination faced by older people

What cultural models might ‘eat’ this message?

The Old-Age Survival Guide: How to Live a Longer, Happier Life

Even the best genes will only get you so far. Most of the rest, for better or worse, is up to you. “The importance of choices people make is in so many ways responsible for the quality of life in old age,” said Charles Reynolds III, a professor of geriatric psychiatry, neurology, and neuroscience at the University of Pittsburgh Medical School. “Many people think they should be entitled to a good-quality 25 years after age 60. Well, they’re not necessarily entitled, but they can put the odds in their favor.”
Emergent Recommendations

Don’t

• cue individualism (“choice,” “planning,” “control,” “responsibility”…)
• use images or textual cues that “otherize” older Americans (watch your pronouns)
• activate zero sum in discussions of resources (“pies,” “pools” and other limited resource metaphors)
• use crisis messages

Emergent Recommendations

Do

• find the “real real”
• show how context shapes individual actions and outcomes (contextual decisions)
• explain how intervention leads to the change in outcome
• tell stories in which systems and supports are key “characters”
• focus on systemic solutions
• paint the future as a time for potential change and improvement
• highlight solutions when discussing ageism
We know that to be healthy and well we need opportunities to engage with our communities and access to support. As an integral part of our society, the health and well-being of older Americans improves when there are varied opportunities to stay physically active and socially engaged. We need to do everything we can to ensure that all communities have these opportunities for engagement — such as community centers with programming for older Americans, farmers markets, and chances to volunteer in our schools and libraries. And we need to make sure we give older adults reliable and safe ways to get where they need to go.
Because aging is a process we all experience, Americans of all ages do better when we take steps to ensure everyone has what they need to age successfully. Responding to the demographic shifts that are happening in our country is a challenge, but it is one that we, as a country can address. More and more people living longer poses challenges, but we know how to address them to keep our country moving forward.
How to Re-Frame an Issue

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Map the Gaps

Key Factors
- Physical Changes
- Attitude Towards Aging
- Implications of Longevity
- Opportunities
- Policy Implications
- Social Security
- Role of Family
- Ageism
- Responsibility for Solutions

Expert Story
- Context/Society/Systems
- Normal
- Embrace
- Country
- Limited/Better Support
- Broad/Extensive
- Holistic/Viable
- Part of Society
- Serious Concern/Challenge
- Society/Policy

Public Story
- Individual
- Negative
- Battle
- Ind./Family
- Already Out There
- Older Adults/Doomed
- In a Bubble
- Individual Decisions
How People Use This Research

In some American sub-cultures, it is a “given” that kids will go into a STEM field—it’s just part of the culture and they’re proud of it—whereas for other groups it’s uncool to like math or science—it’s just not something they value. It seems that there isn’t much to be done until we tackle this “culture” piece, and figure out how to change what groups of parents and kids value.

Find the Tools to Address the Challenge: Fairness btw Places + Charging Stations

For all children to reach their full potential and be able to contribute to their communities and country we need to ensure that, no matter what zip code they live in, they have exciting and engaging opportunities to learn. These learning opportunities are like charging stations. For some kids, there are high quality and easily accessible charging stations all over their communities—there are great curriculum in schools, and lots of museums, summer opportunities, and so forth. But other kids live in dead zones, where there just aren’t high quality learning opportunities to plug in to. It’s important that all communities have lots of places to plug in when it comes to STEM learning, because learning these subjects at full power requires multiple opportunities to charge up interest and engagement and different ways to hook up to and interact with concepts. We need to even out the patchy learning grid we have now, and make changes so that all communities have lots of high-powered charging stations.

We hear all the time that there is a rising tide of Americans who are about to come into their older years and that in the near future our country will not look the way that it does now. This will be a catastrophic drain on our country’s resources— sucking up more public services and leaving less for all the rest of us. It seems like the only answer is for each of us to take greater responsibility for and control over our lives so that, when we are older, we are not a drain on other generations.

We all rely on systems that support us throughout our lives. Some of these supports come from our families, some from our local communities and some from government systems that we have put in place to ensure that everyone can contribute to the strength of our society. We also know that our country can’t progress when groups of citizens don’t have what they need to do well. This is why it is so important that we think hard about the policies and programs that we need in order to support all members of our society. One key group to to think about is older Americans—because our well-being as a nation depends on having access to the strengths and contributions of these members of our communities and society. If we develop better ways to support Americans as they age, we can assure that all members of our society can contribute to our collective well-being.
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