



Disrupting Stereotypes

The Reframing Aging Initiative

National Academy of Sciences
Forum on Aging, Disability, and Independence
“Beyond Stereotypes to Inclusion” Public Workshop

October 10, 2017

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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

A note on naming

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

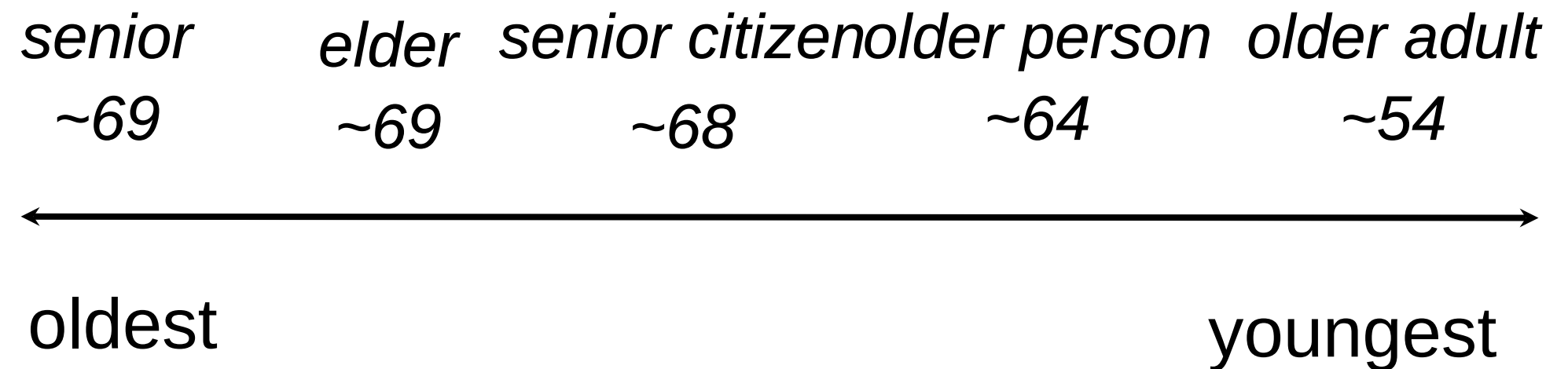
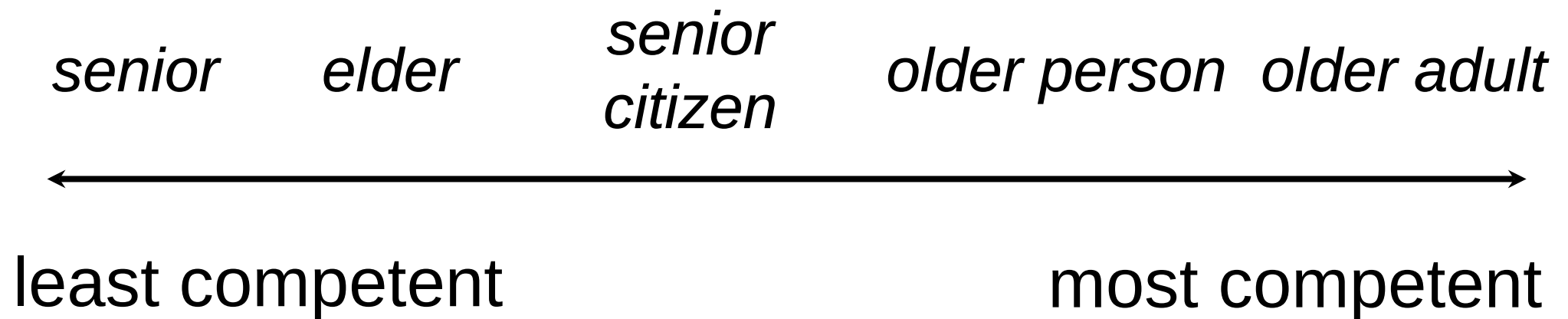
The recommendation:

Use the term

older person/people.

It cues *both*

“over age 60” *and* “competent.”



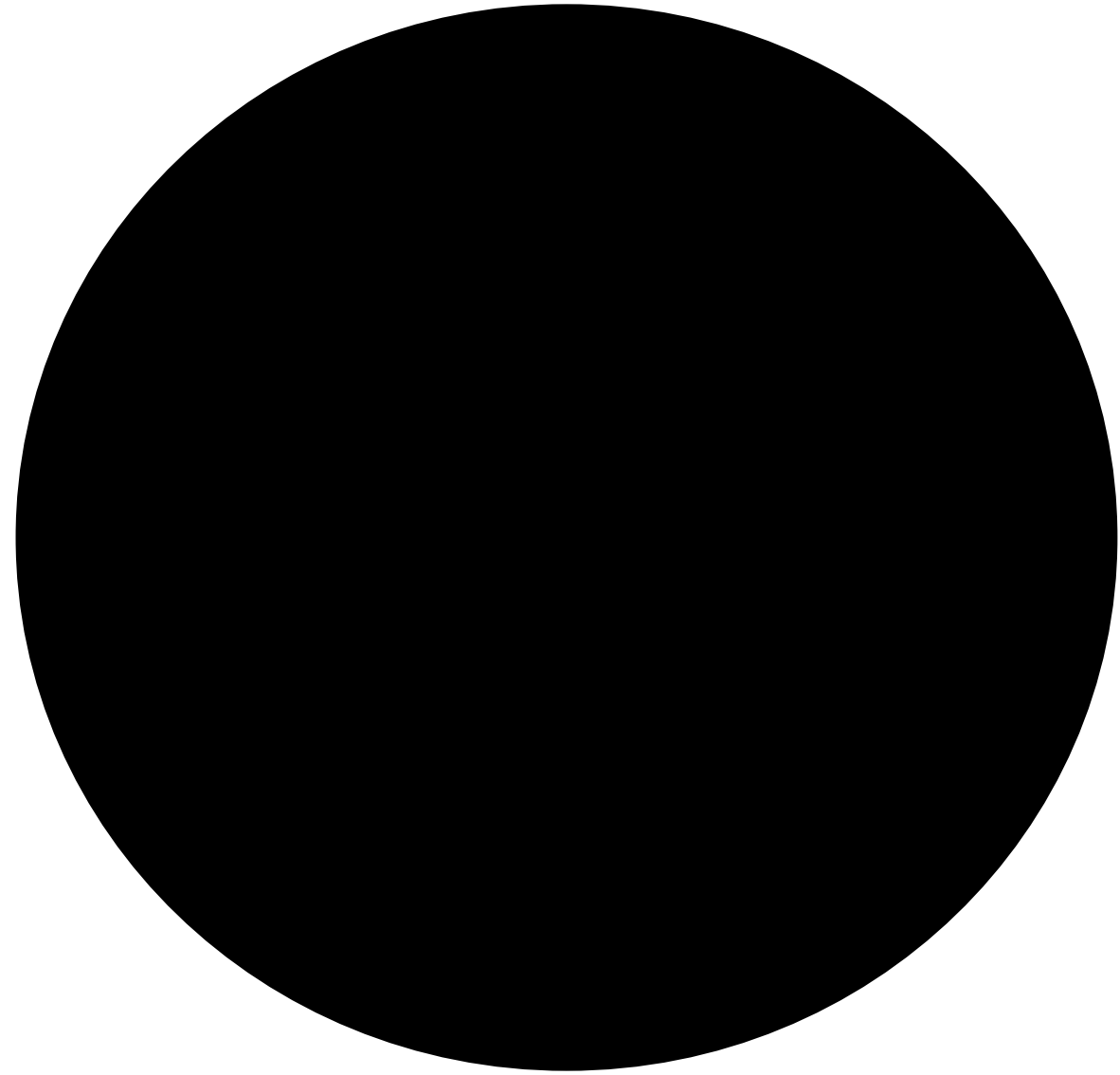
These organizations recognized a shared challenge



Public thinking about adult aging



Here's what the public knows about ageism





Let's elevate the issue of
ageism -
strategically.



AVOID

Don't introduce ageism by comparing it to sexism or racism.

Don't try to add a sense of urgency or gravity by labeling it a “civil rights issue.”

Don't choose examples that can be easily dismissed as “not really that bad.”

ADVANCE

Instead,
define ageism on its own terms.

Instead, help people understand
how implicit bias drives ageism.

Instead, always **state that ageism has a negative impact**, and **use carefully-chosen examples.**

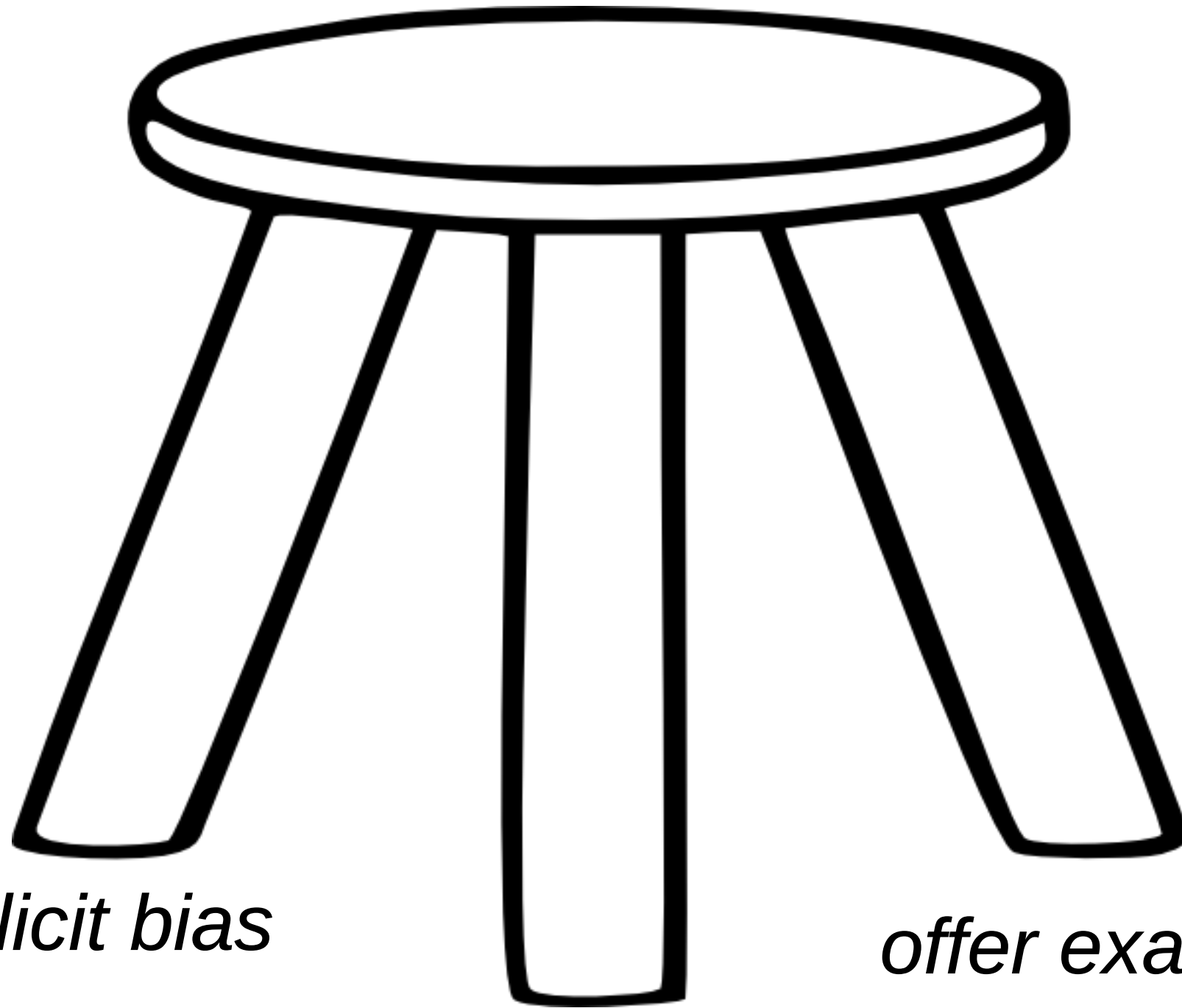
Framed with *Easy to Dismiss*

The number of Americans 60 and older is growing, but society still isn't embracing the aging population, geropsychologists say. Whether battling "old geezer" stereotypes or trying to obtain equal standing in the workplace, those who are 60 or older may all too often find themselves the victims of ageism. The most frequent type of ageism reported is being told a joke that pokes fun at older people.

Reframed with *Explanation*

As longevity increases, more Americans are aged 60 and older, but as a society, we aren't treating older people as equals. In fact, as we age, we are likely to experience ageism, or discrimination based on prejudices about age. This often involves the assumptions that older people are less competent than younger people - although studies show that managers rate older workers' skills highly. Ageism has a negative impact on us as we age - and on our communities.

Supporting public understanding of ageism



explain implicit bias

offer examples

name & define ageism

A well-framed definition anticipates misunderstandings

“Ageism is discrimination based on prejudices about age. When ageism is directed at older people, it often involves the assumptions that older people are less competent than younger people. Ageism has a negative impact on us as we age, in many areas of life.”

Explaining implicit bias helps people see its scope

“Ageism is held in place in society by “implicit bias.” Because we are all exposed to negative messages about older people, our brains automatically form judgments about people based on their age. For example, because of news coverage or common movie characters, many people subconsciously assume that older people are forgetful, grouchy, or frail. These stereotypes lead to discrimination against older people in many areas of life, from health care to the workplace.”

Workplace discrimination is a good go-to example

“Ageism’s effects are built into the institutions and systems that shape Americans’ lives. One example is common workplace policies and practices that discriminate against older people. Because people hold negative and inaccurate stereotypes about older workers, this limits older people’s ability to find employment. Because of ageism, capable people who could contribute are left out of the workforce.”

Offering policy solutions helps the public see
the possibility for widespread change

“Because implicit bias affects our decisions without us even being aware of it, we need to establish procedures and practices that help correct for ageism. For example, we can change our job applications so that people aren’t required to disclose the year they graduated from high school or college.”

Framing ageism effectively sparks new thinking



“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

With gratitude to our funders...



Thank you.
Let's continue the conversation.



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