Framed Messaging 101
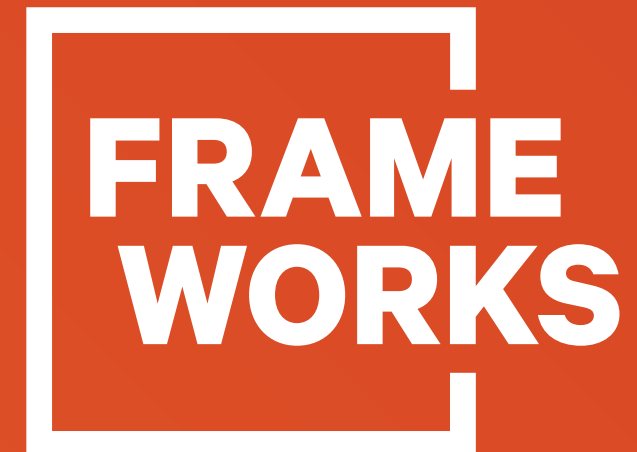
Take 30

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FRAME WORKS

FrameWorks is on a mission

to help advocacy organizations **frame the public discourse** and **build public will** for positive social change.

Framing is a Tool for Both Defense and Progress

Insight

Good framing is about surviving the current moment *and* also shaping future understanding.

▶

Recommendation

Use framing to clarify what's at stake today, while laying the groundwork for broader public support and deeper understanding over time. Treat every communication moment — even reactive ones — as an opportunity to advance your long-term vision.

Framing Tip:

**Even in a crisis situation, "crisis"
is not the most effective frame**

Individualism   Otherism   Fatalism

Characteristic of Cultural Mindsets	Implications for Communicators
Shared	• Can plan strategies that are relevant to all audiences
Multiple	• Need to know the models the public will bring to bear • Everyone is a potential ally *and* a potential skeptic
Durable	• Mindsets research has a long shelf life (unlike opinion research) • Need to change the context of communication • Need to have a long-term strategy for change
Structuring	• Need to distinguish between productive and unproductive mindsets
Activated by Association	• Need to plan to cue up the productive mindsets • Need to avoid cuing up the unproductive mindsets

Vary your goals (not your main story) by audience stance

Audience Stance	Immovable Opponents	Opponents	Uncommitted/ Uninvolved	Uncommitted/ Involved	Allies	Hardcore Allies
Communication Goal	Anticipate their arguments	Deactivate or convert	Explain, don't 'persuade'	Activate	Reinforce + Equip as messengers	Equip as messengers

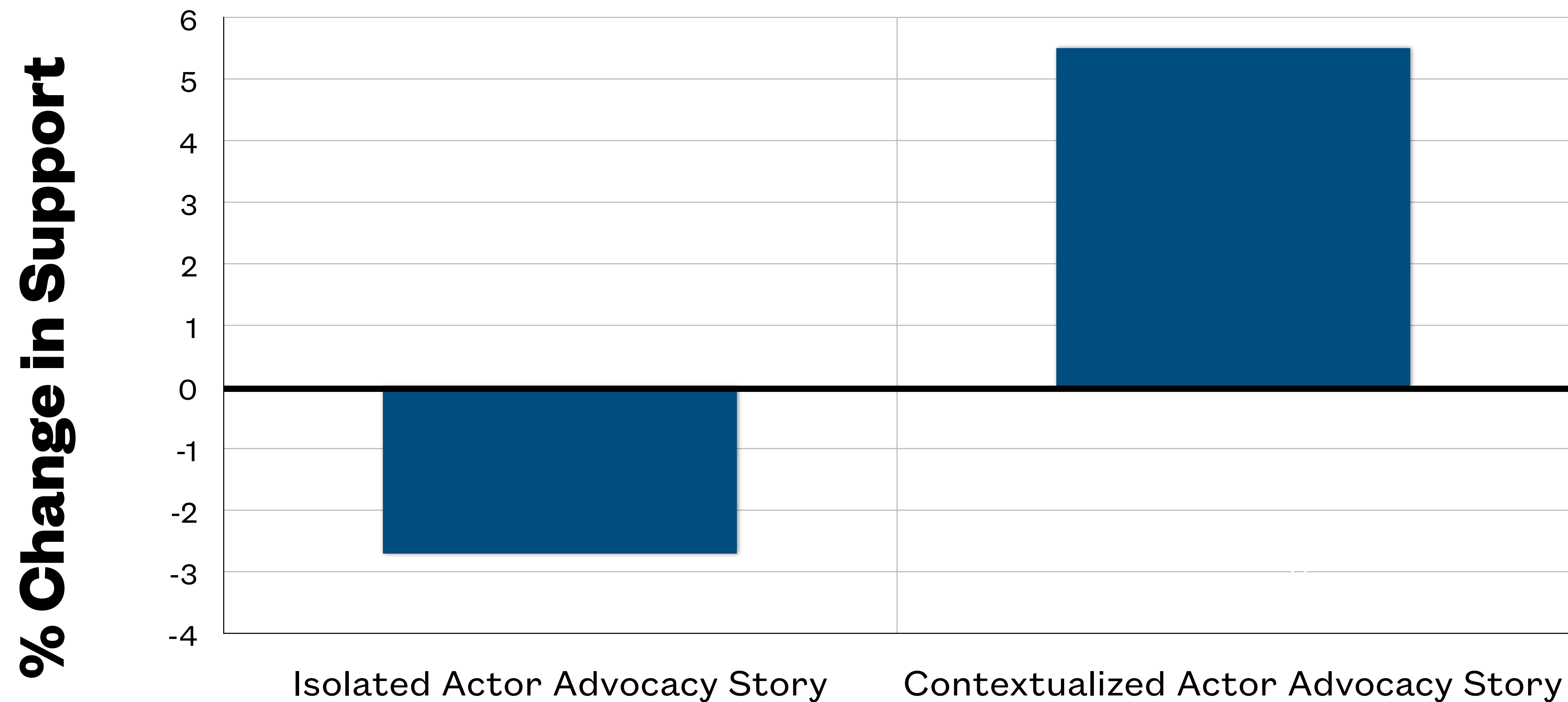# Framing Tip:

Show the Big Picture

Framing Tip:

Instead of re-butting, tell a wide-lens advocacy story

What do we mean by advocacy story?

An advocacy story is a *real, personal* story that shows how a policy, system, or institution has directly impacted a person's life – for better or for worse.

Different story structures produce different effects

Support for oral health equity policies

% Change in Support

Isolated Actor Advocacy Story — Contextualized Actor Advocacy Story

*= p <.01

Framing Tip:

Values-Driven Messaging Bridges Partisan Divides

Framed with
Equity is Good

Reframed with
Keys & Locks + Responsible Management + Dignity

Oral health care is difficult to access in this country, and the consequences are widespread. Most adults have some kind of cavity. But the burden isn't shared equally: untreated tooth decay is more common among some racial minorities and people experiencing poverty. We must prioritize expanding access to affordable, quality oral health care.

Achieving good oral health is like moving through a series of locked doors. Some doors lead to insurance that includes dental benefits, others to nutritious food, and still others to providers who speak your language. Some of us have a whole key ring, and can open every door with ease. Some of us hold only one or two keys. For those of us in this situation: it doesn't matter how often we use the keys we have. When we don't have all the keys, we can't get the care we need.

Oral health is deeply connected to overall health, and when conditions go untreated they become painful and expensive – for all of us. Untreated oral health issues lead to more emergency room visits, missed school and work, and long-term health problems that strain our health care system and economy. Fortunately, many of these problems are preventable. We can create and endorse policies that unlock more doors for more people. When we do that we're not just improving individual lives, we're reducing long-term health costs, strengthening workforce participation, and honoring our shared human dignity.

Before

At the United Health Organization, we're reimagining oral health equity in Detroit. Through the Wayne County Oral Health Coalition, we deliver education and essential dental care supplies directly

into under-resourced neighborhoods— meeting people where they are and closing long-standing gaps in access and awareness.

Reframed with Locks & Keys

At the United Health Organization, we're unlocking the doors to oral health. Through the Wayne County Oral Health Coalition, we deliver education and essential dental care supplies directly into under-resourced neighborhoods— meeting people where they are and increasing access and awareness.

We also engage students from our coalition partners who are studying to become hygienists and dental assistants. By sharing what they're learning with the community, they gain real-world experience and help turn knowledge into action.

Overview of Original Recommendations

Avoid

Images, definitions, and explanations that narrow the scope of oral health to teeth

Language & images that narrow oral health care to dentists' offices and their staff

Illustrating systemic problems by "zooming in" on individual cases

Leaving the idea of "prevention" undefined, under-described, or individualized

Unframed data about disparities

Leaving solutions up to the public's imagination

Advance

Images, definitions, and explanations that **connect oral health to overall health**

The idea that **oral health involves a team of professionals that work across the community**

Comparing systemic barriers to "**locked doors**" and policies/programs that remove them to "**keys**"

Using *Responsible Management* to make an economic case for widespread prevention strategies

Framing data about disparities with either *Targeted Justice* or *Responsible Management*

Sharing **concrete, collective solutions** that show what works and why prevention matters

Some of Our New, Complimentary Recommendations

Avoid

Instead

"Individualized Actor" advocacy stories → Share "Contextualized Actor" advocacy stories

Using different framing for different audiences → Vary your communications goal to suit different audience stances, but use the same fundamental framing strategies for all messages

Relying on crisis framing when creating messages that address the news cycle → Address pressing issues while simultaneously working toward longer-term goals, like changing narratives and cultural mindsets

Implying that science should be accepted without question → Talk about scientific research as a tool for advancing shared values like *Dignity*, *Fairness*, and *Wellbeing*

Repeating dangerous or deceptive ideas → Talk about their harmful intent or impact and use an inclusive tone

Using partisan language – e.g. "Republicans are blocking health care access" → Focus on shared values like *Dignity*, *Fairness*, and *Wellbeing* to remind people of common ground

Opportunities for Technical Assistance

- Advocacy/lobbying talking points
- Annual reports
- Community events
- Editorials (op-eds)
- Event flyers/posters
- Letters to the editor
- Journal articles
- Media inquiries (interviews/quotes)

- Newsletters
- In-person conversations
- Policy papers
- Press releases
- Proposals
- Social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)
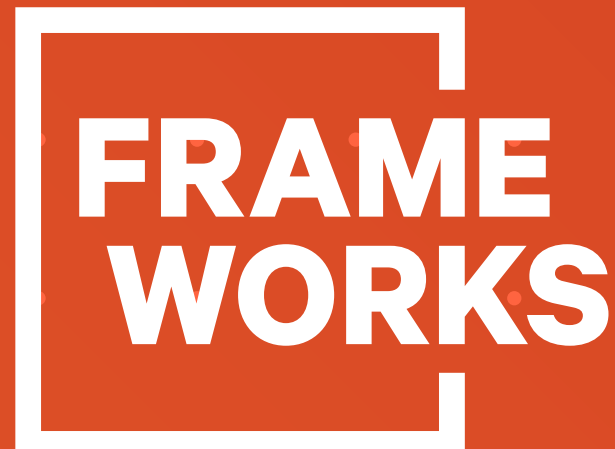- Speeches/presentations/trainings
- Website updates

Reactions? Questions?

Thank you!
Let's continue the conversation.

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FRAME WORKS

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About FrameWorks

The FrameWorks Institute is a nonprofit think tank that advances the mission-driven sector's capacity to frame the public discourse about social and scientific issues. The organization's signature approach, Strategic Frame Analysis®, offers empirical guidance on what to say, how to say it, and what to leave unsaid. FrameWorks designs, conducts, and publishes multi-method, multidisciplinary framing research to prepare experts and advocates to expand their constituencies, to build public will, and to further public understanding. To make sure this research drives social change, FrameWorks supports partners in reframing, through strategic consultation, campaign design, FrameChecks®, toolkits, online courses, and in-depth learning engagements known as FrameLabs. In 2015, FrameWorks was named one of nine organizations worldwide to receive the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

Learn more at www.frameworksinstitute.org