

@FrameWorksInst

Strategic Storytelling: Framing for More Effective Advocacy

November 9, 2015

Alliance for Early Success Partner Summit
Omaha NE

Jennifer Nichols, Ph.D.
Senior Associate

Examples of Our Work

- **Harvard University Center on the Developing Child** – how to translate the science of early childhood brain and biological development to inform sound policy
- **AECF/KIDS COUNT Network** – how to make the most powerful case for children’s issues
- **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
- **American Public Health Association** – how to talk about environmental health work and addressing environmental health disparities across communities
- **Jacksonville Partnership for Child Health** – cross-sector, inter-agency network working to build support for child mental health as a key to reducing disparities in child outcomes

Three guiding questions about strategic framing:

- 1. Why does framing matter?**
- 2. Why is strategic framing so difficult?**
- 3. What does framing look like in practice?**

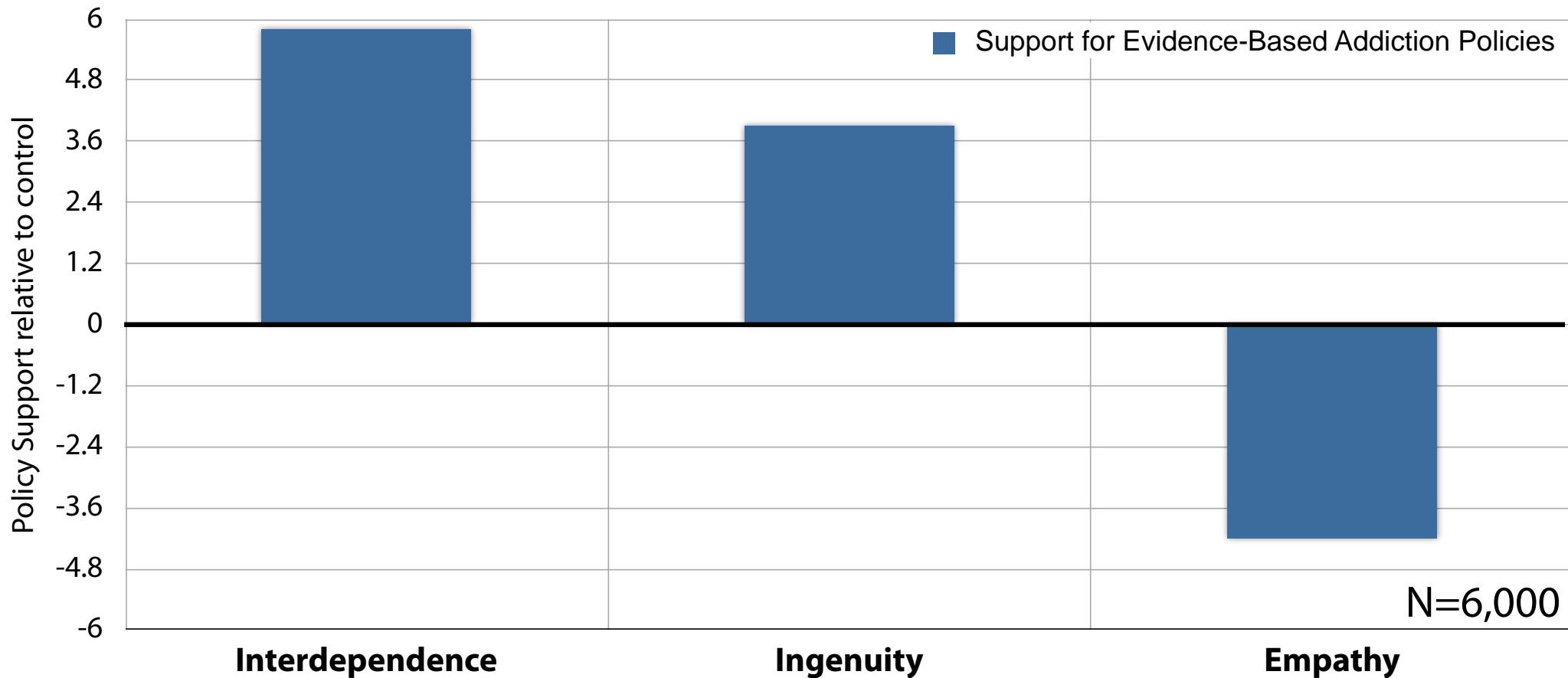


**Why does framing
matter?**

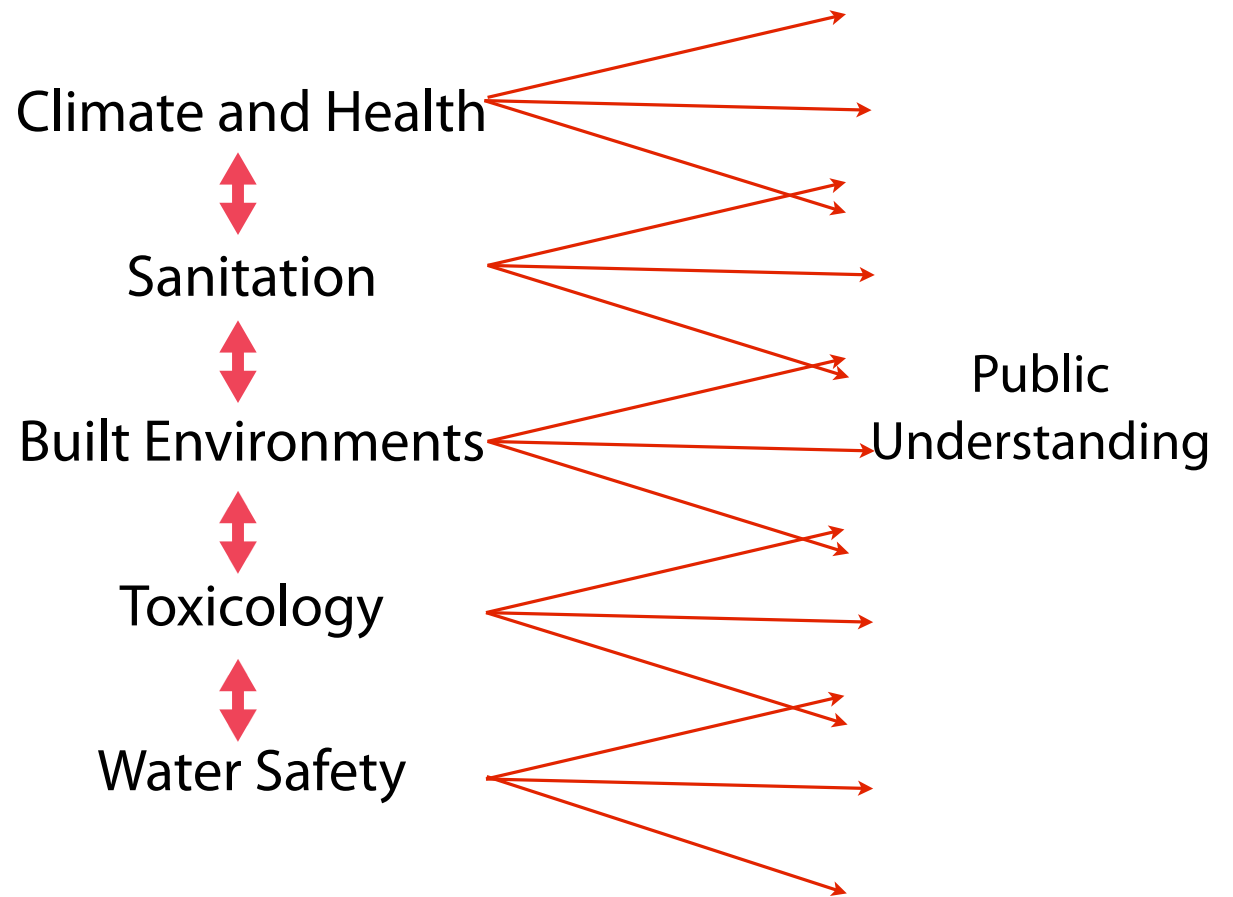


...Because understanding is frame-dependent

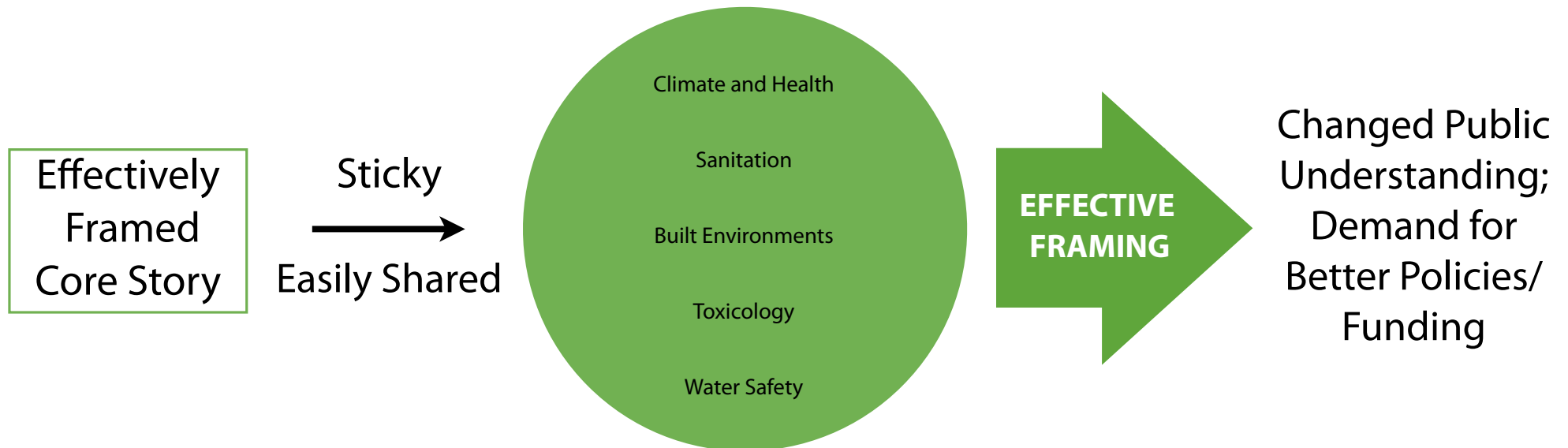
The way you communicate shapes what people think and do



...Because frames can unite fields and amplify effects

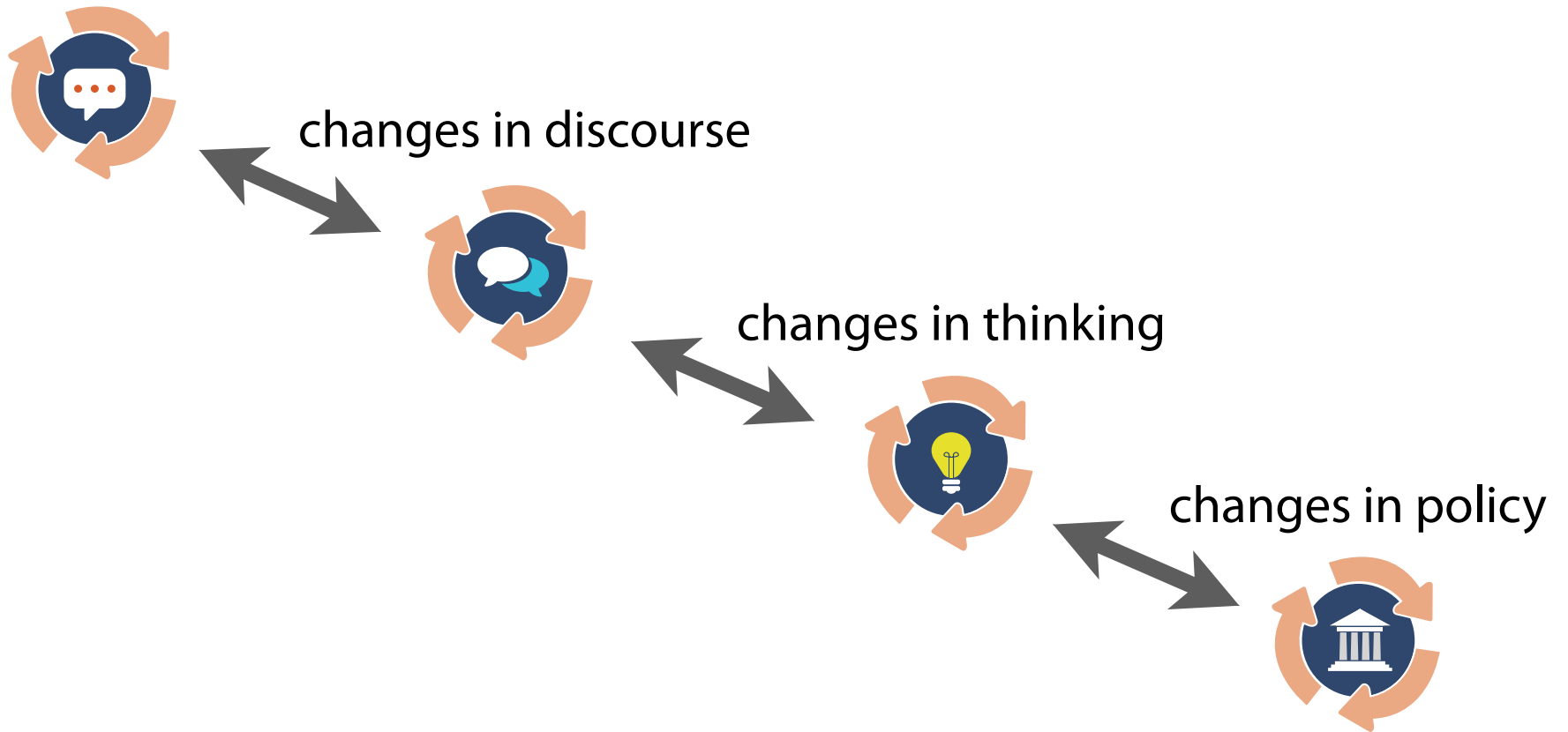


...Because frames can unite fields and amplify effects

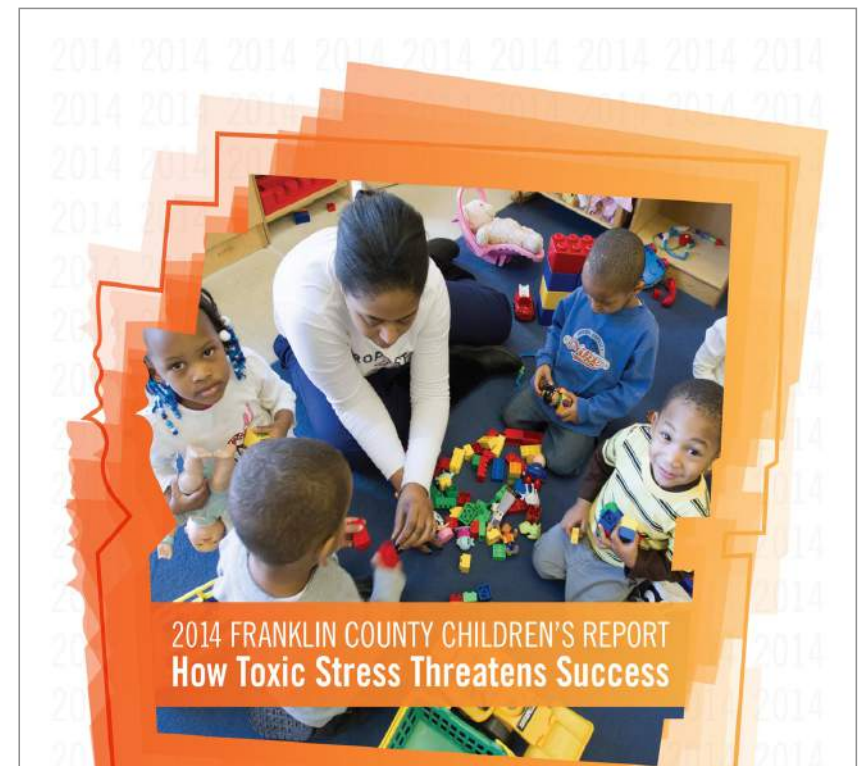
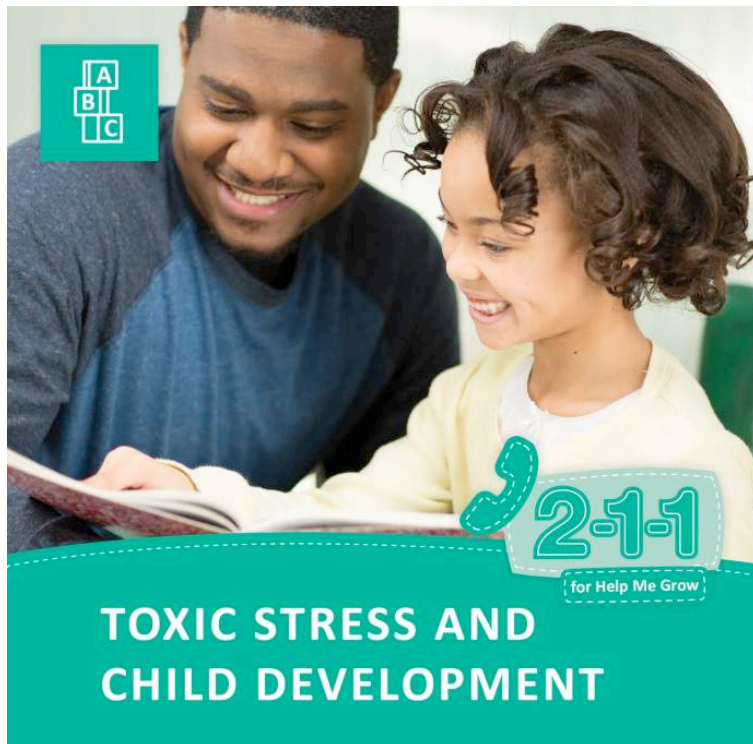


...Because frames can make change

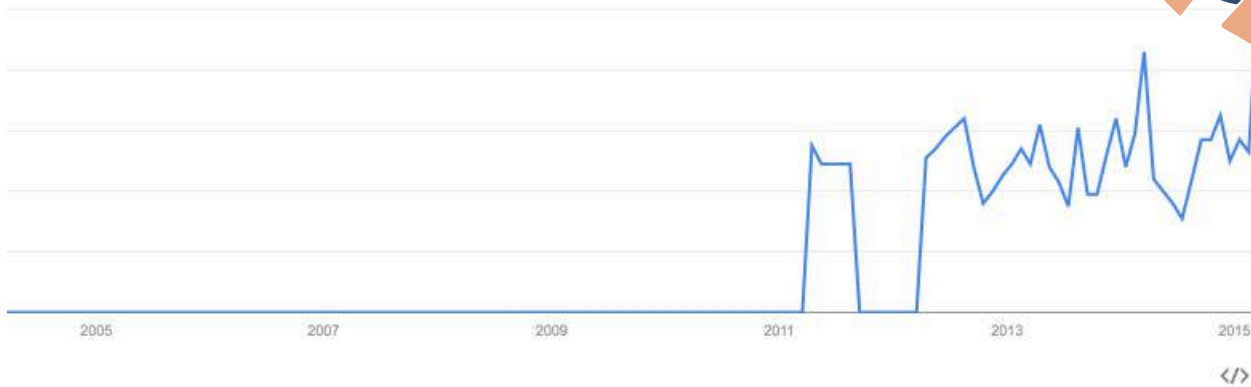
changes in communication



Changes in Communication



Changes in Discourse



The New York Times

The Opinion Pages

Opinionator

FIXES

Protecting Children From Toxic Stress

By DAVID BORNSTEIN OCTOBER 30, 2013 11:55 AM



Changes in Thinking



2002

Only 42% understood that infants can communicate before they learn to speak

Public unsure whether babies' cries were 'conscious manipulation' or expressions of genuine need

2011

96% understood that infants can communicate before they learn to speak

85% understood that for infants, cries and signals indicate a genuine need for adult attention

Changes in Policy



CALIFORNIA SENATE PASSES RESOLUTION ASKING GOV TO LOOK AT INTERVENTION POLICIES TO ALLEVIATE "TOXIC STRESS" IN CHILDREN



CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2013–14 REGULAR SESSION

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 155

Introduced by Assembly Member Bocanegra
(Coauthors: Assembly Members Bonta, Bradford, Buchanan, and Ian Calderon)

May 28, 2014

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 155—Relative to childhood brain development.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 155, as introduced, Bocanegra. Childhood brain development: adverse experiences: toxic stress.
This measure would urge the Governor to identify evidence-based solutions to reduce children's exposure to adverse childhood experiences, address the impacts of those experiences, and invest in preventive health care and mental health and wellness interventions.
Fiscal committee: no.

American Academy of Pediatrics
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

TECHNICAL REPORT

The Lifelong Effects of Early Childhood Adversity and Toxic Stress

abstract

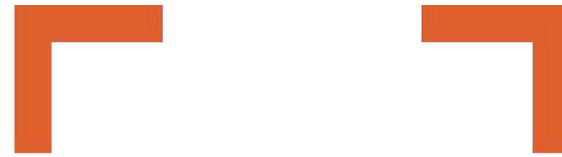
FREE

Advances in fields of inquiry as diverse as neuroscience, molecular biology, genomics, developmental psychology, epidemiology, sociology, and economics are catalyzing an important paradigm shift in our un-

Jack P. Shonkoff, MD, Andrew S. Garner, MD, PhD, and THE COMMITTEE ON PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF CHILD AND FAMILY HEALTH, COMMITTEE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD, ADOPTION, AND DEPENDENT CARE, AND SECTION ON DEVELOPMENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL PEDIATRICS



AFMC Primer on Biopsychosocial Approach to Addiction



**Why is effective
framing so difficult?**



...Because You Have a Problem

You Say...They Think

Improving the CJ system is about supporting individuals and meeting needs so that people can better decisions.

Persistent stress can lead to mental health problems in children and have long term negative effects on developmental outcomes.

Our current system denies immigrants their basic rights and makes them vulnerable to worker exploitation.

A A A

B B B

Yes! And the best way to affect these decisions is to make punishment more severe across the board so people will think twice before deciding to break the law! One strike and you're out...



Sure, all people deserve respect, but if you're one of those people who chose to break the law, why should you get the same rights as those of us who follow it?

Expert

Public

You Say...They Think

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CULTURE!

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Public

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Sure, all people deserve respect, but if you're one of those people who chose to break the law, why should you get the same rights as those of us who follow it?

It's NOT about Correcting Mistakes

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

- People misremembered the myths as true.
- Got worse over time.
- Attributed false information to the CDC.



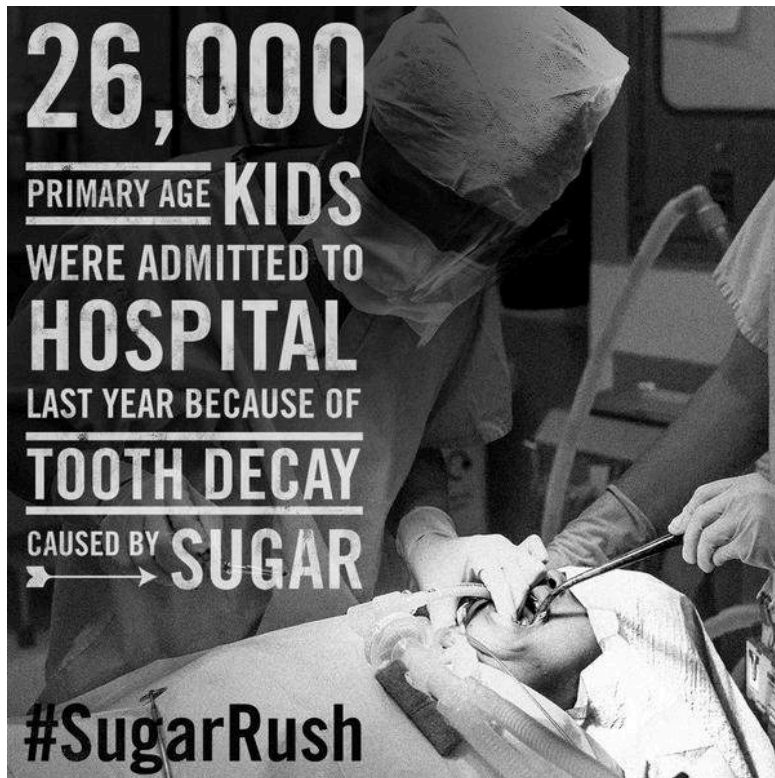
Flu Vaccine
Facts & Myths





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

It's NOT (Just) About Resonance



RETWEETS 712 FAVORITES 377



4:07 PM - 3 Sep 2015



judy swafford @judykarol · Sep 3
[@jamieoliver](#) and neglectful parents forgot that part.



Love Lassi @LoveLassi1 · Sep 3
[@jamieoliver](#) #SugarRush educate educate - cook home made food, drink water, take responsibility for your children's health



linda mackenzie @lindamackenzie5 · Sep 3
[@jamieoliver](#) its impossible to omit sugar from kids diets! Fresh juice or not. What can we do?? I don't take sugar as I hate sweet things.



Lesley MacGregor @scoobs1969 · Sep 3
[@jamieoliver](#) I refuse to give my son drinks which contain aspartame and sweeteners in them x



Brushbaby @brushbabytweet · Sep 4
[@scoobs1969](#) & we can help with the toothbrushing! Take a look: [brushbaby.co.uk](#)



Lisa Downes @downesrule · Sep 4
[@jamieoliver](#) well done but good luck.. ive worker in special care dental services for 27 years we have over a year waiting list. Good luck



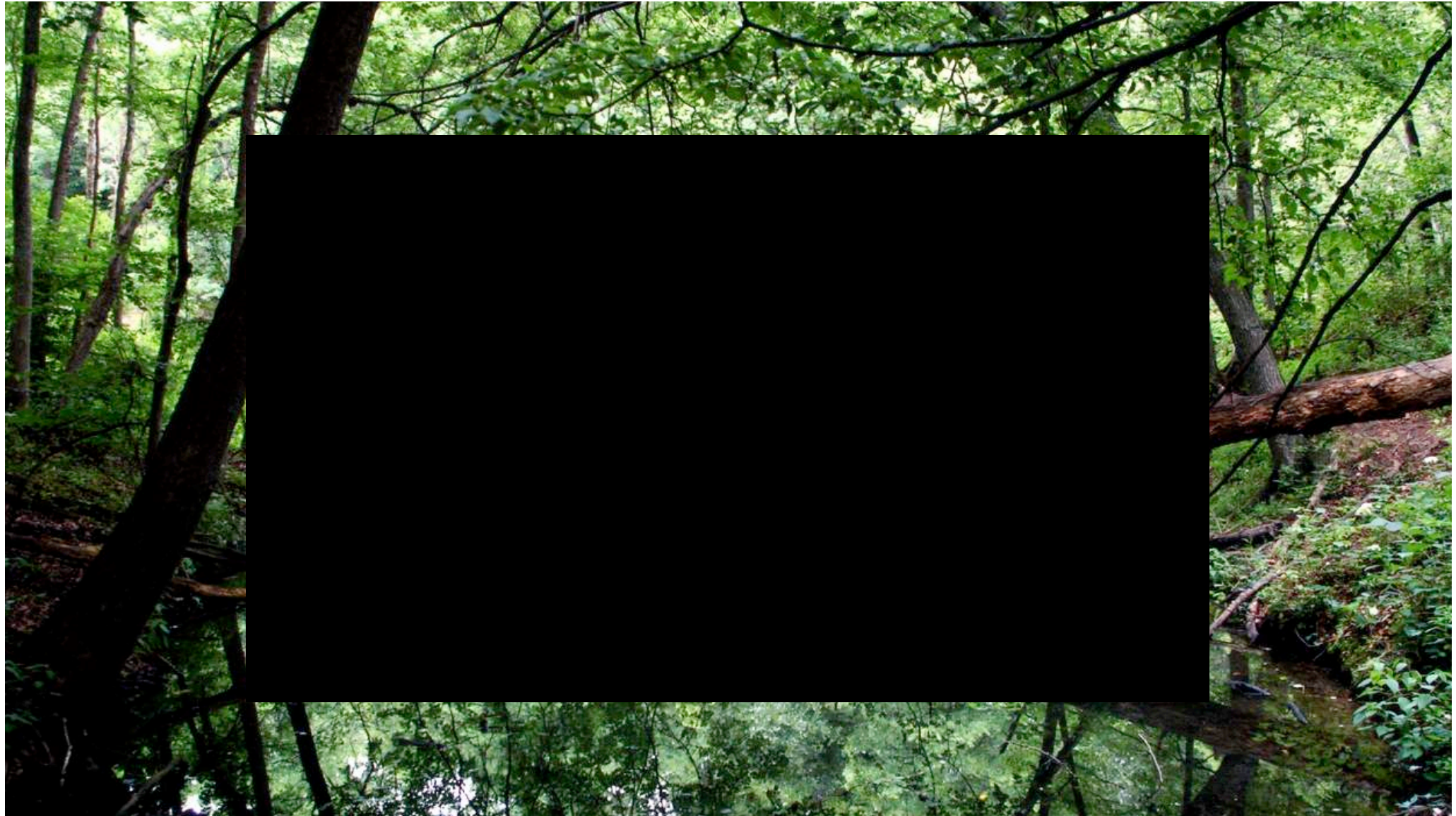
Opinions as Expectations



“People approach the world not as naïve, blank-slate receptacles who take in stimuli ...in some independent and objective way, but rather as experienced and sophisticated *veterans of perception* who have stored their prior experiences as an organized mass. This prior experience then takes the form of expectations about the world, and in the vast majority of cases, the world, being a systematic place, confirms these expectations, saving the individual the trouble of figuring things out anew all the time.”

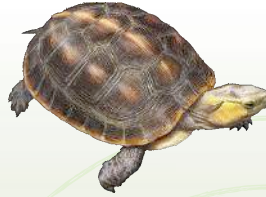
-- Deborah Tannen, *Framing in Discourse*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

An example from our research on communicating with the public about early childhood development



WILLPOWER

- No challenge or adversity is too great
- Effort explains individual differences
- Resilience is yours if you want it



What's in the swamp of...

Developmental Outcomes and Resilience

FAMILY BUBBLE

- Parental behavior explains individual differences

Resilience= Innate Substance

- Everyone is born with it--it's in all of us
- Use it or lose it

Black Box / Osmosis

- ???
- Kids just develop by absorption

Damage Done Is Damage Done

Context Matters

- Employment demands shape parental behaviors



The background of the slide features a series of concentric, light green circles that create a ripple effect, centered around the text box. The circles are thin and have a slightly textured appearance.

SWAMP DROP!

What default models might this message trigger?

Every child has the capability to learn how to become stronger from the inside out. Some boys and girls do need extra assistance though; they may be highly sensitive, lean toward the more negative, or "I can't do it" side of life, as well as get "stuck" in situations and feel that this is the worst ever. For example, like failing a math test. As a child's wise partner and guide, you have the incredibly important role to give them a "big picture" perspective, support them in ways that work for them in particular and realize that resilience, like confidence and inner strength, is merely a skill they need to learn to master.

What default models might this message trigger?

Resiliency, the ability to accept and overcome challenging or adverse circumstances, is a fundamental and natural characteristic which is essential to healthy development. Resiliency can be nurtured and supported by caring adults who take a strength-based approach to foster and empower a child's efforts to cope with hardships.

In addition to helping a child develop self esteem and confidence, resiliency, along with other positive attributes and strengths, protects children from the risk factors in their environment. It has been shown that developing these protective factors is equally as important as eliminating or minimizing the risk factors. At times there can be an overemphasis on problem behavior, risk factors and pathology. This can divert the energy of caregivers from the development of a more strengths-based focus on fostering resilience and other protective factors.

Framing tools that help get messages through the Swamp

CONTEXT establishes the nature of the problem as either a public “issue” that concerns us all, or a private “trouble” affecting only those individuals experiencing the problem

VALUES, or goals, to remind people of what’s at stake or a principle they hold that is connected to the issue

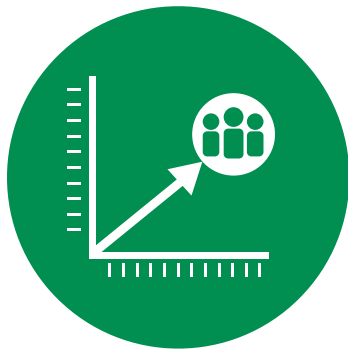
METAPHORS, to place issues in people’s everyday action scenario, enhance their understanding of processes and mechanisms and increase agency

EXAMPLES, to show process, anchor explanation and assist with recall and transmission

NARRATIVE, to override people’s default patterns of expectation about a complex, abstract issue by substituting the expectations of a well known narrative structure

Values:

*enduring beliefs, which **orient** individuals' attitudes and behavior (perceptual lenses)*



Shared Fate/Common Good

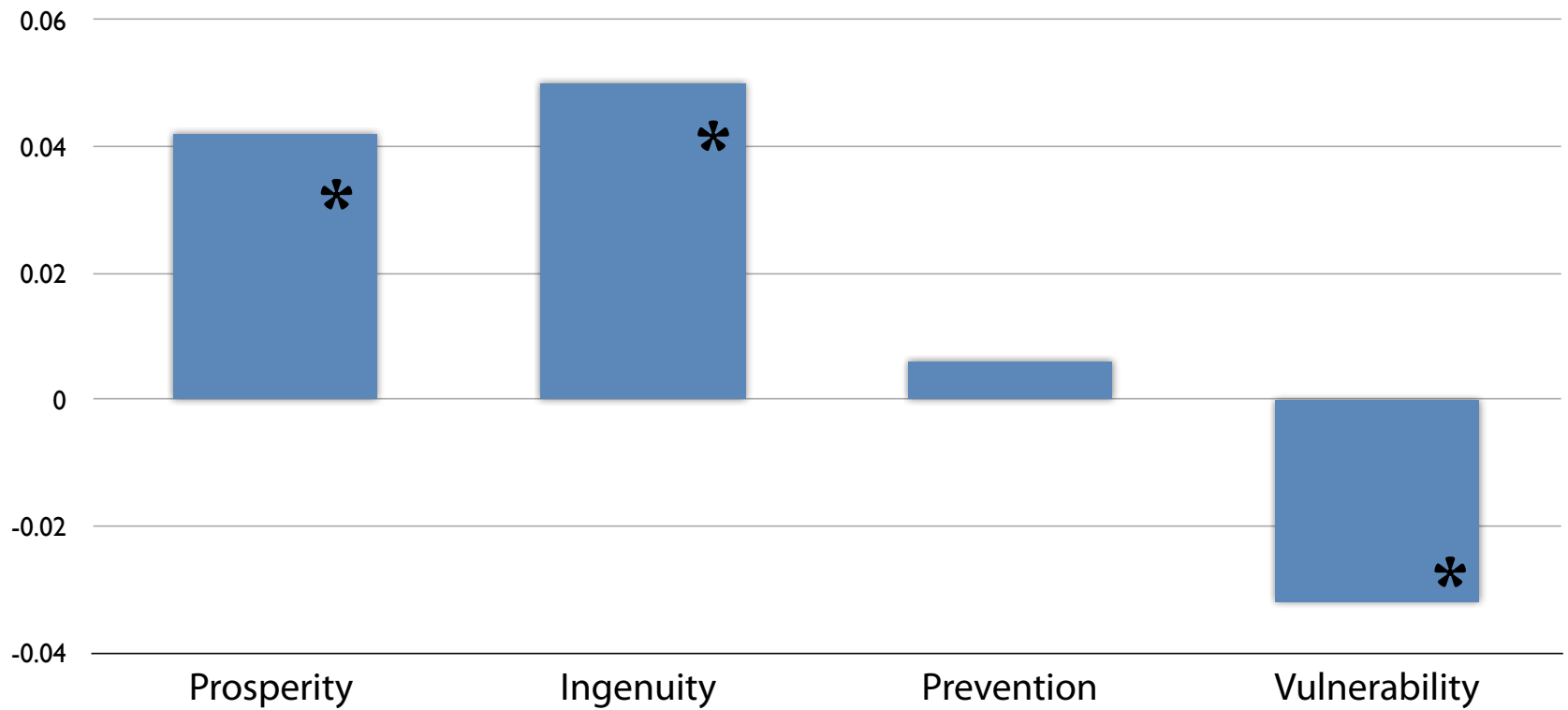


Pragmatism



Prevention

Support for ECD Policies



Prosperity



Your issue matters because:

it will contribute to collective, shared good fortune, both economic and social.

Strategic way to redirect public perceptions away from ...

- Consumerism
- Family Bubble
- Individualism

Stronger frame effects than...

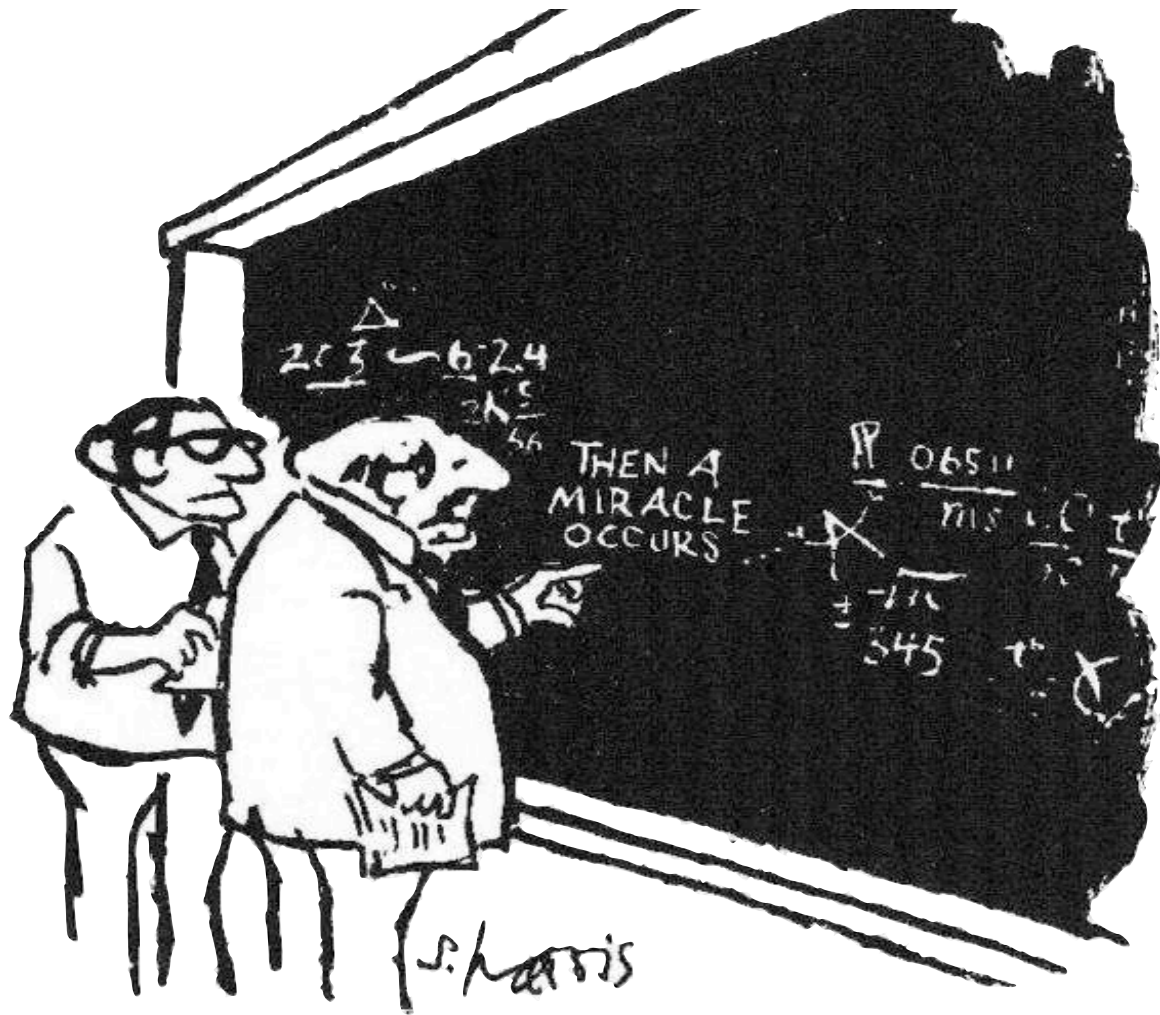
- *"Children!"* as Value
- Individual achievement or gain
- Self-sufficiency
- *"Crisis!"* as Value

Framed with Crisis and Vulnerable Child

Millions of disadvantaged children in the U.S. do not have access to the resources they need to develop well—leaving them vulnerable to a life of hardship, poor health, and troubled relationships. Their diminished life prospects affect all of us. That's why we need to invest in high-quality early childhood development programs and resources for low-income children.

Framed with *Shared Prosperity*

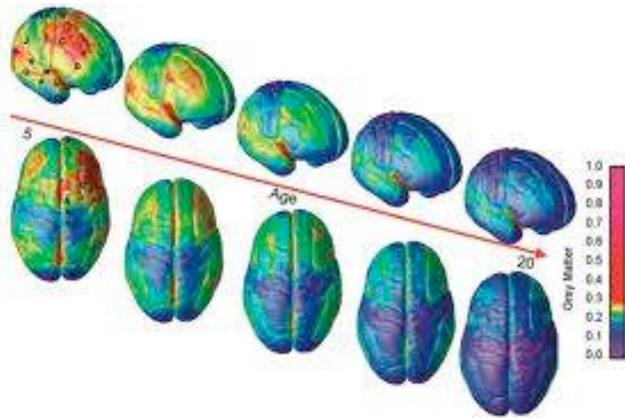
Our nation's future prosperity depends on the social and economic strength of all of our communities. That includes our future citizens' ability to participate in the world as citizens, workers, and community leaders. An important means of securing our country's collective future is investing in early childhood developments programs now, in order to ensure that children in all of our communities have the resources they need to develop well.



"I think you should be more explicit here in step two."

Explanatory Metaphors: Carefully crafted, tested analogies

Brain Architecture



Brain Development

≈



Building/Architecture



Resilience Scale

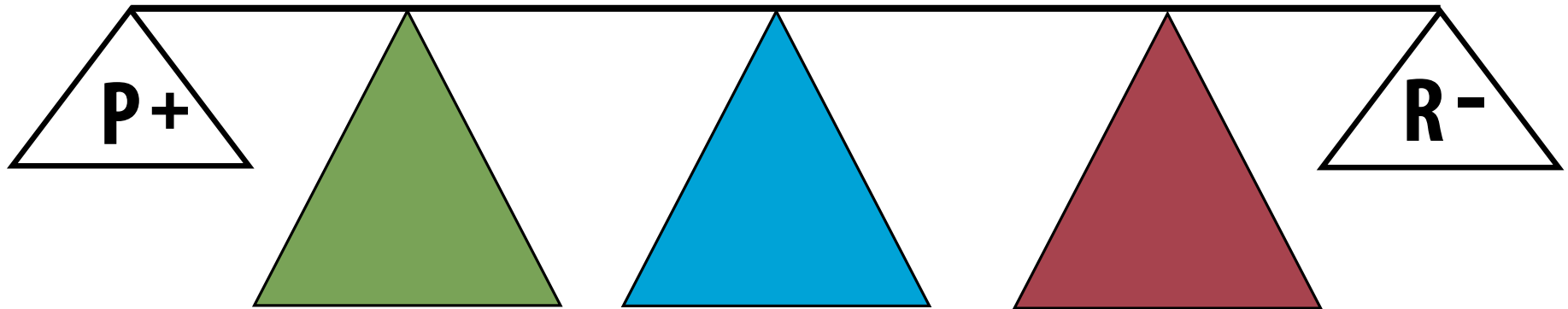
A positive outcome is like a scale tipped to one side.
It can be influenced by counterbalancing weights
and adjusting the balance point.



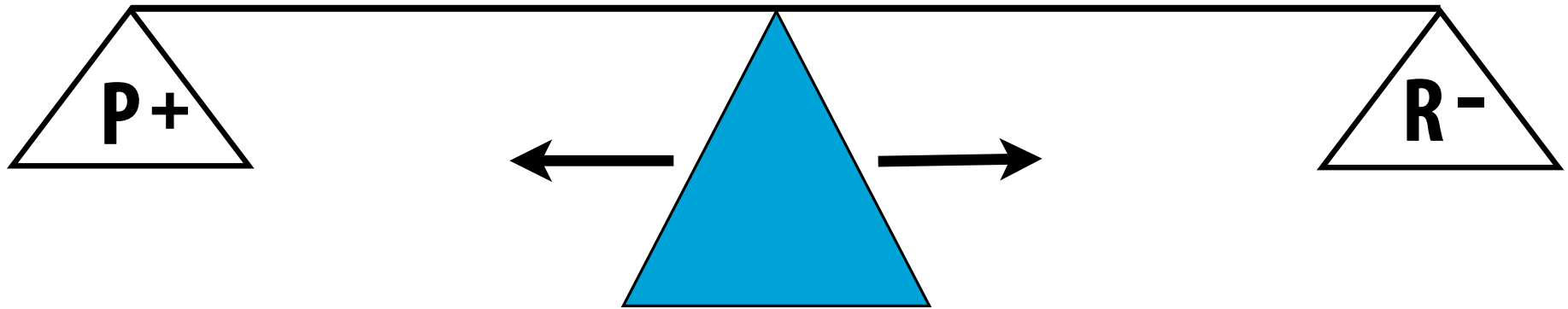
- Think of development as a scale--positive factors get put on one side and negative factors on the other--and the way that the scale tips is like the outcomes of development



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- The scale can be counterbalanced such that good outcomes can still happen even when there is a lot of heavy “stuff” stacked on the negative side

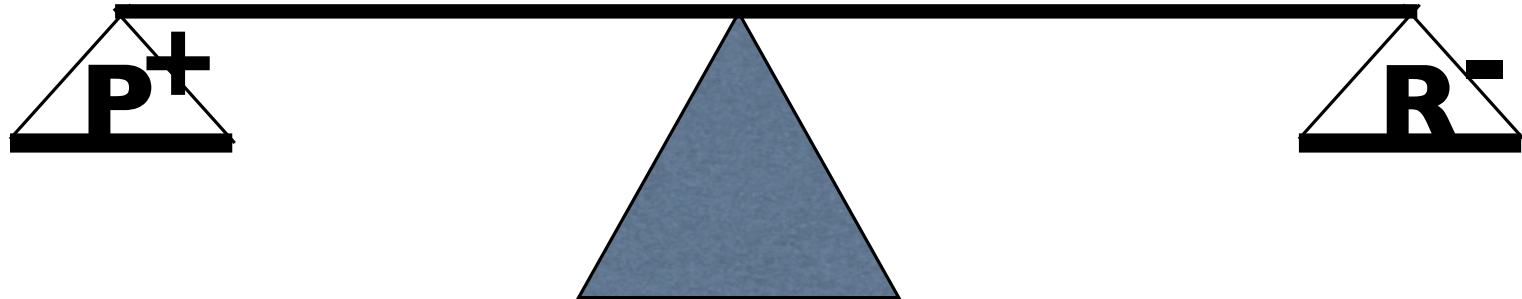


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- For every child, the fulcrum starts in a different place, which influences how the scale works and makes some scales easier to counterbalance than others
- The fulcrum's not set--it can slide based on experiences over time

Highly Effective in Inoculating Against...



Willpower:

scales don't tip themselves

Family Bubble:

too much space to fill

Stress Does the Body Good:

negative weight never tips the scale positive

Determinism:

scales are dynamic

Framed with *Black Box*

In addition to helping a child develop self esteem and confidence, resiliency, along with other positive attributes and strengths, protects children from the risk factors in their environment. It has been shown that developing these protective factors is equally as important as eliminating or minimizing the risk factors. At times there can be an overemphasis on problem behavior, risk factors and pathology. This can divert the energy of caregivers from the development of a more strengths-based focus on fostering resilience and other protective factors.

Reframed with *Resilience Scale*

We can think of children's development as a scale with a positive and a negative side. For a child to develop well, the scale needs to tip positively. To do that, we need to offload negative factors like neglect or poverty and stack positive ones like access to healthcare and supportive relationships. Building resiliency, or the ability to thrive even when faced with hardship, is like being able to move the fulcrum of the scale in order to make it easier to tip positive. That requires addressing both sides of the scale, not only the negative. Over time, the cumulative weight of positive factors in a child's life makes it easier to tip the balance positively.



Framing Practice

Shared Prosperity and Resilience Scale

Imagine you've just met a local official at a "wine and cheese" reception, and she's asked you about your efforts to support early childhood development. How could you use the Value *Shared Prosperity* or the Metaphor *Resilience Scale* to offer a brief explanation of why your work matters and how it contributes to improving child outcomes?

Spend three minutes crafting a sentence or two -- be sure to give the Value or Metaphor some "room to breathe." When you have a draft, share it with the person next to you and discuss:

What words or phrases in your partner's introduction reinforce the frame element she or he chose?

AVOID

It's for the kids

This problem is entrenched

These data speak for themselves --
look how bad this is!

This is a problem for population x

Vulnerable child

PROBLEM! PROBLEM! PROBLEM!
solution?

ADVANCE

It's for us all

Change is feasible, possible, practical

Because of our shared values, these data
suggest we have a problem to solve

We all need a solution to this problem

Sensitive periods

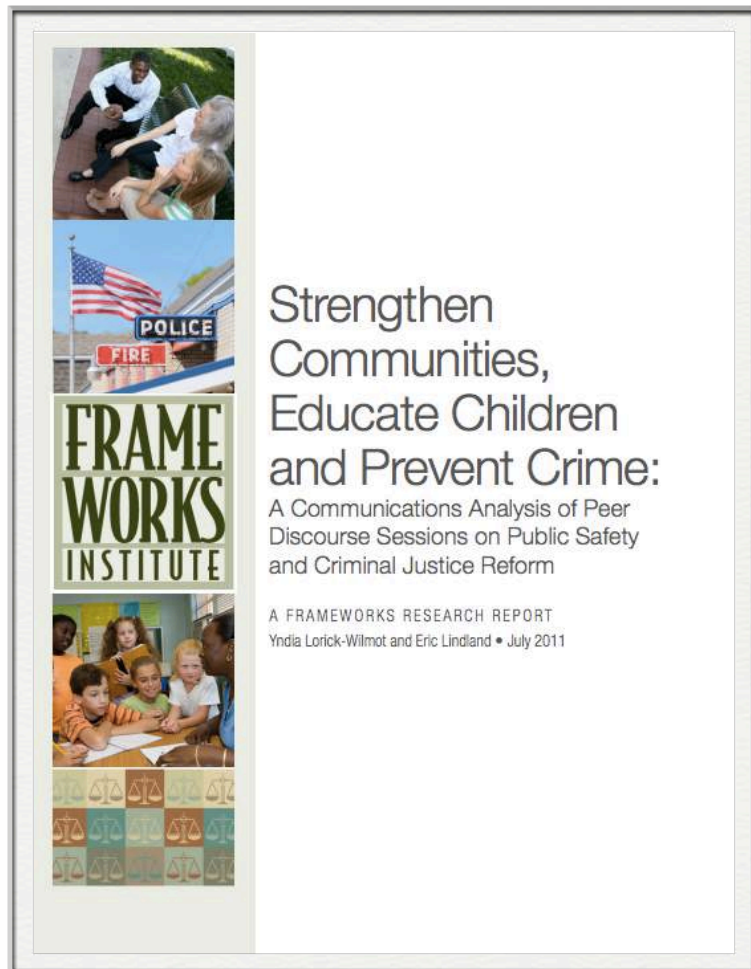
problem
SOLUTION! SOLUTION! SOLUTION!



**What does framing
look like?**



Three-year, multi-method, multi-funder research project



Experts' Core Story

The Public's Story

Advocate Communications

Social Norms & Possibilities

Which Reframes Work? (Values, Data, Metaphors)

Regular engagement with advocacy community

Documents > 500

***n* = 10,000 average Americans**

6 Strategic Reports

Causes of Crime

Rational actor

"Rotten eggs"
Parents



Government

Responsible
Corrupt, wasteful

The System

Police
Corrupt individuals
The system works just fine

Race

Historical progress
Separate fates
Minorities violate self-makingness



What's in the swamp of . . .

Public Safety and Criminal Justice

Fairness

Uniform: sentencing needs to be consistent
Due process influenced by money and power
Contextual: punishment takes context into account

Solutions

????????????
Fatalism
Affect decision calculus: ↑ surveillance, ↑ punishment
Find the dirty cops and get them out of the system

Context and Circumstances

Violence threshold
Context matters



Framing problem: the criminal justice field's stories leave the public to fill in too many cognitive holes

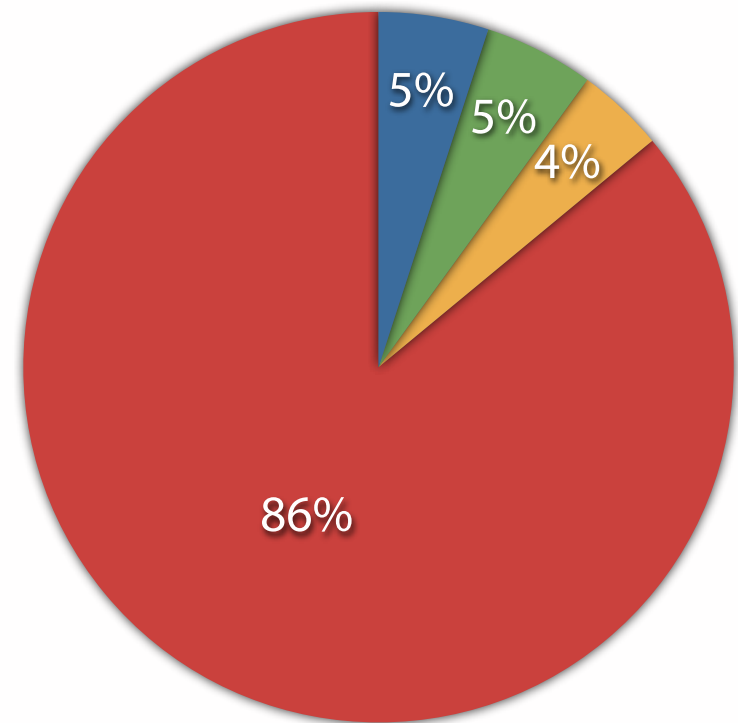
Causal Explanations

Child Development: 5%

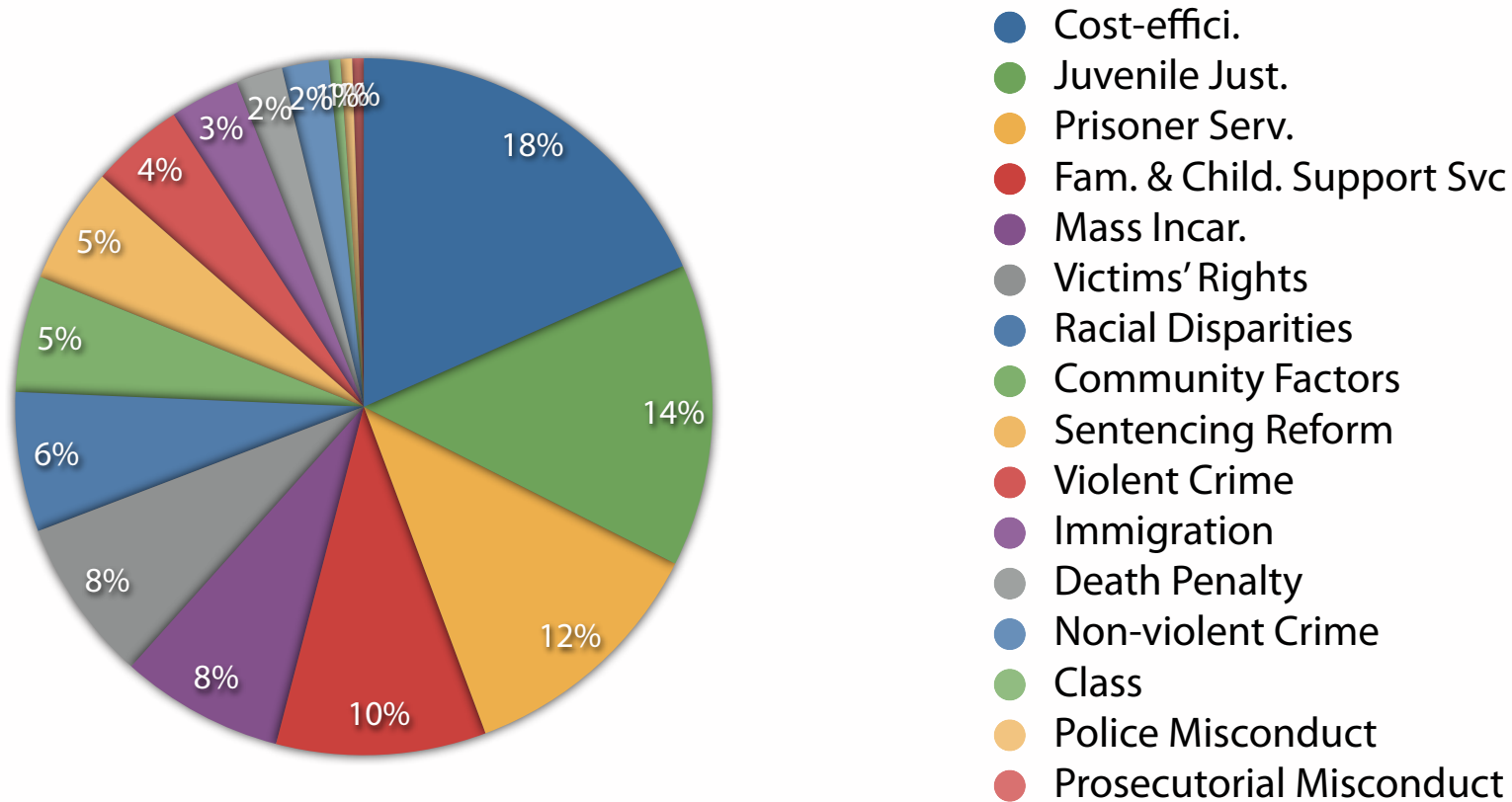
Community Factors: 5%

Individual Factors: 4%

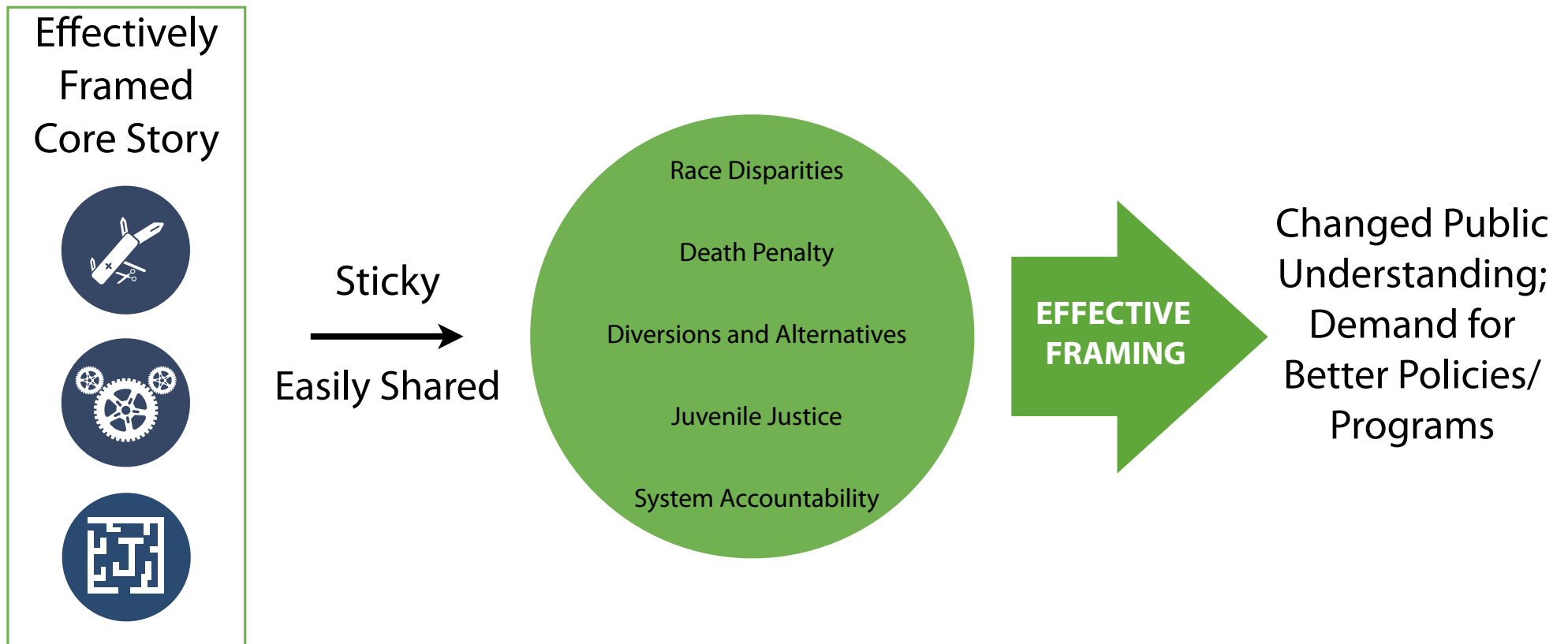
NO CAUSE MENTIONED: 86%



Framing problem: too many stories in the field makes identifying priorities difficult



Framing solution: unify the field with a shared narrative



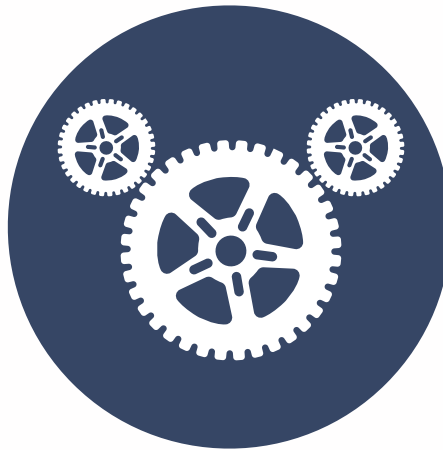
A systems story helps the public focus on improving policies



PRAGMATISM

Moves thinking away from:

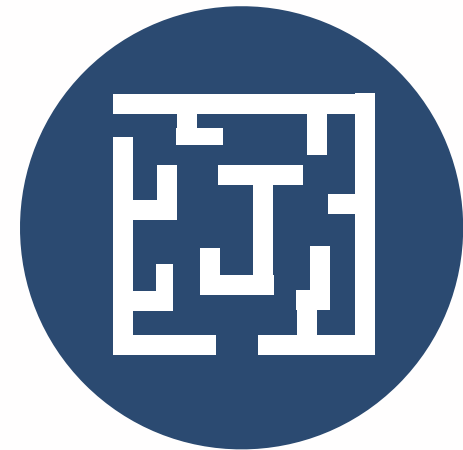
- Fatalism
- Individualism
- System works fine
- “Politics as usual”



JUSTICE GEARS

Moves thinking away from:

- Fairness = uniformity
- Essentialism
- Fatalism
- Moral judgment



JUSTICE MAZE

Moves thinking away from:

- “Rational actor” thinking
- Fatalism
- Individualism
- Moral judgment

A multistep dissemination campaign moves the story into the public sphere

FrameWorks research briefings, trainings, and toolkits build the field's communications capacity



Please join FrameWorks Institute and the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School for a theory-to-practice working session:

Framing a Public Safety Reform Agenda: Applying Research-Based Strategies

Friday, May 2, 2014, 9:00 am - 4:30pm

University of California, Los Angeles

A multistep dissemination campaign moves the story into the public sphere



**Advocates recognize
that our tools and
approach address their
communications
challenges**

“This is the missing gap in our reform work!”

“FrameWorks gave us the approach we needed to get our juvenile reform through. It works!”

“Terrific mix of theory, robust findings, and practical application.”

A multistep dissemination campaign moves the story into the public sphere



“Our justice system currently operates like a complex maze, with too many entry points and too few exits. As a result, many people enter jail—and stay in pretrial detention—unnecessarily, which increases their chances of **getting stuck in the maze . . .**”

“**Reinvesting funds** saved from a smaller criminal justice system into **effective educational interventions** for young people at risk of dropping out . . . is **an achievable and practical next step . . .**”

“District attorneys and sheriffs – both local, elected officials – hold the power to **help California shift gears on criminal justice . . .**”

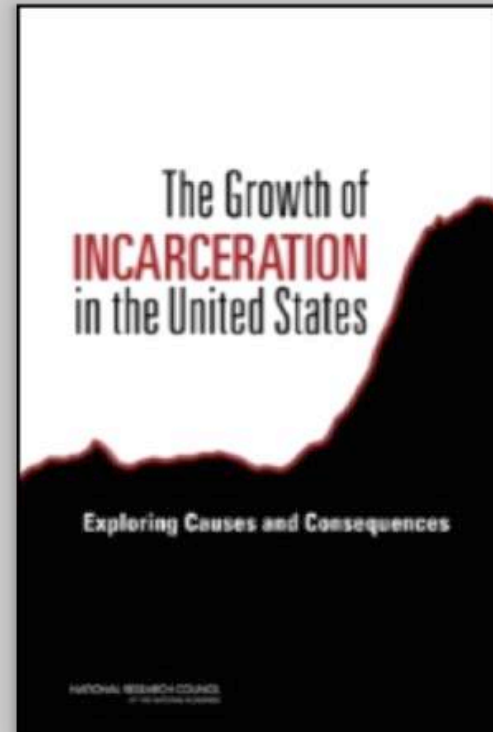
“For 30 years, a ‘tough on crime’ mentality has held sway among lawmakers in every state and nationally, leaving in its wake an **increasingly complex maze** of punishment . . .”

“The current criminal justice system is not helping us **get to where we need to be . . . we need to create better paths** for people in our society . . .”

As the field coheres around shared frames, this master narrative enters public discourse

Through:

- Research reports



National Academy of Sciences, 2014.

As the field coheres around shared frames, this master narrative enters public discourse

Through:

- Research reports
- Advocacy communications

ACLU of California's
outreach messaging



The Pretrial Justice Institute's campaign to end cash bail

As the field coheres around shared frames, this master narrative enters public discourse

Through:

- Research reports
- Advocacy communications
- Coalition-based messaging



California Senate Votes to Switch Gears in Criminal Justice

Advancement of legislation shows readiness to be smart on crime, recognition that more and longer prison sentences not always best

SACRAMENTO, CA — The Senate today, May 28, 2014, advanced the California Fair Sentencing Act (SB 1010), authored by Senator Holly Mitchell (D-Los Angeles), demonstrating that the state is ready for a smarter approach. **After decades of being stuck in the prison gear, California is ready to move toward approaches that are effective, cost-effective and fairer.**

As the field coheres around shared frames, this master narrative enters public discourse

Through:

- Research reports
- Advocacy communications
- Coalition-based messaging
- Legislative testimony

Our legal system . . . effectively channels people of color, notably African Americans, into **a maze of incarceration and punishment that diminishes the life chances of individuals and devastates communities**. We at the Institute have been focused on these issues since our inception ten years ago . . .

Charles Hamilton Houston Institute on Race and Justice
at Harvard University, *Testimony for the Joint Committee on the Judiciary
On Solitary Confinement Reform*, October 2015

As the field coheres around shared frames, this master narrative enters public discourse

Through:

- Research reports
- Advocacy communications
- Coalition-based messaging
- Legislative testimony
- Social media channels



National Research Council, 2015, incarceration rates

pji Pretrial Justice
PRETRIAL JUSTICE INSTITUTE @Pretrial

+ Follow

Entry to the maze should be based on risk, not money. bit.ly/endcashbail #unconvicted.

One Small Thing, 2015, women in the system



As the field coheres around shared frames, this master narrative enters public discourse

Through:

- Research reports
- Advocacy communications
- Coalition-based messaging
- Legislative testimony
- Social media channels
- News and opinion

THE HUFFINGTON POST

THE INTERNET NEWSPAPER: NEWS BLOGS VIDEO COMMUNITY

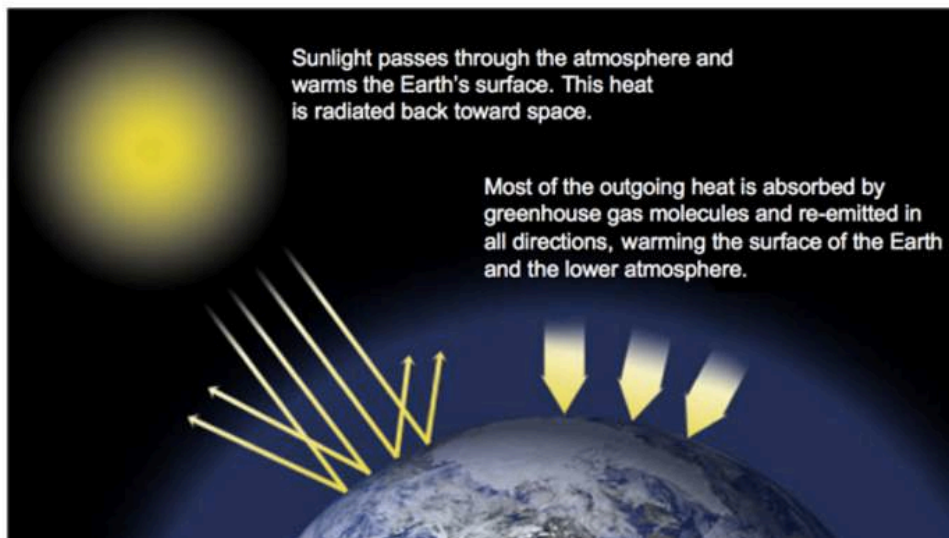
“Mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses . . . and harsher sentences for juveniles created **dead ends and false exits**. . . . Even those who did manage to find **a way out** faced restrictions in housing, health care, employment and financial aid, limiting their chances to succeed on the outside, and **pushing them back into the maze.**”

The Boston Globe

This system is not only wasteful and deeply harmful, it is also woefully outdated. **It is as if we have been riding on an old bike with balloon tires and one speed even though we have far more sophisticated vehicles at our disposal.**

From NASA to naptime, strategic framing is building public understanding of climate change

A blanket around the Earth



<http://climate.nasa.gov/causes/>



“The coal burned to make electricity and the fuel burned by cars, buses and planes releases a huge amount of CO₂ into the atmosphere. **This CO₂ creates a blanket around the earth. What do you think happens when the world is surrounded by a thick blanket? It becomes warmer!**”

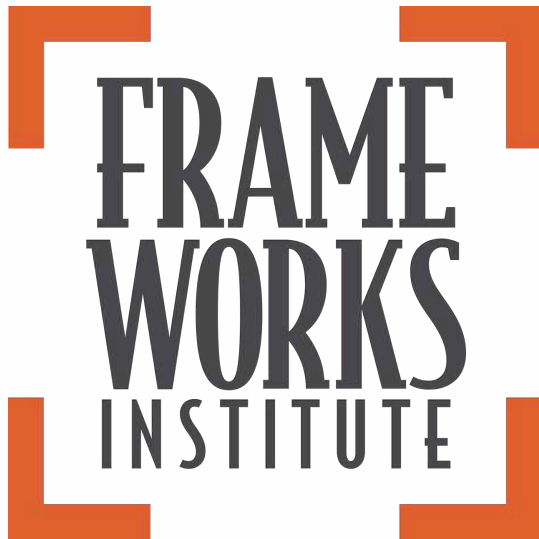
Nice Weather We're Having (2015)

Thank you for your time!



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

-- Richard Rorty



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