Words Matter: A Conversation on Changing the Narrative to Prevent Violence Impacting Youth

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The views expressed in this presentation are those of the presenters and do not constitute statements of policy or necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
Today’s Session

- Part 1: Highlights of Ongoing Efforts to Shift the Narrative
  - Overview of STRYVE Action Council
  - Overview of Youth Violence Prevention Centers

- Part 2: Understanding Public Narratives around Youth Violence
  - Overview of worldview and narrative
  - Overview of messaging and frames

- Part 3: Opportunities for Action Panelist Discussion
  - Discussion of opportunities to use narrative in public health prevention
“Shifting narratives is not about winning an argument. It is about engaging people to illuminate values, beliefs and assumptions that are already in them.”
Part 1: Highlights of Ongoing Efforts to Shift the Narrative
Shifting the narrative is shaping approaches to child and youth violence prevention

- CDC surveillance systems, children and youth violence prevention initiatives, and efforts to support partners in the field have increased understanding of using narrative to shape approaches to youth violence prevention

- CDC technical packages help states and communities take advantage of the best available evidence to prevent violence
Shifting narrative in youth violence is a focus of the STRYVE Action Council

- The STRYVE Action Council is a multi-sector consortium of organizations that work at the national level to advance youth violence prevention efforts in states and communities.

- In Spring 2019, the STRYVE Action Council announced plans to create a positive message framing guide to increase awareness of positive narrative for youth violence.
Shifting narrative in youth violence aligns with the vision and work of the STRYVE Action Council

- The Action Council’s work includes:

  - Increasing awareness and understanding that youth violence is a preventable public health issue
  - Expanding the network of national, state, and local organizations that are involved in, and champions for, youth violence prevention
  - Informing national, state and local policy that advances youth violence prevention strategies

The vision of STRYVE Action Council is to build safe, stable, nurturing, and healthy communities that provide opportunities for all children, teens, and young adults to thrive
STRYVE Action Council has engaged in youth violence prevention for nearly a decade

- The STRYVE Action Council was formed in 2010 to leverage the expertise, resources, and influence to advance youth violence prevention.
- STRYVE Action Council Member Organizations include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American Academy of Pediatrics</th>
<th>American Association of School Administrators</th>
<th>American Psychological Association</th>
<th>American Public Health Association</th>
<th>Association of State and Territorial Health Officials</th>
<th>Boys and Girls Clubs of America</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</td>
<td>Council for Strong America</td>
<td>Local Initiatives Support Corporation</td>
<td>National Association of City and County Health Officials</td>
<td>National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges</td>
<td>National League of Cities</td>
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<td>Prevention Institute</td>
<td>Safe States Alliance</td>
<td>Sandy Hook Promise</td>
<td>US Soccer Foundation</td>
<td>YMCA of the USA</td>
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CDC Youth Violence Prevention Centers support efforts to prevent youth violence

- CDC's Youth Violence Prevention Centers (YVPCs) are academic-community collaborations that advance the science and practice of youth violence prevention.

- The mission of the YVPCs is to research and prevent youth violence by identifying and testing innovative violence prevention approaches and to strengthen the use of effective strategies in communities.

*UofL YVPRC social norm campaign particularly highlights importance of social norm and narrative in Youth Violence Prevention
Part 2: Understanding Public Narratives around Youth Violence
Goals for this session:

- To deepen our understanding of public narratives that shape what we see as possible

- To name elements of public narratives around youth that dominate in our state/communities, and the impact that these have on our work to prevent youth violence

- To discuss opportunities to develop and act on alternative narratives in our work
# Why Do Narratives Matter?

What is the current story around youth violence?

| In your community? | In your state? | In the media? | In everyday conversation? |
Preventing violence requires understanding the contexts, including the historical contexts, in which violence occurs.
World Health Organization
Conceptual Framework on Social Determinants of Health

World Health Organization

Conceptual Framework on the Social Determinants of Health

- Sociopolitical and Economic Context
  - Governance
  - Macroeconomic Policies
  - Social policies
  - Public Policies
  - Culture & Societal Values

- Structural Determinants of Health Inequities
  - Education
  - Occupation
  - Income/Wealth

- Intermediary Determinants of Health
  - Building Capacity
    - Especially with those most impacted
  - Health Systems

- Sociodemographic and Behavioral Factors
  - Social Class
  - Gender
  - Race/Ethnicity

- Living & Working Conditions
  - Behavior & Biological Factors
  - Psychosocial Factors

- Impact on Equity in Health and Well-Being

- World Health Organization Conceptual Framework on the Social Determinants of Health
Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics

(estimate based on children who come in contact with CPS)

- Overall rate: 17.2/1000
- By Race/Ethnicity:
  - 12.6/1000 White
  - 24/1000 African American
- By Socio-economic Status (SES):
  - 4.4/1000 not-low SES
  - 22.5/1000 low SES

And so we asked...

- Is this something about African American parents and parents living with low incomes?

  OR

- Is this something about the conditions in which African American parents and parents with low incomes are raising their children?
World Health Organization
Conceptual Framework on the Social Determinants of Health

Sociopolitical and Economic Context

- ≠ Education funding
- ≠ Mortgage lending
- ≠ Hiring practices
- ≠ Justice system

Socioeconomic Position (of groups)

- Education ↓ by R/E, SES
- Occupation ↓ by R/E, SES

Living & Working Conditions
- Poverty/low family income
- Parental unemp.
- Residential instability
- High poverty n'hood
- High violence n'hood

Behavior/Biology
Psychosocial Factors

Intermediary Determinants of Health

Health Systems

Structural Determinants of Health Inequities

Education ↓ by R/E, SES
Occupation ↓ by R/E, SES
Income/Wealth ↓ by R/E, SES, gender

Child Abuse & Neglect
Overall: 17.2/1000
White 12.6
AA: 24
Non-low SES: 4.4
Low SES: 22.5
From the producers of *UNNATURAL CAUSES*

**THE RAISING OF AMERICA**

EARLY CHILDHOOD AND THE FUTURE OF OUR NATION

A DOCUMENTARY SERIES

[URL: www.raisingofamerica.org]
What are some current narratives around youth violence?
“It will come as no surprise that race has been a confounding factor in the public discussion about youth violence. Some of this is based on [data]. It is widely known that African-American and Latino youth are disproportionately arrested for violent crimes. This disparity feeds into a broader narrative about race in this country: the story of the irresponsible and dangerous minority community. This is a community, so the story goes, that allows its youth to be dominated by gang culture, rap music and indiscriminate violence. The upshot is that these youth become emblematic of the failure of some groups to instill the proper values into the younger members of their community.”

Out of Whack with the Facts: The Stubborn Case of Youth Violence in Public Perception
A FrameWorks Institute E-Zine, 2011
Youth Violence and Race

Dominant public narratives that reinforce negative associations between African Americans and Latinos and criminal behavior include:

1. **Historical progress and personal racism** (e.g., racism is a thing of the past except for the actions of a few individual “bad actors”)

2. **The self-making person** (e.g., how people are doing is solely based on their own individual behavior)

3. **Separate fates** (e.g., minority concerns are thought to be disconnected from the shared concerns and aspirations of the broader society)
Dominant Media Narratives around Youth Violence

• The three most frequently reported topics of youth news on local stations (46% of all coverage of youth):
  – Crime victimization
  – Accidents involving youth
  – Violent juvenile crime

• “Super predator” (e.g., a frame that originated in the mid-1990s that calls hyper-attention to violent episodes and does little to contextualize youth violence).

And so we need to ask...

Is the increased risk for being involved with violence something about African American and other youth of color?

OR

Are inequities in risk for violence something about the conditions in which some youth, especially youth of color, are trying to grow, learn, and live their lives?
• Adolescence is a developmental period rich with opportunity for youth to learn and grow.

• The trajectory of an individual’s life may be changed, negatively or positively, by conditions in the environment.

• The promise of adolescence can be severely curtailed by economic, social, and structural disadvantage and, in all-too-many cases, by racism, bias, and discrimination.
Public Narratives

- Public narratives are not stories about specific people or situations.
- Rather, they are meta-stories that provide an *understanding or interpretation* of people and situations.
- Public narratives both inform and are informed by our individual internal narratives and by our worldviews.
- Public narratives inform the development of frames and messages.
Worldview

- Worldview refers to the collections of beliefs, norms, value systems, core themes, popular wisdom and traditions that people draw upon to help them make sense of the world around them.

- Worldview often is linked to unexamined assumptions about human nature, identity, gender, race, class and sexuality and family.

- A dominant worldview narrative is one that overrides other narratives and has the most power to shape what is possible.
Worldview—a set of values, beliefs, and assumptions that shape our view of the world—human nature, power relations, stereotypes. These ideas become naturalized as “common sense.”

Public Narratives are stories that can shape peoples’ conscious perceptions, understandings, analysis and senses of responsibility and possibility.

Frames bring some aspects of a situation into focus while distorting others. Frames point the audience toward particular solutions that are grounded in a particular narrative and worldview.

Messages communicate the story we want specific audiences to hear.
Public Narratives

Stories that can **shape peoples’ conscious perceptions, understandings, analysis and senses of responsibility and possibility**. They are:

- Grounded in values and beliefs
- More powerful than facts in changing outcomes
- Grounding for messaging and strategy
- Created/reinforced through visuals as well as words
- Created by people and can be changed by people
Creating new narratives around youth and risk for violence
Changing the Narrative:
Using Media to Shift Norms of Violence Among Youth

U OF L YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION RESEARCH CENTER (YVPRC)
Example from the Louisville YVPRC

- **UofL Pride Peace Prevention Animation Video**
  - Brief animated video describing the broader definition and impacts of violence on a community

- **UofL Pride Peace Prevention**
  - Video highlighting features of social norms campaign including music to engage youth
What We are Learning from the Louisville YVPRC

• Role of youth in creating a new narrative
• There are few differences between West Louisville and other youth in relation to attitudes, beliefs, and norms related to violence:
  – Negative attitudes towards violence
  – Violence as a means of survival
• West Louisville youths are exposed to much higher levels of interpersonal and structural violence

Sociopolitical awareness is associated with lower levels of risky behaviors and greater resilience.
World Health Organization
Conceptual Framework on the Social Determinants of Health

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Socioeconomic Position (of groups)
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Living & Working Conditions
- Behavior & Biological Factors
- Psychosocial Factors

Education
- Occupation
- Income/Wealth

Impact on Equity in Health and Well-Being

Intermediary Determinants of Health

Building Capacity (including with those affected)

Health Systems

Structural Determinants of Health Inequities
What are some new narratives we can lift up around youth that will encourage their full health and development and minimize their exposure to violence?
Part 3: Opportunities for Action Panelist Discussion
Panelists

- Mighty Fine, MPH, CHES
  - American Public Health Association
  - Director, Center for Public Health Practice and Professional Development

- Lisa Fujie Parks, MPH
  - Prevention Institute
  - Associate Program Director
Discussion Questions

1. In your current work, how does the dominant public narrative impact your organization’s approach and interactions with youth?

2. What key partners do you engage in creating a “new” public narrative grounded in values and beliefs that support youth and families?

3. How does narrative impact engagement across your organization? Which of the following areas have you identified as key to implementing this work?
   a. Communication
   b. Partnership
   c. Prevention
   d. Policy
East San Jose PEACE Partnership Video

- East San Jose Peace Partnership Overview
  - The East San Jose PEACE (Prevention Efforts Advance Community Equity) Partnership is a group of residents and organizations working together to build a healthy, peaceful, and empowered community in East San Jose, California

  - The PEACE Partnership addresses racial and health inequities by preventing youth, family and community violence and trauma
## Resources

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<tr>
<th>CDC Resources</th>
<th>Other Resources</th>
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| • Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors  
  • [English](#)  
  • [Spanish](#) | • STRYVE Action Council |
| • Preventing Child Abuse & Neglect: A Technical Package for Policy, Norm, and Programmatic Activity  
  • [English](#)  
  • [Spanish](#) | • Advancing Public Narratives for Health Equity & Social Justice – NACCHO |
|               | • Developing a Transformational Criminal Justice Narrative: A Toolkit – Human Impact Partners |
|               | • Out of Whack with the Facts: The Stubborn Case of Youth Violence in Public Perception – Frameworks Institute |
|               | • The Raising of America – Early Childhood Documentary Series |
|               | • Human Impact Partners Master Narrative Tips |
Need More Information?

- Check out the [CDC Division of Violence Prevention Website](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention) for Helpful Resources
  - [Veto Violence](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention)
  - [CDC Youth Violence Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/youthviolence)
  - [CDC Youth Violence Prevention Centers](https://www.cdc.gov/youthviolence/preventioncenters)
  - [CDC Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/childabuseprevention)

- Email us at [dvpinquiries@cdc.gov](mailto:dvpinquiries@cdc.gov)