

Methods Supplement: Changing the Story of Child Sexual Abuse Prevention

Building a More Effective Narrative

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**FRAME
WORKS**



JOHNS HOPKINS
BLOOMBERG SCHOOL
of PUBLIC HEALTH

**Moore Center for the
Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse**

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Appendix A: Research Methods and Samples

To arrive at the recommendations in this brief, we applied Strategic Frame Analysis®—an approach to communications research and practice that yields strategies for shifting the discourse around social issues. This approach has been shown to increase understanding of, and engagement in, conversations about scientific and social issues.

This work builds on earlier research we conducted that involved interviews with members of the public and experts and advocates working in the field of child sexual abuse prevention, which are described in a separate brief and methods appendix.

Below, we describe the research we conducted in which we designed and tested frames to address the challenges and leverage the opportunities in public thinking about child sexual abuse (CSA) prevention. These frames were tested in 2021–2022 and refined using three methods: on-the-screen (OTS) interviews; survey experiments with a nationally representative sample; and peer discourse sessions (PDS), a type of focus group. In total, 5,481 people from across the US were included in this research.

Frame Design

To identify effective ways of communicating about CSA prevention, FrameWorks researchers developed a set of tasks the frames needed to address and then brainstormed potential reframing strategies that might accomplish one or more of these tasks (for example, metaphors, values, and issue frames). After generating a list of candidate framing ideas to test, researchers solicited feedback on these ideas from project partners to ensure the frames were both apt and potentially usable for those working in the field of CSA prevention. Based on this feedback, researchers refined a set of frames and brought them into empirical testing.

On-the-Screen Interviews

Frame design was followed by a set of OTS interviews conducted to explore potential framing tools with members of the public. FrameWorks researchers conducted 36 brief one-on-one interviews over Zoom in June and July 2021. A diverse sample of participants was recruited in terms of age, gender, race/ethnicity, household income, education level, geographical location, and political party identification.

We first asked participants to respond to open-ended questions about CSA and its prevention. Participants were then presented with different metaphors and issue frames and asked questions that explored the frames' abilities to open new ways of thinking about CSA prevention and overcome fatalism about the issue. The candidate metaphors and issue frames we tested are itemized in Appendix B.

Experimental Surveys

After analyzing how the candidate frames performed in OTS interviews, FrameWorks researchers refined the frames to bring forward for testing in the survey experiment. Two online experimental surveys involving a total sample of 5,409 adults in the US (Wave 1: N = 2,254; Wave 2: N = 3,155) were conducted between June and August 2022 to test the effectiveness of frames on shifting public understanding, attitudes, and support for programs and policies to prevent CSA. Target quotas were set according to national benchmarks for age, sex, race/ethnicity, household income, education level, and political party affiliation. See Table 1 for more information about the sample composition for each experiment. Data were not weighted.

Table 1: Survey Experiments—Participant Demographic Information

Demographic Variable	Wave 1 Frequency	Wave 1 Percent	Wave 2 Frequency	Wave 2 Percent
Age				
18–29	493	22	693	22
30–44	591	26	810	26
45–59	628	28	758	24
60+	542	24	894	28
Sex				
Male	1,093	48	1,483	47
Female	1,150	51	1,652	52
Nonbinary/Other	11	1	20	1
Ethnicity				
Caucasian/White (non-Hispanic/Latino)	1,375	61	2,005	63
Hispanic or Latino	396	17	482	15
Black/African American	263	12	367	12
Asian	83	4	87	3
American Indian/Alaska Native	24	1	25	1
Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	4	0	6	0
Other/Bi-racial or multi-racial	109	5	183	6

Income				
0-24,999	542	24	768	24
25,000-49,999	572	25	805	26
50,000-99,999	673	30	937	30
100,000+	467	21	645	20
Education				
High school diploma or less	870	38	1,133	36
Some college or associate degree	667	30	952	30
Bachelor's degree	441	20	675	21
Graduate/professional degree	276	12	395	13
Party leaning				
Closer to Republican Party	123	19	195	21
Close to Democratic Party	153	23	241	27
Neither	376	58	471	52
Are you or is someone you know a survivor of child sexual abuse?				
Yes	790	35	1,088	35
No	1,373	61	1,934	61
Prefer not to answer	91	4	133	4
Do you currently work in a profession where you regularly interact with survivors of child sexual abuse?				
Yes	172	8	211	7
No	2,028	90	2,881	91
Prefer not to answer	54	2	63	2
Do you currently work in a profession where you regularly interact with people who have been convicted of child sexual abuse?				
Yes	150	7	173	5
No	2,050	91	2,928	93
Prefer not to answer	54	2	54	2

Participant recruitment and survey hosting was completed by [Dynata](#). Participants were recruited from some combination of the following sources: proprietary loyalty panels, open invitation, or integrated channels that recruit from partnerships with external sources, such as publishers or social networks. All participants opted in to complete the survey. Participants with Dynata earn points for completing surveys, which they can then exchange for various rewards. These rewards vary by panel and recruitment method but may include things such as airline miles or gift cards.

Participants with Dynata are required to verify their identity at multiple points during survey enrollment and routing. Dynata uses various methods, such as third-party validation and digital fingerprinting, to detect fraud or identify bots, and to monitor and detect suspicious activity from participants.

Participants were not allowed to complete the survey more than once. Participants who did not fully complete the survey were removed from the data and were not paid. In addition, participant data was removed if they completed the survey within one-third of the median survey time, if they straight-lined, or if they provided nonsensical responses to the open-ended questions included in the survey.

After providing consent to participate, participants were randomly assigned to one of several experimental conditions or to a control condition. Across the two waves, frame treatments included metaphors, values, explanatory examples, narratives, and other frames aimed at understanding the best ways to shift thinking toward CSA as a preventable public health issue. All tested experimental frames can be found in Appendix B.

Participants assigned to an experimental frame condition were asked to read a short message, which they were required to view for at least 30 seconds, before answering a series of survey questions. Participants assigned to a null control condition were directed to answer the survey questions without reading any message. After assignment to an experimental condition, participants were asked a series of questions designed to measure outcomes of interest. Each battery consisted of multiple questions and was primarily measured using Likert-type items with five- or seven-point response scales. Open-ended questions requiring free-text answers were also included in the survey but were not included in the current analysis.

Prior to any inferential analysis, we conducted a series of randomization checks. Chi-square analyses indicated that all target demographics were evenly distributed across conditions. We also conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to determine the psychometric quality of each battery. Items with rotated factor loadings below $|.50|$ were dropped from each battery. Once finalized, Cronbach's alpha (α) was used to assess internal consistency among the items in each battery. Given that there are various heuristics for determining acceptable internal consistency, we determined that batteries with internal consistency scores approaching 0.60 or above would be considered acceptable.¹ After assessing internal consistency, items within each battery were combined into composite scores that indicated participants' average ratings of the attitudes or stereotypes measured by each battery. Table 2 provides reliability values for each battery that resulted in a composite measure. All questions from the experiments can be found in Appendix C.

Table 2. Psychometric Properties of Survey Batteries

Batteries	Number of Items	Internal Consistency Range (α)	Composite Mean Range
B1. <i>Home factors influencing CSA</i>	3	0.76–0.77	3.22–3.39
C1. <i>CSA is preventable</i>	4	0.75–0.76	4.69–4.74
C2. <i>How CSA is preventable</i>	3	0.72–0.75	5.08–5.14
C3. <i>How CSA is preventable</i>	3	0.75–0.79	4.66–4.99
D1. <i>Preventative policies</i>	5	0.79–0.83	5.22–5.24
D2. <i>Punitive policies</i>	4	0.81–0.82	5.09–5.16
E1. <i>Collective responsibility to prevent CSA</i>	4	0.79–0.83	2.92–4.08
F1. <i>Government efficacy for preventing CSA</i>	4	0.87–0.88	3.92–4.22
F2. <i>Collective efficacy for preventing CSA</i>	3	0.68–0.70	3.60–3.67

Ranges indicate the range of values between wave 1 and wave 2 of the experiment.

After conducting the preliminary analyses described above, we used multiple regression analysis to determine whether there were significant differences on the outcomes between each of the experimental frame conditions and the control condition. A threshold of $p < 0.05$ was used to determine whether the experimental frame conditions had any significant effects. Significant differences were understood as evidence that a frame influenced a particular outcome (for example, collective efficacy).

As with all research, it is important to remember that results are based on a sample of the population, not the entire population. As such, all results are subject to margins of error.

Peer Discourse Sessions

After an analysis of both waves of the survey experiment was conducted, FrameWorks researchers retested and refined frames that tested well in the experiment in PDS with 36 participants (six sessions with six participants each). These sessions were conducted virtually over Zoom in October 2022. A diverse sample of participants was recruited from across the US in terms of age, gender, race/ethnicity, household income, education level, geographical location, and political party identification.

These two-hour-long sessions included a variety of discussion prompts and activities designed to evaluate how the frames were taken up in social context and their usability during conversations with peers. We tested issue frames, stories with explanatory examples, and a metaphor. The frames we tested in PDS are itemized in Appendix B.

Appendix B: Tested Framing Strategies

OTS Interviews

Metaphors

Fire Safety

Preventing child sexual abuse is like ensuring good fire safety. To prevent fires, certain safety precautions, such as having enough exit doors in a building and providing appropriate fire safety training to people living or working there, need to be in place. In the same way, preventing child sexual abuse requires safety precautions for everyone, such as schools educating adults and children about what types of behaviors are safe or unsafe and healthcare providers providing appropriate mental health services to people who have experienced abuse as children or who feel a sexual attraction to children. When exit doors are in place and people are trained in fire safety, buildings are safer and people are better able to respond to fires when they arise. In the same way, by providing the right exit doors and safety training, we can prevent the fire of child sexual abuse and better address trauma when abuse happens.

Road Safety

Preventing child sexual abuse is like ensuring good road safety. To ensure everyone's safety on the road, certain safety measures need to be in place, such as guardrails and appropriate signage on the roads, or safety belts and car seats for adults and children. In the same way, preventing child sexual abuse requires safety measures for everyone, such as schools educating adults and children about what types of behaviors are safe or unsafe and healthcare providers providing appropriate mental health services to people who have experienced abuse as children or who feel a sexual attraction to children. When guardrails are in place on the road and safety belts are being used, roads are safer and injuries are less severe when crashes arise. In the same way, by building the right safeguards, we can prevent child sexual abuse and better address trauma when abuse happens.

River Safety

Preventing child sexual abuse is like ensuring good river safety. To prevent flooding, certain safety measures need to be in place, such as having enough dams and locks that function properly and monitoring the flow of rivers. In the same way, preventing child sexual abuse requires safety measures for everyone, such as schools educating adults and children about what types of behaviors are safe or unsafe and healthcare providers providing appropriate mental health services to people who have experienced abuse as children or who feel a sexual attraction to children. When dams and locks are built and managed properly and rivers are monitored, rivers are safer and it becomes possible to reduce damage when flooding occurs. In the same way, by building the right infrastructure, we can prevent the flood of child sexual abuse and better address trauma when abuse happens.

Gardening

To prevent child sexual abuse, we need to cultivate many different strategies. Right now, our only way of dealing with child sexual abuse is to punish abusers and send them to prison. It's a bit like expecting that weeding alone will make plants grow well in a garden, when other strategies like using stakes and nourishing the soil can be much more helpful depending on the problem and the context. We actually need many different strategies to prevent child sexual abuse. While weeding out offenders through the criminal justice system is sometimes necessary, providing support and nourishment are often needed too. This means for instance schools educating adults and children about what types of behaviors are safe or unsafe, or healthcare providers providing appropriate mental health services to people who have experienced abuse as children or who feel a sexual attraction to children. To prevent child sexual abuse, we need to cultivate many different strategies to make it easier for people to see when something goes wrong and ask for help and prevent child sexual abuse.

Multitool Toolbox

To prevent child sexual abuse, we need to use many different tools in our toolbox. Right now, our only way of dealing with child sexual abuse is to punish abusers and send them to prison. It's a bit like using a hammer to fix everything, when other tools with different functions can be much more helpful depending on the problem and the context. We actually need a "multi-tool" approach to prevent child sexual abuse: while the hammer of criminal justice is sometimes necessary, we need other tools to address different problems in different contexts, such as schools educating adults and children about what types of behaviors are safe or unsafe, or healthcare providers providing appropriate mental health services to people who have experienced abuse as children or who feel a sexual attraction to children. As a society, we need to use a multi-purpose set of tools in our toolbox to fix the problem, provide tools to make it easier for people to see when something goes wrong and ask for help and prevent child sexual abuse.

Well-Lit Path

To prevent child sexual abuse, we need to ensure everyone can travel down well-lit, sturdy paths throughout their lives. When paths are well lit and sturdy, it becomes easier for travelers to see obstacles, know where they're going, and stay safe along the way. In the same way, when children and adults have a clear view of what types of behaviors are safe or unsafe, and when people who have experienced trauma as children or who feel a sexual attraction to children can access adequate mental health services to shed light on their traumas and problems, it paves the way for safer life journeys. It makes it easier for people to see when something goes wrong and ask for help and opens up paths to prevent child sexual abuse.

Issue Frames

- **Child development:** We can't talk about child sexual abuse without talking about child development.
- **Health and wellbeing:** We can't talk about child sexual abuse without talking about health and wellbeing.
- **Human rights:** We can't talk about child sexual abuse without talking about human rights.
- **Safety:** We can't talk about child sexual abuse without talking about keeping people safe.
- **Power:** We can't talk about child sexual abuse without talking about unhealthy power dynamics.
- **Education:** We can't talk about child sexual abuse without talking about education.

Survey Experiment

Wave 1

Metaphors

Toolbox

To prevent child sexual abuse, we need to use many different tools. But right now, our only way of dealing with child sexual abuse is to punish people who have sexually abused a child and send them to prison. It's a bit like trying to use a hammer to fix everything when other tools with different functions can be more helpful.

Instead of only using a hammer, what we really need is an approach that uses many tools to prevent child sexual abuse from happening in the first place. One tool for preventing abuse is providing mental health care for people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children, which can help them cope with their feelings and prevent them from abusing children. Education is another tool that informs adults and children about personal boundaries and age-appropriate behaviors to prevent abuse before it occurs. And directing funding towards rehabilitation programs is a type of tool that can prevent people who have abused children in the past from doing so again.

As a society, we need to use all our available tools to fix the problem of child sexual abuse. We need to fill our toolbox with many different instruments that allow people to ask for help, receive the support they need, and understand when something is not right. When we have access to many prevention tools and know how to use them, we are better equipped to prevent child sexual abuse.

Gardening

To prevent child sexual abuse, we need to cultivate many different strategies. Right now, our only way of dealing with child sexual abuse is to punish people who have sexually abused a child send them to prison. It's a bit like expecting that weeding alone will make plants grow well in a garden, when other strategies like watering and nourishing the soil can be much more helpful depending on the problem and the context.

Just like tending a garden requires many different strategies, preventing child sexual abuse requires different approaches. While weeding out people who have sexually abused a child through the criminal justice system is sometimes appropriate, support and prevention efforts are needed too. One type of support involves providing mental health care for people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children, which can help them cope with their feelings and prevent them from abusing children. Education that informs adults and children about personal boundaries and age-appropriate behaviors is another strategy help prevent abuse before it occurs. And directing funding towards rehabilitation programs provides support that can prevent people who have abused children in the past from doing so again.

As a society, we need to cultivate many different strategies to prevent child sexual abuse. Just as a garden needs water, sunlight, and nutrients to do well, we need to develop many different techniques that allow people to ask for help, receive the support they need, and understand when something is not right. When we use many different strategies to enrich and nourish our society, we are better equipped to prevent child sexual abuse.

Road Safety

Preventing child sexual abuse is like ensuring good road safety. To make sure that everyone is safe on the road, certain protective measures need to be in place, such as driver education, guardrails, and appropriate signage.

In the same way, preventing child sexual abuse requires safety measures at many levels. One type of safety measure involves providing mental health care for people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children, which can help them cope with their feelings and prevent them from abusing children. Education that informs adults and children about personal boundaries and age-appropriate behaviors is another protective measure that can help prevent abuse before it occurs. And directing funding towards rehabilitation programs can prevent people who have abused children in the past from doing so again, which makes everyone safer.

As a society, we agree that road safety measures keep us safe when we travel. When people are educated on how to drive, and when guardrails are in place and signage is clear, roads are safer and fewer crashes occur. In the same way, by building the right safeguards, we can more effectively prevent child sexual abuse.

Explanatory Examples

Help Wanted

It is critical to prevent child sexual abuse before it happens. But right now, our main way of dealing with child sexual abuse is to punish people who have already sexually abused a child and send them to prison. Although sometimes punishment is appropriate, we should also be focused on preventing child sexual abuse before it happens. By offering free self-help programs for people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children, we can make sure that people have the knowledge and support they need so that they don't abuse children.

Help Wanted is one successful perpetration prevention program. This is a free online self-help program for people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children who choose not to act on their feelings. The program is focused on increasing understanding of the harms of child sexual abuse and providing clear strategies to decrease the likelihood of abuse. And, throughout the Help Wanted program, participants are educated and supported with affirmative messaging and role models that support them in their commitment to keep children safe.

Free self-help programs like Help Wanted are just one way to prevent child sexual abuse before it happens. The Help Wanted program attracted more than 200,000 visits in its first 18 months of operation and has hundreds of testimonials from participants who said that it was helpful in preventing them from abusing a child. Alongside other prevention efforts, like education programs, rehabilitation programs, and policy changes, if we make successful programs like Help Wanted more widely available, we can more effectively prevent child sexual abuse.

Shifting Boundaries

It is critical to prevent child sexual abuse before it happens. But right now, our main way of dealing with child sexual abuse is to punish people who have already sexually abused a child and send them to prison. Although sometimes punishment is appropriate, we should also be focused on preventing child sexual abuse before it happens. By offering comprehensive education and prevention programs for adolescents, we can prevent problematic sexual behaviors in teens, and more effectively prevent child sexual abuse.

Because they are still developing, young adolescents are at high risk for engaging in harmful sexual behavior with other adolescents or younger children. These harmful behaviors are a type of child sexual abuse. Shifting Boundaries is an educational intervention that prevents sexual abuse among middle-school students. This program includes a classroom-based curriculum that teaches students about laws and concepts such as consent and personal boundaries. It also encourages school administrators to enact school-wide prevention strategies to address risky behavior. For example, schools might improve lighting in dark stairwells, reduce outside shrubbery to ensure that adults can better monitor kids during recess, and placing teachers in high-traffic zones such as cafeterias. The combination of student education and tailored prevention strategies has been effective at reducing sexual violence among adolescents.

Comprehensive school-based programs like Shifting Boundaries are just one way to prevent child sexual abuse before it happens. Since nearly all adolescents are educated in public or private schools, these are the best places to embed prevention programming. Alongside other prevention efforts, like self-help programs, rehabilitation programs, and policy changes, if we make successful programs like Shifting Boundaries more widely available, we can more effectively prevent child sexual abuse.

Mental Health

It is critical to prevent child sexual abuse before it happens. But right now, our main way of dealing with child sexual abuse is to punish people who have already sexually abused a child and send them to prison. Although sometimes punishment is appropriate, we should also be focusing on preventing child sexual abuse before it happens. By proactively taking care of people's mental health and wellbeing, we can more effectively prevent child sexual abuse.

When people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children feel empowered to ask for help and have access to appropriate mental health support, they are better able to cope with their feelings and less likely to sexually abuse a child. Perpetration prevention programs with a focus on mental health support provide access to group and individual therapy with mental health professionals who are specially trained to work with people who have an unwanted sexual attraction to children. Therapy sessions focus on coping with unwanted feelings and establishing clear strategies to decrease the likelihood of abuse. Because confidentiality is guaranteed and participation remains anonymous to other healthcare providers, participants can speak freely without fear of stigma, which means they can get the support they need in their commitment to keep children safe.

Perpetration prevention programs with a focus on mental health support are just one way to prevent child sexual abuse before it happens. child. Alongside other prevention efforts, like education programs, rehabilitation programs, and policy changes, if we make these perpetration prevention programs more widely available, we can more effectively prevent child sexual abuse.

Historical Policy

Registration (general)

It is critical to prevent child sexual abuse before it happens. But right now, we rely on outdated policies that don't work, and sometimes cause more harm than good for everyone. By revisiting existing policies - like sex offense registration requirements - and making meaningful changes, we can do more to effectively prevent child sexual abuse.

In the 1990s, the federal government required states to enact sex offense registration and notification policies. This requirement is still in place today and means that people who have been convicted of a sex crime must register where they live, work, and go to school. They also must register their email and social media accounts with the police. This information is then made public online for anybody to see. Research shows that registration fails to prevent new sex crimes – instead, these policies only make it harder for people to get jobs, maintain stable housing, and form healthy relationships, all of which are critical for preventing re-offense. On the other hand, research finds that rehabilitation programs and appropriate mental health supports are much more successful than registration at preventing people from abusing again.

Our current policies for preventing child sexual abuse don't work. Instead, some policies – like sex offense registration requirements – make it so difficult for people to live a normal life that they often end up abusing again. We need to end these outdated policies and make meaningful changes if we truly want to prevent child sexual abuse.

Registration (youth)

It is critical to prevent child sexual abuse before it happens. But right now, we rely on outdated policies that don't work, and sometimes cause more harm than good for everyone. By revisiting existing policies - like sex offense registration requirements for children under 18 - and making meaningful changes, we can do more to effectively prevent child sexual abuse.

In the 1990s, the federal government required states to enact sex offense registration and notification policies for adults convicted of sex crimes. In 2006, this requirement was extended to children convicted of sexual misconduct. This policy is still in place today and means that children who commit sexual misconduct must register where they live and go to school. They also must register their email and social media accounts with the police. This information is then made public online for anybody to see and is also often shared with the child's school. Research shows that subjecting children to sex offense registration requirements does more harm than good. In fact, public registration increases the likelihood of attempting suicide or being sexually exploited by an adult. On the other hand, research finds that rehabilitation programs and appropriate mental health supports are much more successful than registration at helping children under 18 live healthy, law-abiding lives.

Our current policies for preventing child sexual abuse don't work. Instead, some policies – like sex offense registration requirements for children under 18 – actually expose children to serious health risks. We need to end these outdated policies and make meaningful changes if we truly want to prevent child sexual abuse.

Prison

It is critical to prevent child sexual abuse before it happens. But right now, we rely on outdated practices that don't work, and sometimes cause more harm than good for everyone. By revisiting existing practices - like sentencing people convicted of sex crimes to lengthy prison time - and making meaningful changes, we can do more effectively prevent child sexual abuse.

For decades now, our primary way of dealing with child sexual abuse is wait for abuse to happen, and then send the person who offended to prison. But research shows that prison time doesn't work to reduce future offenses. In fact, adults who are sent to prison for sex crimes are more likely to re-offend or engage in other illegal behavior once they leave prison. Prison is also unhelpful for children under 18 who are convicted of sexual misconduct, because they end up with worse mental and physical health and are less likely to live successful lives after they are released. Instead, research finds that rehabilitation programs and appropriate mental health supports are much more successful than prison time at preventing people from abusing again.

Our current strategies for preventing child sexual abuse don't work. Instead, some practices – like sending people convicted of sex crimes to prison – actually make it less likely that they will succeed in achieving healthy, law-abiding lives. We need to revisit these practices and make meaningful changes, like mandated rehabilitation as an alternative to prison time, if we truly want to prevent child sexual abuse.

Wave 2

Issues

Education

We can prevent child sexual abuse with better education for everyone. Right now, our only way of dealing with child sexual abuse is to punish people who have sexually abused a child and send them to prison, but we should really be focused on preventing child sexual abuse before it happens. When we educate people about child sexual abuse, we can make sure that everyone has the knowledge they need to prevent it.

We can prevent child sexual abuse if everyone has the right knowledge and resources. When parents, caregivers, teachers, and people who work with children know the signs of child sexual abuse, they can take steps to keep abuse from happening in their homes, schools, and communities. When children and adolescents are taught about consent, personal boundaries, and age-appropriate behaviors, they are less likely to engage in harmful behavior and can identify and report problematic behavior from others. And, when people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children have access to the right knowledge and resources to help them cope with their feelings, they are better able to develop appropriate boundaries that will keep them from ever abusing a child.

We can't only focus on punishment after abuse has already happened. Instead, if we create tailored and supportive education programs for everybody in our communities, we can more effectively prevent child sexual abuse from happening.

Healthy Development

We can prevent child sexual abuse by ensuring healthy sexual development. Right now, our only way of dealing with child sexual abuse is to punish people who have sexually abused a child and send them to prison, but we should really be focused on preventing child sexual abuse before it happens. If we make sure that everyone has what they need for healthy sexual development, we can prevent child sexual abuse from happening.

We can prevent child sexual abuse if we take steps to ensure healthy sexual development for everyone. When parents, caregivers, teachers, and people who work with children know the signs of child sexual abuse and encourage open conversations about healthy sexual behaviors, they can take steps to keep abuse from happening in their homes, schools, and communities. When children and adolescents are taught from a young age about consent, personal boundaries, and age-appropriate behaviors, they are less likely to engage in harmful behavior and can identify and report problematic behavior from others. And, when people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children have access to the right mental health supports, they are better able to develop appropriate boundaries that will keep them from ever abusing a child.

We can't only focus on punishment after abuse has already happened. Instead, if we ensure that everyone in our communities has what they need for healthy sexual development, we can more effectively prevent child sexual abuse from happening.

Public Health

Child sexual abuse is a public health issue. Right now, our only way of dealing with child sexual abuse is to punish people after they have sexually abused a child and send them to prison, but we should really be focused on preventing child sexual abuse before it happens. If we treat child sexual abuse as a public health issue - focused on prevention and promoting the wellbeing of children - instead of only focusing on punishment, we can more effectively keep child sexual abuse from happening.

We can prevent child sexual abuse if we treat it with the same urgency as any other public health issue. When parents, caregivers, teachers, and people who work with children know the signs of child sexual abuse, they can take steps to keep abuse from happening in their homes, schools, and communities. When children and adolescents are taught from a young age about consent, personal boundaries, and age-appropriate behaviors, they are less likely to engage in harmful behavior and can identify and report problematic behavior from others. And, when people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children have access to the right mental health supports, they are better able to develop appropriate boundaries that will keep them from ever abusing a child. Wherever there are risks for child sexual abuse in the community, we can take steps to treat the underlying issue so that abuse doesn't happen.

We can't only focus on punishment after abuse has already happened. Instead, if we address child sexual abuse with the same focus and determination as we treat any major public health issue, we can more effectively prevent abuse from happening, and it will keep our children and communities safe and healthy.

Tone

Neutral Tone

According to the CDC, about 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys will experience sexual abuse during their childhood. Most abuse is committed by someone the child knows, but most of us don't understand the signs that abuse might occur or is already happening. This means that child sexual abuse is often not recognized or reported at all. And, when we don't provide resources or support to people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children, abuse is more likely to occur. We all need better resources to help us recognize and prevent child sexual abuse.

Neutral + Solutions

According to the CDC, about 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys will experience sexual abuse during their childhood. Most abuse is committed by someone the child knows, but most of us don't understand the signs that abuse might occur or is already happening. This means that child sexual abuse is often not recognized or reported at all. And, when we don't provide resources or support to people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children, abuse is more likely to occur. We all need better resources to help us recognize and prevent child sexual abuse.

Concrete solutions exist to prevent this abuse from happening. Targeted prevention programs aimed at people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children can provide strategies to decrease the likelihood that they will ever abuse a child. When children and adolescents are taught about consent, personal boundaries, and age-appropriate behaviors, they are less likely to engage in harmful behavior and can better identify and report problematic behavior from others. And, directing resources towards rehabilitation for people who have abused a child in the past can reduce the likelihood that they will abuse again. By funding these types of programs, we can effectively prevent child sexual abuse from happening.

Crisis Tone

Child sexual abuse is a national crisis that we must address. The rate of child sexual abuse in the U.S. is shocking: A child is sexually assaulted every 9 minutes, and according to the CDC, about 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys will be sexually abused during their childhood. Most abuse is committed by someone the child knows, but most of us don't understand the signs that abuse might occur or is already happening. This means that child sexual abuse is often not recognized or reported at all. And, when we don't provide resources or support to people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children, abuse is more likely to occur. We cannot keep allowing this harm to come to our children, and we must take action to address this crisis before it's too late.

The amount of child sexual abuse that occurs in the U.S. is truly horrifying, and for the sake of our children, we must prevent it from happening.

Crisis Tone + Solutions

Child sexual abuse is a national crisis that we must address. The rate of child sexual abuse in the U.S. is shocking: A child is sexually assaulted every 9 minutes, and according to the CDC, about 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys will experience sexual abuse during their childhood. Most abuse is committed by someone the child knows, but most of us don't understand the signs that abuse might occur or is already happening. This means that child sexual abuse is often not recognized or reported at all. And, when we don't provide resources or support to people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children, abuse is more likely to occur. We cannot keep allowing this harm to come to our children, and we must take action to address this crisis before it's too late.

The amount of child sexual abuse that occurs in the U.S. is truly horrifying, but concrete solutions exist to prevent this abuse from happening. Targeted prevention programs aimed at people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children can provide strategies to decrease the likelihood that they will ever abuse a child. When children and adolescents are taught about consent, personal boundaries, and age-appropriate behaviors, they are less likely to engage in harmful behavior and can better identify and report problematic behavior from others. And, directing resources towards rehabilitation for people who have abused a child in the past can reduce the likelihood that they will abuse again. By funding these types of programs, we can effectively prevent child sexual abuse from happening.

Values

Children's Best Interests

As a society, we believe in doing what's best for kids. But right now, the way our society deals with child sexual abuse doesn't advance our shared interest in promoting children's wellbeing. We are so focused on punishing people who have abused a child that we're forgetting the ways we can prevent child sexual abuse from happening in the first place--the goal that's actually in children's best interest. If we truly believe in doing what's best for kids, we need to focus on preventing child sexual abuse.

There are many steps we can take as a society to ensure that no child is ever sexually abused. First, we can make sure that adults who work or volunteer with children receive appropriate training and supervision to prevent sexual abuse. We can also prioritize giving children and adolescents the knowledge and tools to understand consent, personal boundaries, and age-appropriate behaviors through programs in school and healthcare settings. And, we can make sure that people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children have access to the mental health resources they need so that they never abuse a child. Investing in these kinds of prevention programs and policies is a commitment to doing what's best for children.

We can only prevent child sexual abuse when we take the right steps as a society. If we really believe in doing what's best for children, we must think beyond punishment and implement strategies to prevent child sexual abuse before it happens. When we commit to putting children's best interests first, we can make sure that no child is ever sexually abused.

Aspirational Future

As a society, we believe in creating a better future for our children. But right now, we are missing the mark. We are so focused on punishing people who have abused a child that we forget about the ways we can prevent child sexual abuse from happening in the first place. If we truly believe in building a bright future for our children, we need to do better by preventing child sexual abuse.

There are many steps we can take as a society to build a future world where no child is ever sexually abused. First, we can make sure that adults who work or volunteer with children receive appropriate training and supervision to prevent sexual abuse. We can also prioritize giving children and adolescents the knowledge and tools to understand consent, personal boundaries, and age-appropriate behaviors through programs in school and healthcare settings. And, we can make sure that people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children have access to the mental health resources they need so that they never abuse a child. Investing in these kinds of prevention programs and policies is a commitment to creating a future where child sexual abuse doesn't happen.

We can only create a brighter future for our children if we work together to prevent child sexual abuse. If we want to make this future a reality, we must think beyond punishment and implement strategies to prevent child sexual abuse before it happens. If we do this, we can fully commit ourselves to a future where no child is ever sexually abused.

Common Sense

As a society, we believe in creating common sense solutions to our problems. But right now, our solutions to child sexual abuse don't make sense. We are so focused on punishing people who have abused a child that we forget about the ways we can prevent child sexual abuse from happening in the first place. This doesn't make sense. If we truly believe in common sense solutions, we need to focus on preventing child sexual abuse.

There are practical steps we can take as a society to ensure that no child is ever sexually abused. First, we can make sure that adults who work or volunteer with children receive appropriate training and supervision to prevent sexual abuse. We can also prioritize giving children and adolescents the knowledge and tools to understand consent, personal boundaries, and age-appropriate behaviors through programs in school and healthcare settings. And, we can make sure that people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children have access to the mental health resources they need so that they never abuse a child. If we truly want to prevent child sexual abuse, investing in these kinds of prevention programs and policies just makes sense.

We can only prevent child sexual abuse if we use our common sense. If we really believe in using good judgment to solve our problems, we must think beyond punishment and implement strategies to prevent child sexual abuse before it happens. If we commit to taking these practical steps, we can make sure that no child is ever sexually abused.

Narratives

"I" Episodic + Help Wanted

There are many people in the world who are sexually attracted to children but don't want to act on their feelings. When the right support is available, they can live productive lives and successfully prevent themselves from ever abusing a child. Below is Alex's story.

My name is Alex. I am many things - a sibling, a runner, an artist. I am also sexually attracted to children, but I didn't choose to feel this way. In my commitment to keep children safe, I found a free online self-help program called Help Wanted. It was specially designed for people like me who have a sexual attraction to children but don't want to act on their feelings. After reading through hundreds of testimonials from participants who said the program was helpful in preventing them from abusing a child, I signed up. Help Wanted taught me the harms of child sexual abuse and provided clear strategies that help me cope with my feelings in productive ways. The program created a supportive and affirmative environment, and introduced me to positive role models who I can talk to when I need support.

Free self-help programs like Help Wanted can help people like me gain the knowledge and support we need so that we can live productive lives and never abuse a child. After completing the program, I feel better able to cope with my feelings, know that I have good role models I can lean on for support, and am more confident that I will not abuse a child. Alongside other prevention efforts, like education programs, rehabilitation programs, and policy changes, if programs like Help Wanted are made more widely available, I am certain that we can more effectively prevent child sexual abuse.

Traditional Episodic + Help Wanted

There are many people in the world who are sexually attracted to children but don't want to act on their feelings. When the right support is available, they can live productive lives and successfully prevent themselves from ever abusing a child. Below is Alex's story.

Alex is many things - a sibling, a runner, and an artist. Alex is also sexually attracted to children, but he didn't choose to feel that way. In Alex's commitment to keeping children safe, he found a free online self-help program called Help Wanted. It was specially designed for people like Alex who have a sexual attraction to children, but don't want to act on their feelings. After reading through hundreds of testimonials from participants who said the program was helpful in preventing them from abusing a child, Alex signed up. Help Wanted taught Alex the harms of child sexual abuse and provided clear strategies that help him cope with his feelings in productive ways. The program created a supportive and affirmative environment, and introduced Alex to positive role models who he can talk to when he needs support.

Free self-help programs like Help Wanted help people like Alex gain the knowledge and support they need so that they can live productive lives and never abuse a child. After completing the program, Alex feels better able to cope with his feelings, knows that he has good role models he can lean on for support, and is more confident that he will not abuse a child. Alongside other prevention efforts, like education programs, rehabilitation programs, and policy changes, if programs like Help Wanted are made more widely available, Alex is certain that we can more effectively prevent child sexual abuse.

Perspective-taking Episodic + Help Wanted

There are many people in the world who are sexually attracted to children but don't want to act on their feelings. When the right support is available, they can live productive lives and successfully prevent themselves from ever abusing a child.

Think of the many different things that make you who you are. Maybe you are a sibling, a runner, or an artist. Now imagine that you are also a person who is sexually attracted to children, but you did not choose to feel this way. In your commitment to keeping children safe, you find a free online self-help program called Help Wanted. You learn that it was specially designed for people like you who have a sexual attraction to children, but don't want to act on their feelings. After reading through hundreds of testimonials from participants who said the program was helpful in preventing them from abusing a child, you decide to sign up. Help Wanted teaches you about the harms of child sexual abuse and provides clear strategies that help you cope with your feelings in productive ways. The program creates a supportive and affirmative environment, and introduces you to positive role models who you can talk to when you need support.

Free self-help programs like Help Wanted help people like you gain the knowledge and support you need so that you can live productive lives and never abuse a child. After completing the program, you feel better able to cope with your feelings, know that you have good role models you can lean on for

support, and are more confident that you will not abuse a child. Alongside other prevention efforts, like education programs, rehabilitation programs, and policy changes, if programs like Help Wanted are made more widely available, you are certain that we can more effectively prevent child sexual abuse.

PDS

Issue Frames

Education

We can prevent child sexual abuse with better education for everyone. When parents, caregivers, teachers, and people who work with children learn the signs of child sexual abuse, they can take steps to keep abuse from happening in their homes, schools, and communities. And, when people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children have access to the right knowledge and resources to help them cope with their feelings, they are better able to develop appropriate boundaries that will keep them from ever abusing a child.

We can't only focus on punishment after abuse has already happened. Instead, if we create tailored and supportive education programs for everybody in our communities – including people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children – we can more effectively prevent child sexual abuse from happening.

Healthy Sexual Development

We can prevent child sexual abuse by ensuring healthy sexual development for everyone. When parents, caregivers, teachers, and people who work with children learn the signs of child sexual abuse and encourage open conversations about healthy sexual behaviors, they can take steps to keep abuse from happening in their homes, schools, and communities. And, when people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children have access to the right mental health supports, they are better able to develop appropriate boundaries that will keep them from ever abusing a child.

We can't only focus on punishment after abuse has already happened. Instead, if we ensure that everyone in our communities has what they need for healthy sexual development – including people with an unwanted sexual attraction to children – we can more effectively prevent child sexual abuse from happening.

Stories + Explanatory Examples

Third person narration + mental health general perpetration prevention program

Alex is many things - a sibling, a runner, and an artist. Alex is also sexually attracted to children, but he didn't choose to feel that way. In Alex's commitment to keeping children safe, he found a perpetration prevention program. It was designed for people like Alex who have a sexual attraction to children, but don't want to act on their feelings. The program provided Alex with access to group and individual therapy with mental health professionals who are specially trained to work with people who have

an unwanted sexual attraction to children. Through therapy sessions focused on coping with unwanted feelings and establishing clear strategies to decrease the likelihood of abuse, Alex learned how to cope with his feelings in productive ways. And because the program guaranteed confidentiality and Alex's participation remained anonymous to other healthcare providers, Alex could speak freely to mental health professionals without fear of stigma.

Perpetration prevention programs help people like Alex gain the knowledge and support they need so that they can live productive lives and never abuse a child. After completing the program, Alex feels better able to cope with his feelings knowing that he has mental health professionals he can lean on for support and is more confident that he will not abuse a child. If perpetration prevention programs are made more widely available, Alex is certain that we can more effectively prevent child sexual abuse.

1st person narration + mental health general perpetration prevention program

My name is Alex. I am many things - a sibling, a runner, an artist. I am also sexually attracted to children, but I didn't choose to feel this way. In my commitment to keep children safe, I found a perpetration prevention program. It was designed for people like me who have a sexual attraction to children, but don't want to act on their feelings. The program provided me with access to group and individual therapy with mental health professionals who are specially trained to work with people who have an unwanted sexual attraction to children. Through therapy sessions focused on coping with unwanted feelings and establishing clear strategies to decrease the likelihood of abuse, I learned how to cope with my feelings in productive ways. And because the program guaranteed confidentiality and my participation remained anonymous to other healthcare providers, I could speak freely to mental health professionals without fear of stigma.

Perpetration prevention programs help people like me gain the knowledge and support we need so that we can live productive lives and never abuse a child. After completing the program, I feel better able to cope with my feelings knowing that I have mental health professionals I can lean on for support, and I am more confident that I will not abuse a child. If perpetration prevention programs are made more widely available, I am certain that we can more effectively prevent child sexual abuse.

3rd person narration + Help Wanted Program

Alex is many things - a sibling, a runner, and an artist. Alex is also sexually attracted to children, but he didn't choose to feel that way. In Alex's commitment to keeping children safe, he found a free online self-help program called Help Wanted. It was specially designed for people like Alex who have a sexual attraction to children, but don't want to act on their feelings. After reading through hundreds of testimonials from participants who said the program was helpful in preventing them from abusing a child, Alex signed up. Help Wanted taught Alex the harms of child sexual abuse and provided clear strategies that help him cope with his feelings in productive ways. The program created a supportive and affirmative environment and introduced Alex to positive role models who he can talk to when he needs support.

Free self-help programs like Help Wanted help people like Alex gain the knowledge and support they need so that they can live productive lives and never abuse a child. After completing the program, Alex feels better able to cope with his feelings, knows that he has good role models he can lean on for support, and is more confident that he will not abuse a child. If programs like Help Wanted are made more widely available, Alex is certain that we can more effectively prevent child sexual abuse.

1st person narration + Help Wanted Program

My name is Alex. I am many things - a sibling, a runner, an artist. I am also sexually attracted to children, but I didn't choose to feel this way. In my commitment to keep children safe, I found a free online self-help program called Help Wanted. It was specially designed for people like me who have a sexual attraction to children but don't want to act on their feelings. After reading through hundreds of testimonials from participants who said the program was helpful in preventing them from abusing a child, I signed up. Help Wanted taught me the harms of child sexual abuse and provided clear strategies that help me cope with my feelings in productive ways. The program created a supportive and affirmative environment and introduced me to positive role models who I can talk to when I need support.

Free self-help programs like Help Wanted help people like me gain the knowledge and support we need so that we can live productive lives and never abuse a child. After completing the program, I feel better able to cope with my feelings, know that I have good role models I can lean on for support, and I am more confident that I will not abuse a child. If programs like Help Wanted are made more widely available, I am certain that we can more effectively prevent child sexual abuse.

Metaphor: Road Safety

Preventing child sexual abuse is like ensuring good road safety. To make sure that everyone is safe on the road, certain protective measures need to be in place, such as guardrails and appropriate signage. As a society, we agree that road safety measures keep us safe when we travel. When guardrails are in place and signage is clear, roads are safer, and we can prevent crashes from occurring. In the same way, by building the right safeguards, we can more effectively prevent child sexual abuse.

Appendix C: Sample Survey Items

BATTERY A

Understanding CSA (*items analyzed individually*)

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements: *[seven-point Likert scale: strongly disagree; disagree; somewhat disagree; neither disagree nor agree; somewhat agree; agree; strongly agree]*

1. Child sexual abuse always involves physical contact.
2. People who have a sexual preference for children will inevitably commit child sexual abuse.
3. All people who commit child sexual abuse have a sexual preference for children.
4. Child sexual abuse often occurs with other forms of child maltreatment, like neglect or emotional abuse.
5. People who have power and influence over children are more likely to commit child sexual abuse.

BATTERY B

Factors Influencing Whether CSA Happens

Please rate how much you think each of the following increases the likelihood that a child will be sexually abused. *[five-point Likert scale: 1 = not at all; 2 = a small amount; 3 = a moderate amount; 4 = a large amount; 5 = a very large amount]*

Subscale B1: Home Factors (composite)

1. Living in poverty
2. Exposure to substance use in the home
3. Exposure to domestic violence in the home

Subscale B2: Individual Items

1. Regular exposure to media that sexualizes children and adolescents
2. Experiencing other types of abuse (e.g., neglect, mental or emotional abuse, etc.)

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements: *[seven-point Likert scale: strongly disagree; disagree; somewhat disagree; neither disagree nor agree; somewhat agree; agree; strongly agree]*

3. A child with a physical or intellectual disability is more likely to be sexually abused than a child without a disability.
4. Adolescents are at high risk for sexually abusing other adolescents and younger children.

BATTERY C

Understanding CSA as Preventable

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements: *[seven-point Likert scale: strongly disagree; disagree; somewhat disagree; neither disagree nor agree; somewhat agree; agree; strongly agree]*

Subscale C1: CSA Is Not Preventable (reverse coded, composite)

1. Child sexual abuse will always be a problem.
2. We can only do so much to prevent child sexual abuse.
3. We cannot protect all children from sexual abuse.
4. No matter how hard we try, child sexual abuse will continue to happen.

Subscale C2: How CSA Is Preventable (reverse coded, composite)

1. People who are sexually attracted to children will always act on their urges.
2. Therapy and rehabilitation aren't enough to keep people from sexually abusing children.
3. No matter what supports are available, some people will always find a way to sexually abuse children.

Subscale C3: How CSA Is Preventable (reverse coded, composite)

1. If people convicted of child sexual abuse are punished more severely, they won't abuse again.
2. If people convicted of child sexual abuse are always sentenced to life in prison, it will prevent others from sexually abusing children.
3. If people convicted of child sexual abuse are isolated from the rest of society, it will prevent them from abusing again.

BATTERY D

Specific Policies

How much do you favor or oppose the following policies? *[seven-point Likert scale: strongly oppose; oppose; somewhat oppose; neither favor nor oppose; somewhat favor; favor; strongly favor]*

Subscale D1: Preventative Policies (composite)

1. Require that all public schools implement educational programs that aim to reduce adolescent dating violence.
2. Implement comprehensive sex education programs in all public schools.
3. Increase federal funding to support prevention programs for people who are sexually attracted to children.
4. Increase federal funding for rehabilitation programs targeted towards youth who have committed sexual offenses.
5. Mandate and fund rehabilitation programs for adults who are convicted of child sexual abuse.

Subscale D2: Punitive Policies (composite, reverse coded)

1. Mandate that anybody convicted of child sexual abuse is sentenced to life in prison.
2. Publicly shame people convicted of child sexual abuse.
3. Keep people who are convicted of child sexual abuse permanently isolated from the rest of society.
4. Try adolescents who are accused of child sexual abuse as adults.

BATTERY E

Collective Responsibility for Preventing CSA

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements: *[seven-point Likert scale: strongly disagree; disagree; somewhat disagree; neither disagree nor agree; somewhat agree; agree; strongly agree]*

Subscale E1: Collective Responsibility (composite, reverse coded)

1. It is not our responsibility, as a society, to prevent child sexual abuse from happening.
2. We, as a society, are not responsible for preventing people from acting on their sexual attraction to children.
3. We, as a society, cannot be held responsible for preventing child sexual abuse.

Subscale E2: Responsibility, Single Item

1. In your opinion, who is most responsible for preventing child sexual abuse from happening?
 - a. All of us, as a society
 - b. Children
 - c. Parents
 - d. People who work with children (teachers, coaches, etc.)
 - e. People who are sexually attracted to children

BATTERY F

Collective Efficacy for Preventing CSA

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements: *[seven-point Likert scale 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = somewhat disagree; 4 = neither disagree or agree; 5 = somewhat agree; 6 = agree; 7 = strongly agree]*

Subscale F1: Government Efficacy (composite)

1. I am optimistic that our government will enact policies and programs to prevent child sexual abuse.
2. It is realistic to believe that our government can prevent child sexual abuse.
3. I am confident that our government can effectively prevent child sexual abuse.
4. I am optimistic that our government can pass legislation that will successfully reduce child sexual abuse in the US.

Subscale F2: Collective Efficacy (composite, reverse coded)

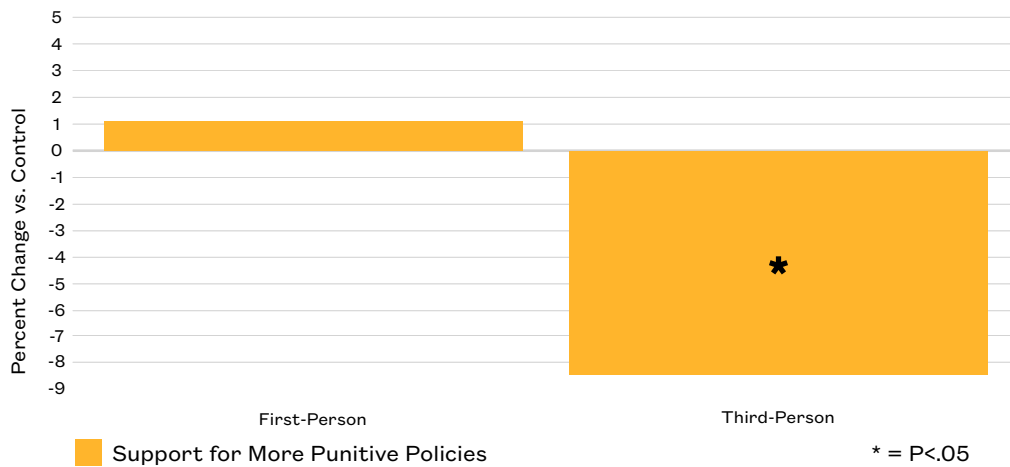
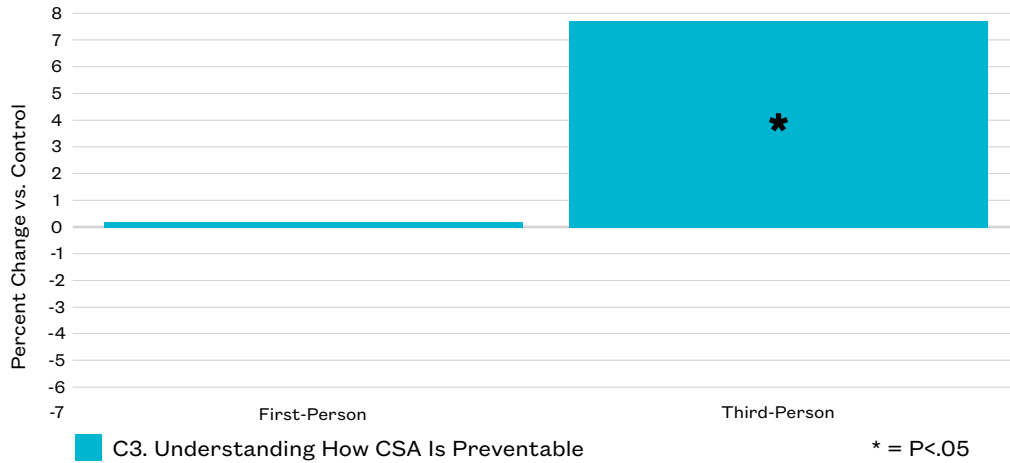
1. I am not confident that we, as a society, can prevent child sexual abuse from happening.
2. It is unrealistic to think that we, as a society, can prevent child sexual abuse.
3. There is not much that we, as a society, can do to prevent child sexual abuse.

Appendix D: Quantitative Data Supporting Recommendations

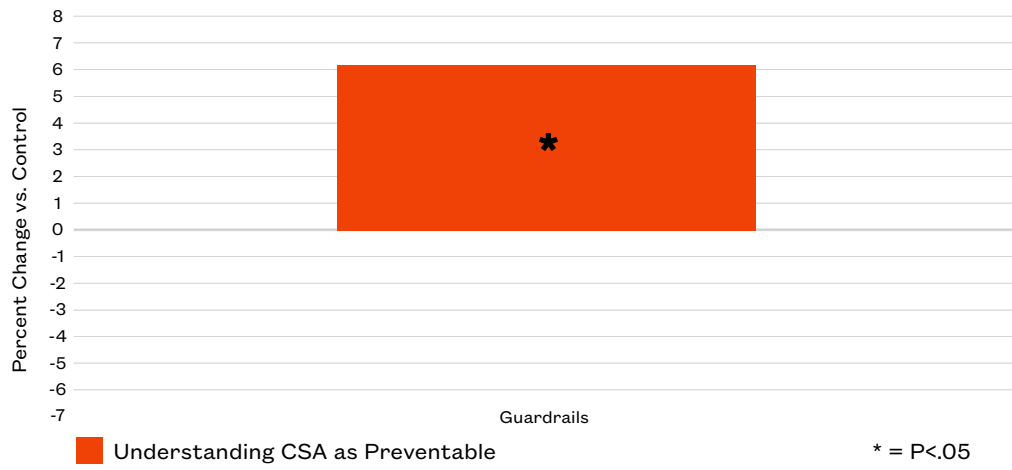




Point of View: First- and Third-Person Narration, for People with Experience of CSA



The Guardrails Metaphor, for People without Experience of CSA



Endnotes

1. Taber, K.S. (2011). The use of cronbach's alpha when developing and reporting research instruments in science education. *Research in Science Education*, 48, 1273-1296.



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.

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Methods Supplement: Changing the Story of Child Sexual Abuse Prevention

Building a More
Effective Narrative

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