

VIOLENCE PREVENTION— Creating a New Scientific Discipline

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The Melissa Institute 25th Anniversary

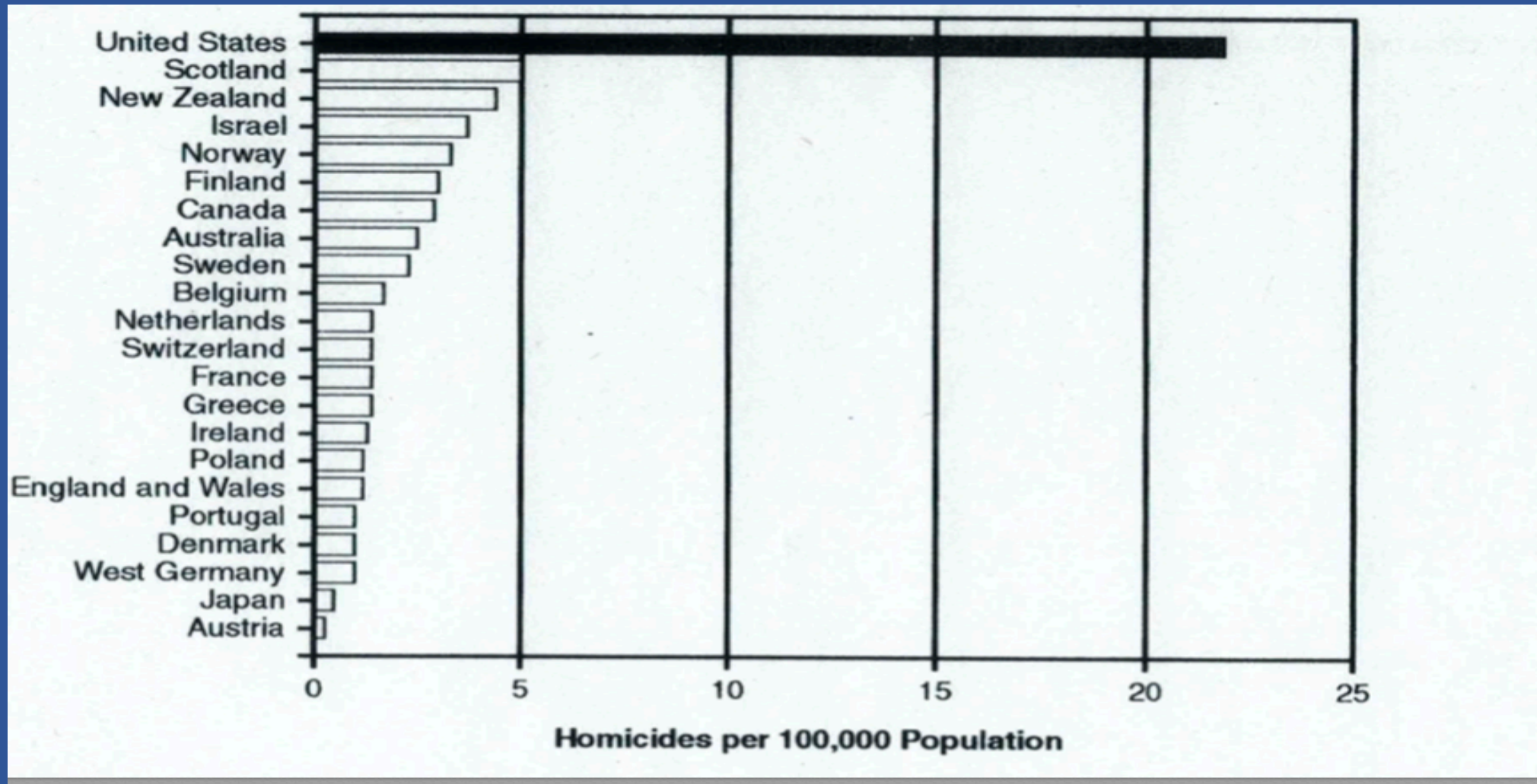
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Presentation Outline

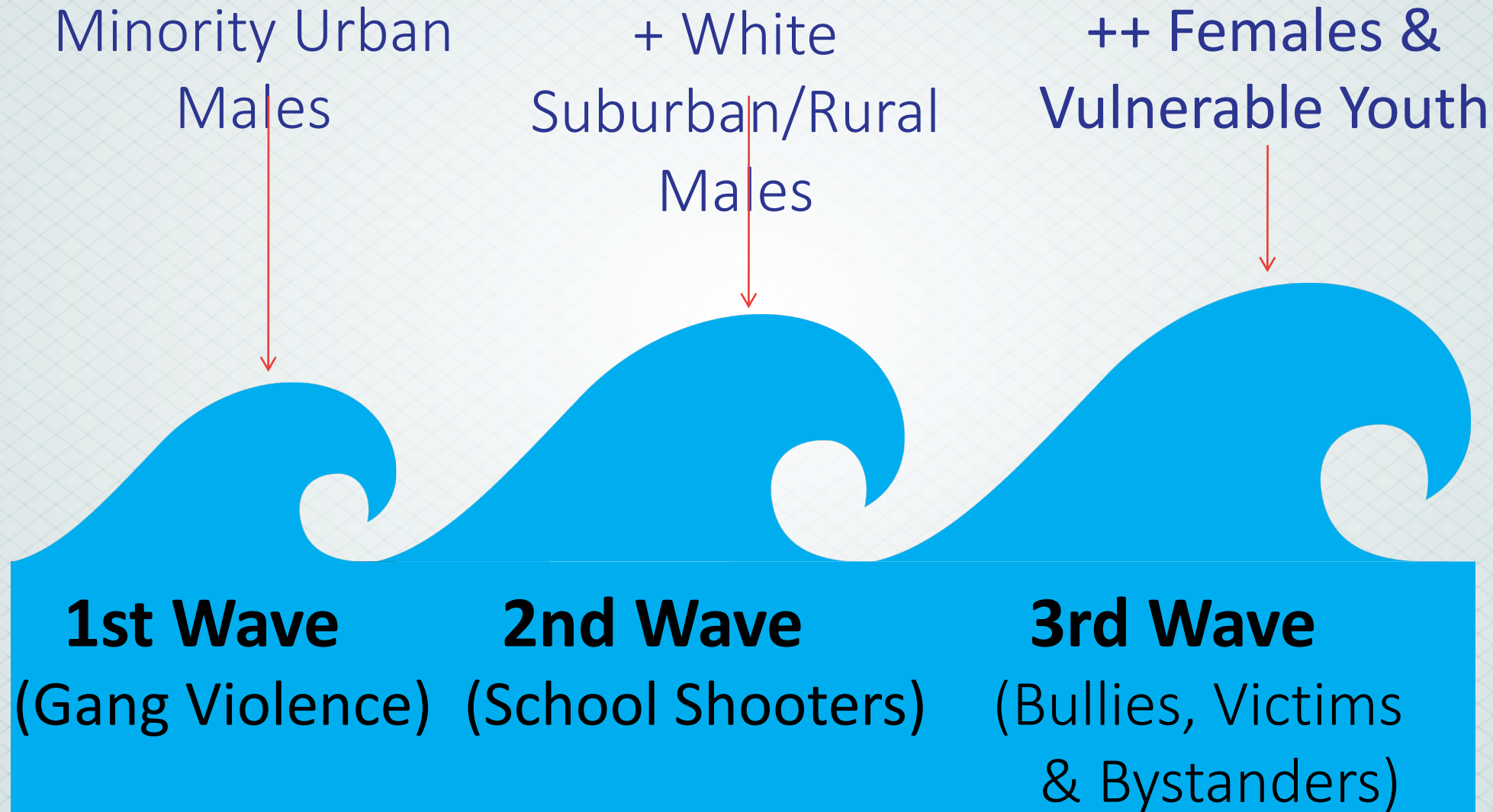
1. The Problem
2. The Paradigm
3. The Breakthroughs
4. The Barriers
5. The Future

Homicide Rates for Males age 15-24 in 1987

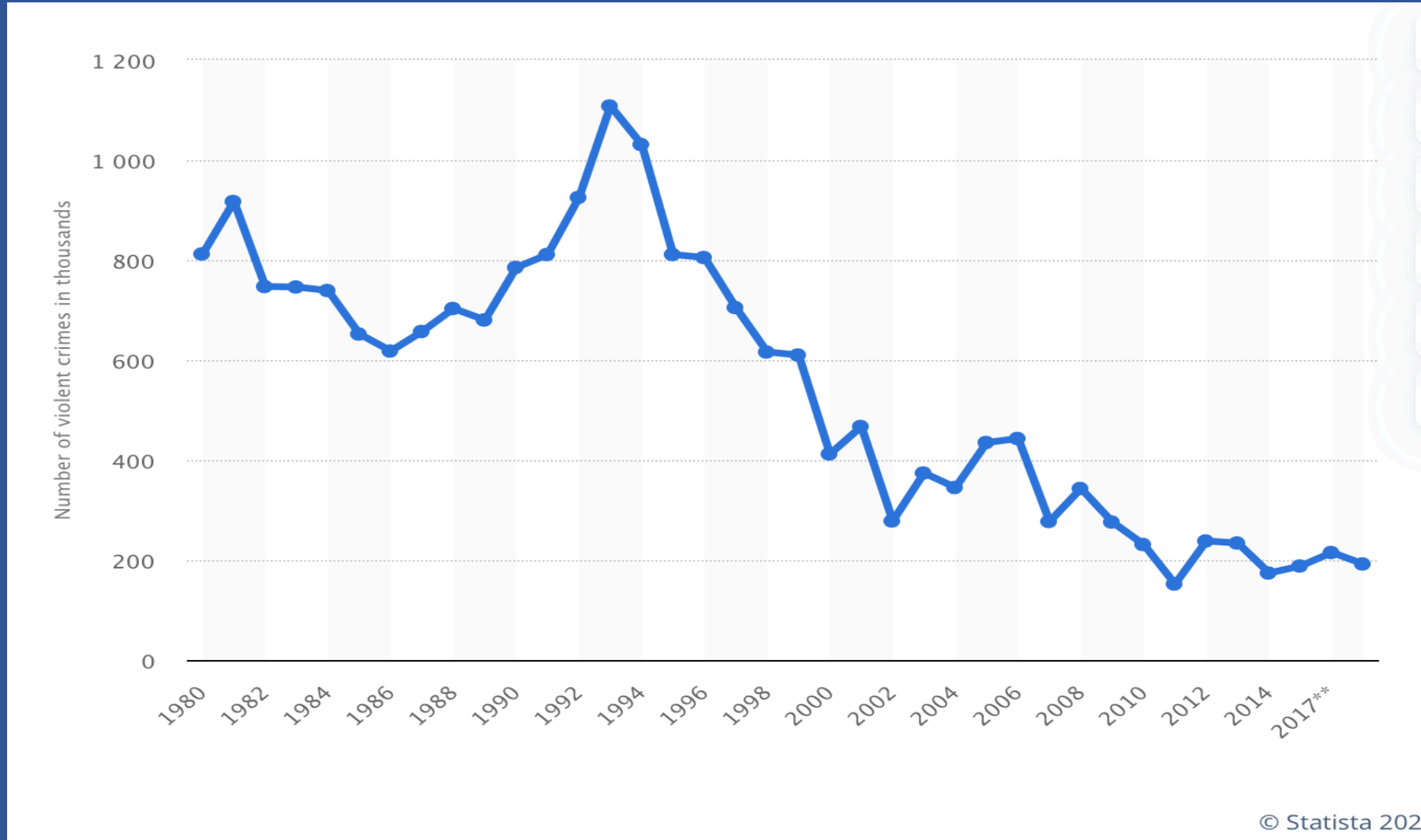
(WHO, National Center for Health Statistics)



3 Waves of an Epidemic – Youth Violence in USA



Number of Serious Violent Crimes in the U.S. by Youth (12-17 years) from 1980 to 2018



Decrease in Serious Violent Crime by Youth

Why this dramatic decrease?

From about 1,100,000 violent crimes in 1993
To about 192,000 violent crimes in 2018

An 82% decrease over 25 years

- Serious Violent Crime = murder/ nonnegligent manslaughter/ forcible rape/ robbery/ aggravated assault.

2. New Paradigm: Science Creates Paradigms to Solve New Problems

Models similar to Solving a Picture Puzzles:

- Define the Pieces (Define what is—and is not—a “fact”)
- Connect the Pieces (Set rules for interconnection)
- Interpret the Meaning (Clarify what is known)

Contrasting Definitions of Violence

(around 1990)

- **Public Health**—Violence is a potentially preventable societal problem that often results in physical injury or death.
- **Behavior Science**—Aggression is a largely learned, developing, and alterable form of physical or verbal harm-doing behavior.
- **Education**—Aggression is a maladaptive interpersonal behaviors, correctable by building knowledge, skills, and strategies for resolving conflict nonviolently.
- **Criminal Justice**—Violence is a criminal act, determined by a jury, based on a legal facts and circumstances, and requiring punishment and/or correctional treatment.

Different Methods for Establishing Facts

Methods:

- **Public Health** (*Epidemiology Research*)
- **Behavior Science** (*Controlled Research*)
- **Education** (*Outcome Research*)
- **Criminal Justice** (*Recidivism Research*)

Need to Integrate Separate Disciplines

- **Work** together in partnership
- **Learn** each other's language, methods, & strategies
- **Integrate** . each other's complementary strengths
- **Create** . . . a new Violence Prevention Paradigm
 - Greater than the sum of its parts
 - Build a bridge between 2 best types of knowledge:
Evidence from research & **Wisdom** of practice

Build a Bridge

Between our 2 Best Types of Knowledge

Evidence
from Research



Wisdom
of Practice

3. Breakthroughs:

First National Agenda for Violence Prevention (1992)

1. Build an **infrastructure** for preventing violence
2. Reduce **firearm** violence
3. Reduce violence associated with **alcohol & other drugs**
4. Reduce **childhood experiences** that lead to violence

Slaby, R.G. (1992). The prevention of youth violence. Testimony presented to the U.S. Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs.
Washington, D.C.: *Congressional Record*, March 31.

Violence Prevention Saves Lives & Money

For every \$1 spent on violence in USA:

Only 6¢ is spent on preventing violence
and 94¢ on reacting to violence

Violence prevention programs:

Save \$6 to \$8 for every \$1 invested

Violence prevention funding is “Smart Money”

U.S. Government Accounting Office (1992). Testimony presented to the U.S. Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Record, March 31.

APA Commission on Violence & Youth (1993-4)

- First psychologists to replace “Aggression” with “Violence”
- First reviews of violence prevention for:
 - LGBTQ youth/ Native Americans/ Asians & Pacific Islanders/ mobs/ and policy recommendations for prevention & treatment
- Testimonies from youth in most violent community in USA
- Summary of 50 years of research on aggression/violence in a book entitled “*Reason to Hope.*”

Summary of APA Commission Findings

- Violence is primarily **learned**.
- Violence can be **unlearned** or **not learned**.
- Violence **develops** from early childhood.
- **The earlier** we intervene, **the more effective**.
- **It's never too late** to treat violence effectively
—but it becomes much more difficult
- **Violence spreads to others** if not stopped.

A First Effective Treatment for Adolescent Violence Offenders

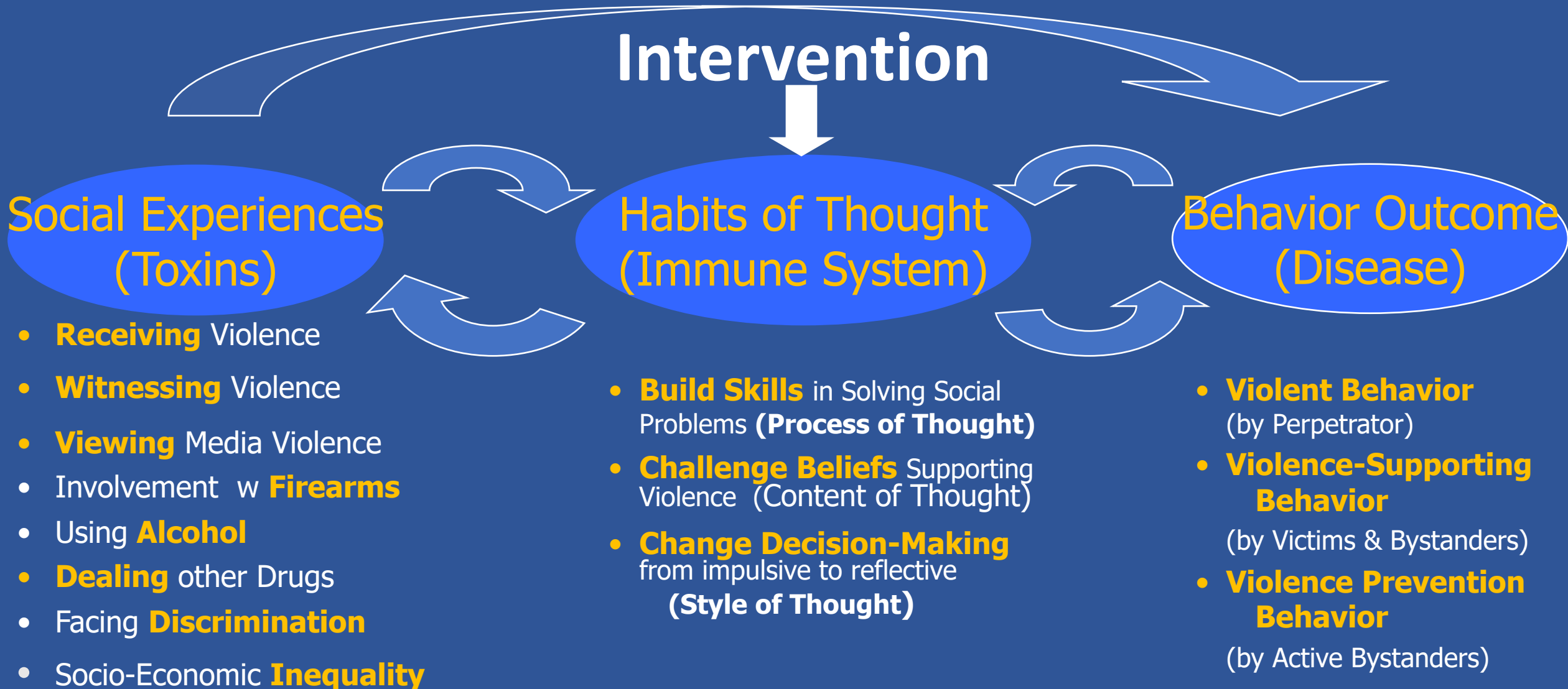
Adolescent Violence Offenders vs. Their High School Peers

- Lacked Skills in solving social problems nonviolently
- Held Beliefs that support violence
- Acted Impulsively rather than thoughtfully

Adolescent Violence Offenders vs. 2 Control Groups

- Changed habits of thought & violent behavior
- Tended to reduce recidivism 24 months later

HABITS of THOUGHT MODEL



Strengthen Immune System to Prevent Violence

Change Habits of Thought (Cognitive Mediators) by —

- **Building Skills** in Solving Social Problems Nonviolently
Process of Thought (How We Think)
- **Challenging Beliefs** Supporting Violent Behavior
Content of Thought (What We Think)
- **Changing Decision-Making** - Impulsive to Reflective
Style of Thought (Connecting How & What We Think)

Aggressors, Victims & Bystanders: Thinking & Acting to Prevent Violence

- First evidence-based program to **prepare bystanders** to help prevent violence
- Designed for middle school students
- Building **Skills**, Challenging **Beliefs** & **Thinking First**
 1. Keep Cool
 2. Size up the Situation
 3. Think it Through
 4. Do the Right Thing

First Federal Peer Reviews of Evidence-Based Violence Prevention Programs (by about 1999)

Evidence of Program Effectiveness Evaluated & Designated as:

Model / Effective / Promising / or Ineffective

- US Dept. of Health (SAMHSA, NREPP) (23 VP Programs)
- US Dept. of Education (OSDFS) (33 VP Programs)
- US Surgeon General (26 VP Programs)
- US Dept. of Justice (CSPV) (7 VP Programs)

Safe Schools/Healthy Students Program (1999-2013)

- **First Funding Partnership** of U.S. Depts. of Health, Education, & Justice
\$2 billion in grants to 365 sites & 13 mil. students in first 14 years
- **First Community Teams** School Superintendent/ Health Director/
Sheriff/ Early Childhood Director/ Evaluator/ & Team Coordinator
- **First Use of Logic Model:** Baseline data, goals, objectives, activities,
partners, process measures, common outcome measures
- **First cross-site meta-analysis evaluation**
- **Findings:** 17% decrease in students involved in violence, over 2-year
period across 86 sites.

Violence Prevention Became International

- **Inter-American Development Bank**
 - First national violence prevention plans in Uruguay & Colombia (1997-8)
 - Cali, Colombia reduced homicides by 30% (in 3 years)
 - Bogota, Colombia reduced homicides by 75% (in 9 years)
- **World Bank**
 - First global conference on violence prevention (1998)
- **World Health Organization (WHO)**
 - First declaration of violence as a major world public health issue (1996)
 - First international school-based violence prevention program (1999)
 - First global status of *Violence Prevention: The Evidence* (2010, 2014)

Progress in Addressing Violence Prevention

- 30 Years . . . Violence Prevention **can work**
- 20 Years . . . Violence Prevention **does work**
- 15 Years . . . **How** Violence Prevention **works best**
- 10 Years . . . Violence Prevention **can be scaled up**
- 5 Years . . . Violence Prevention **working hand-in-hand with political activism**

4. **Barriers:** to Progress in Violence Prevention

- Extremist Gun Culture
- Political Support for Punitive Strategies
- Mass Incarceration
- Organizations that Profit from Violence
- Funding Shortages

Mindset Barriers to Violence Prevention

Overheard after Testimony to U.S. Senate (1992) —

The War on Drugs is Over . . .

The War on Violence Has Begun!

5. Future Directions: for Violence Prevention

1. Men's violence against women (sexual, dating, domestic)
2. Racial/ethnic/religion violence (against Black, Latino, Asian & P.I., Native Am., Jewish & Muslim communities)
3. Violence against LGBTQ (individuals & communities)
4. Radicalized militias (White supremacist, anti-government)
5. Mass shootings (in schools, workplaces, communities)
6. Bullying (origins in early education, cyberbullying, adult bullying)

Prepare Youth to Become the Violence Preventers of their Generation



The Cost of Violence

“The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind. . . . It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. . . . It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers.”

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

Thank You!