Informing Social Policy About Boys at Risk

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The Psychology of Boys at Risk: Indicators from 0-5

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Session take-aways

- Research is an important element to inform social policy

- Research based insights and formulations could result in improving the developmental trajectory and subsequent life options for young boys of color

- Applying research to policy development requires:

    - **Clear** and **timely** communications

    - **Credible** relationships with policy makers and influential key actors

    - **Consistent** and **collaborative** engagement throughout the policy cycle

- Policy implementation provides opportunities for further research

What do you envision as a successful social science research project?

- Expand knowledge base
- Publish in a juried journal
- Present findings at a professional conference
- Receive a public or private grant
- Change professional practice
- Change public perceptions
- Change laws or other public policies

Session purpose:
How to move research findings to public policy

What we hope to accomplish:

- Identify strategies to apply knowledge from research in shaping public policy reforms

- Discussion policy example: Strengthening Head Start to increase public policy effectiveness for cognitive and social development of young boys of color

What is public social policy?

Standards instituted by a governmental agency that establish expectations for behavior or levels of professional performance in:

- Public health
- Education
- Social justice
- Income and wealth distribution
- Overall public welfare

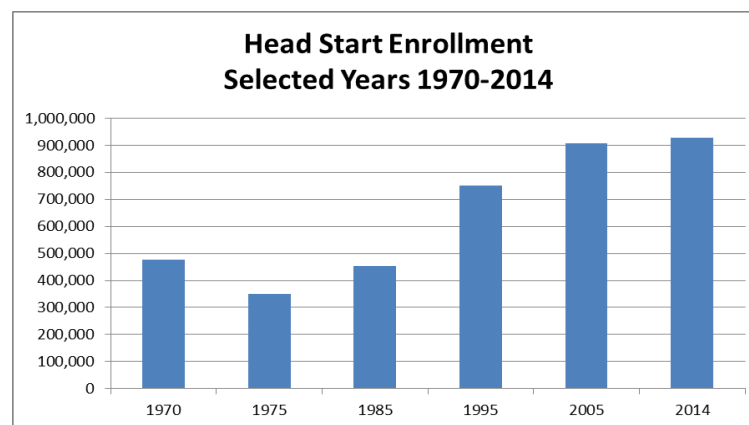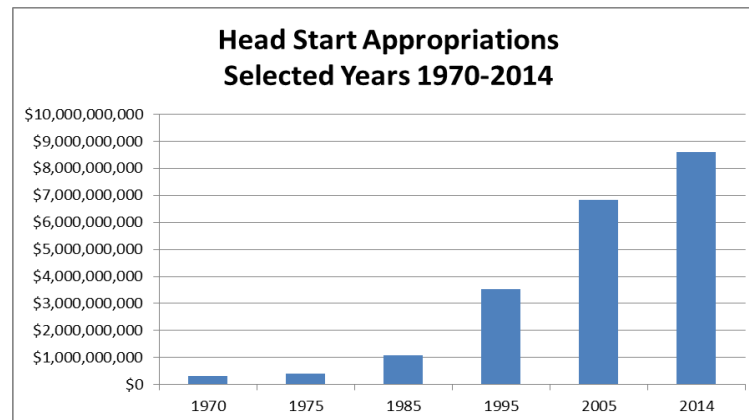# Why is social public policy development important to your work?

- Opportunities to apply evidence based research and best practices for the public good

- Social policies are both dynamic and opportunistic: Policies are continually being modified and refined, often times based on new research and public will

Public Policy Cycle

☆ = Strategic opportunity
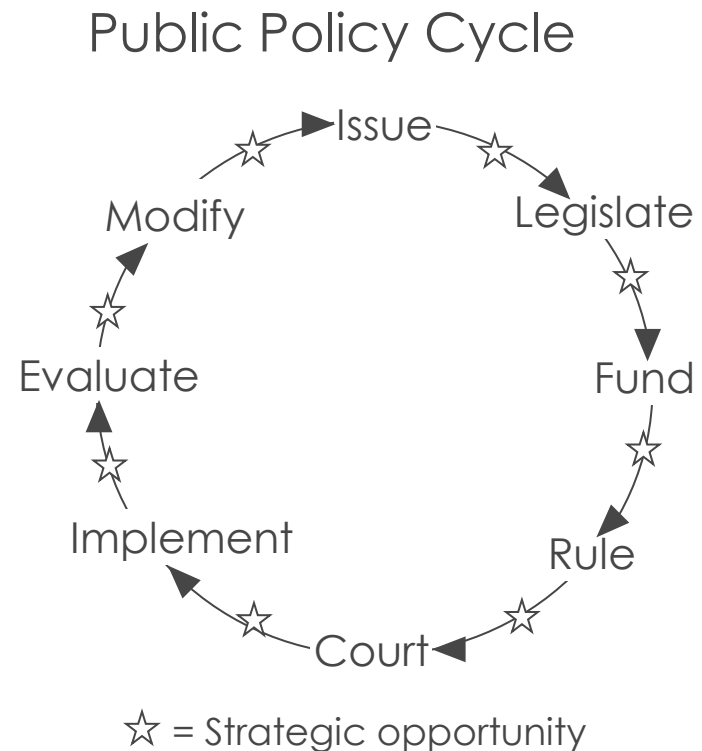
Why is Head Start an example of research based policy?

- 50 years of opportunity for low income children and families

- Adoption and implementation shaped by:
  - Research
  - Positive political climate (War on Poverty, civil rights movement, strong bi-partisan support, continuous annual budget increases)

Data adapted from: Head Start. (n.d.). *FY 2014 Head Start program fact sheet.* Retrieved from eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/data/factsheets

Head Start Appropriations Selected Years 1970-2014

Year	Appropriation
1970	~$300,000,000
1975	~$400,000,000
1985	~$1,000,000,000
1995	~$3,500,000,000
2005	~$6,800,000,000
2014	~$8,600,000,000

Head Start Enrollment Selected Years 1970-2014

Year	Enrollment
1970	~475,000
1975	~350,000
1985	~450,000
1995	~750,000
2005	~905,000
2014	~925,000

Head Start costs (continued)

Head Start Enrollment and Appropriations History

	Federal Funding	Funded Enrollment
1970	$325,700,000	477,400
1975	$403,900,000	349,000
1985	$1,075,059,000	452,080
1995	$3,534,128,000	750,696
2005	$6,843,114,000	906,993
2014	$8,598,095,000	927,275

Proven positive outcomes for boys of color

- Cost effective : $16 return per $1 investment
- Students
  - Outperform average students in early elementary years
  - Higher HS graduation rate: 65% vs. 45%
  - As adults:
    - Higher employment: 76% vs. 62%
    - Higher annual median incomes
    - Higher rate of savings accounts: 76% vs. 50%
- Fewer arrests as adults: 32% vs. 58%

Dave Weikart's High Scope Perry Preschool Study inspired similar studies of the Frank Porter Graham Abecedarian child care program, the Chicago Child-Parent centers and the Nurse-Family Partnership program. Like the Perry Preschool, all of these programs were found to have long-term effects and strong return on investments.

Schweinhart, L., Barnett, S., & Love, J. (2014, December 9). Remembering Dave Weikart's legacy: How we can work together to help children succeed in school and life. *Preschool Matters Today: A Blog of the National Institute for Early Educational Research*. Retrieved from: http://preschoolmatters.org/2014/12/09/

Major changes over the years influenced by research

- Yearlong program (1966)

- Services to special needs children (1972)

- Performance standards (1975)

- Bilingual and multi-cultural focus (1977)

- Early Head Start (1993)

- Professional standards for teachers (1995)

Haxton, B. (2013). *A brief history of changes in the Head Start program.* Retrieved from: http://caheadstart.org/pdfs/history/HeadStartHistory.pdf

Childhood education movement

- Legislation passed in 42 states (various forms)

- Increased access

- Research influenced

- Implications for Head Start program

- State vs. national standards

Head Start reauthorization (pending since 2012)

Major policy questions:

- Continue Head Start as Targeted Federal Program

- Convert Head Start Block Grants to States for early education

- Privatize management and delivery of Head Start program

HS Reauthorization (continued)

Opportunity to change policy based on research to increase effectiveness for boys of color:

- High quality instruction and teacher child relationships as best predictor of success (Barbarin & Crawford 2006)

- Increased teacher willingness to take responsibility for learning (Halverson et al.)

- Highlight assets of young boys (Boykin 2000 and Halverson 2009)

- Proactive steps to promote positive racial socialization of young boys (Mandara 2006)

- Proactively engage boys in individualized early literacy (Barnett 8/19/2011)

- Recognition of importance of high levels of physical and social activity (Nelson, Carson & West 2006, in *Young Children*)

- Increase investments in coordinated programs to for well-being of boys and their families (Tomlin, *EC News*)

- Implement a continuous improvement system tied to an integrated evaluation (Barnett 8/19/2011)

Conceptualizing a policy agenda

- Issue identification – priority policy goals

- Policy scans

- Diffusion of knowledge using social media

Use policy, funding, and incentives to create a more level playing field, quality classroom, prepared staff, integrated evaluation.

— Steve Barnett, 10/2/2015

Conceptualizing a policy agenda (continued)

Social Media

- Enhances the transfer of evidence from the research community to policymakers
- Turns the dial from broadcast to engage
- Provides real time communication
  - Immediacy of insights that can be drawn from social media is a game changer. Much government policy is based on out of date information—yesterday's questions answered tomorrow. Consider the time lag and consequent inadequacy of traditional research to inform policy, and contrast this with the potential value of a broad range of social indicators that are up to date or even real time.

Form coalition for change

- Develop effective relationships with policy makers

- Form coalition for change

Develop mobilization strategy

- Distribute policy briefs based on research and evaluation

- Develop effective message points for policy makers and key organizational and community leaders

- Establish policy advocacy/tracking function

- Brief key policy makers

  - Formal leaders

  - Thought leaders

- Provide legislative testimony

- Send action alerts to coalition members

Implementation of new policy

Oversight role
- Principal function of legislative committees

Assessment/evaluation

- How does implementation/funding of new policies stay on the policy radar of legislative committees and chief executives?

- Does new policy require/fund independent evaluation of newly enacted policy?

- Are public fiscal and program legislative reports available for researchers and interested groups?

Modification of policies – post adoption

Is there a process in place for policy makers, researchers and other key supporter to periodically consider modifications or alternatives to the policy reforms on a regular basis?

- Federal: Reauthorization

- State: Sunset laws/provisions

- Both: Periodic reporting requirements re performance of new policy/legislative authorization/funding of external evaluation

- Circle back to issue identification

Why is all this important for my work?

Photo courtesy of Creative Commons, Seattle City Council, CDSA

I don't believe you change hearts. I believe you change laws, you change allocation of resources, you change the way systems operate. You're not going to change every heart.

– Hilary Clinton
August 15, 2015, at meeting with Black Lives Matter

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