POLICY-INFORMED SCHOLARSHIP:
Forging a role for psychological research in educational policy

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APA Division 15
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Goal: Advocate for educational psychologists to pay greater attention to educational policy

- About me
- Why should we do this?
- How should we do this?
  - Conducting research for (about) policy
  - Translating research for policy
  - Disseminating research for policy
- Activities of the Ad Hoc Policy and Practice Committee
- Q and A
What does it mean to be an educational psychologist in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century? (My Path)

Graduate School (UA)
(Micro/Meso Contexts)

Educational Psychology
- Motivation
- Learning
- Teaching
- Assessment, statistics, research

Post Doc (ASU)
(Macro Contexts)

Educational Policy
- NCLB
- High-Stakes Testing
- School Reform
What does it mean to be an educational psychologist in the 21st century?

- Shifting Worldviews (philosophical paradigms): generalizability v. role of local conditions (quant v. qual)
- Building theory v. influencing practice
- Outcomes vs process
- Simplicity vs complexity
  - “The teaching and learning that we study almost always takes place inside the intersection of teachers x students x task x setting. Because of the immense complexity of what we study, we do not always design our research to explore the full four-way interaction that lies at the heart of the educational psychologist’s interest. We do what scientists often do: we simplify in order to understand” (Berliner, 2006b, p. 6)


What does it mean to be an educational psychologist in the 21st century?
Enduring tensions between research and practice

- Vol. 1 Calfee & Berliner, 1996
  - “a handbook of educational psychology presents a particular challenge, perched as it is between the discipline of scientific psychology on the one hand, and the field of education practice, on the other” (p. 1)

- Vol. 2, Berliner, 2006
  - “Educational psychologists clearly have made important contributions to the study of transfer, memory, learning via technology...classroom management, bullying, group work, teaching thinking...and dozens of other areas. But the scientific work for which we are justifiably proud seems not to translate easily into practice.... Our scientific work often has implications for classroom practice, but does not end up often changing practice” (p. 6)

- Vol 3, Farley et al., 2016, (selected) reflections on the past, present, and future of educational psychology
  - Relationship of the science of educational psychology to the practical use of research
  - The issue of the relevance of educational psychology
  - Changes in the methodologies being used in the science of educational psychology (p. 416)

Handbook of Educational Psychology, Volumes 1 (1996), 2 (2006), and 3 (2016)
WHY SHOULD EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS THINK ABOUT POLICY IN THEIR WORK?

Policy-informed scholarship is a way to bridge research we do and the educational practices we aim to understand, describe, and influence.
WHY? BECAUSE POLICY INFORMS PRACTICE
WHY? BECAUSE POLICY INFORMS PRACTICE!
WHY? BECAUSE POLICY INFORMS PRACTICE!

"Psst, Marjorie, am I allowed to answer the question, ‘Where do babies come from?’?"
WHY? BECAUSE POLICY INFORMS PRACTICE!

Haven't you heard, the state now mandates that students do thirty-five hours of useful volunteer work?
WHY? BECAUSE POLICY INFORMS PRACTICE!

SO, YOU WERE EDUCATED IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM—WHAT DOES THAT QUALIFY YOU TO DO?

IS THAT A MULTIPLE CHOICE, TRUE-FALSE OR FILL-IN-THE-BLANK QUESTION?
WHY? BECAUSE POLICY INFORMS PRACTICE!

NO BIGGIE, BUT IF HE MISSES PROBLEM 9, WE’LL PULL YOUR ACCREDITATION AND YOU’LL BRING SHAME ON YOUR COMMUNITY...

NO PRESSURE, BUT IF HE MISSES PROBLEM 9, YOU’RE OUT OF A TEACHING JOB!!

DAVID, IT’S PROBLEM 9! YOU KNOW PROBLEM 9! RELAX! RELAX!!

THE JOY OF LEARNING
Why should EDP speak to policymakers?

POLICY INFORMS PRACTICE: The educational policy context informs, influences, and directs educational practice we seek to understand, influence, and transform.

■ National

- **High-stakes testing accountability**: How teachers relate to students, how teachers are sorted, assigned, how teachers instruct, particularly with marginalized student populations. (Au, 2007; Booher-Jennings, 2005; Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Nichols & Castro-Villarreal, 2016; Perlstein, 2007; Solórzano, 2008; Wright & Choi, 2006)

- **Special Education**: Standardization vs. Differentiation (RTI); (Figlio & Getzler, 2006; Furney et al., 2003; Nichols & Castro-Villarreal, 2016; 2017)

- **Teacher Preparation**: Preservice teachers worry their training is not preparing them. They learn how to teach, but they know classrooms are often about preparing students for tests. What implications emerge for teacher preparation programs? For the socialization of new teachers? (Barrett, 2009; Brown, 2010; Brown & Goldstein, 2013)

■ State/Local

- Homework policies
- Local discipline policies
- State-defined accountability systems
WHY? BECAUSE QUALITY OF STUDENTS’ AND TEACHERS’ LIVES ARE AT STAKE

And...it is our obligation
Why should Educational Psychologists speak to policymakers?

Garrison, DeLeon, and Smedley (2017), argue that the purpose of APA as a professional organization is dedicated to the “application of scientific knowledge in the interests of human welfare” and as such is committed to “take an active position on any public policy or issue which jeopardizes these fundamental scientific and professional goals”
Why should EDP speak to policymakers?

Jeannie Oakes made a similar call in her 2016 AERA Presidential address when she said:

“For research to matter, that is, to better society and schools, it must escape the ivory tower and engage in the public sphere. The public and policy makers need coaches, guides, collaborators, and translators to make such knowledge accessible, sensible, and usable” (Oakes, 2017, p. 91).
HOW?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
RESEARCH DESIGNS
MAKE THE CASE
DISSEMINATION AND OUTREACH
How?
Through the type of research we conduct

Research Questions
- **Policy implementation:**
  - How do teachers in schools with different accountability structures engage with academically diverse students?
  - How do teachers implement special education policies in general education classrooms (RTI)?
- **Policy effects:**
  - What is the effect of test-based pressures on (novice/veteran) teachers? on students’ long term motivation? On students’ self-regulation strategies?
  - What is the effect of weapons in schools on students’ psychological, emotional, social development?
- **Policy makers:**
  - Studies to understand motivations/identities of policymakers/decision-makers.

Research Designs/Types
- **Mixed methods**
- **Comparative case studies**
- **Longitudinal**
- **Design-based research**
- **Interventions**
How?

National Working Research Groups

- Create working groups in different locations in the US to study policy implementation/impact/outcomes in various locations? How are students/teachers affected? How are policies interpreted? Carried out?

Make connections between our research and the policy context explicit

- JEP: out of 160 articles (randomly selected) from 2000-2015, only $16\% \ (n=26)$ even mentioned policy.
- EP: out of 386 abstracts reviewed from 2000-2018 only $5\% \ (n=21)$ even mentioned policy.
Educational Psychologist

![Bar Chart with years on the x-axis and the number of articles reviewed on the y-axis. The chart shows a decrease in the number of articles reviewed over the years, with a peak in 2010. The chart also includes a legend indicating two categories: "Yes Policy" and "# of Article reviewed."
How?

Strategic Dissemination

- Make it explicit in work
- Write editorials
- Social media
- Direct contact with local representatives
- Individual work with/on school boards
- Participate in programs (e.g., AERA Congressional Fellowship, APA Congressional Fellowship, Education Policy Fellowship Program)
- Division 15 Ad Hoc Policy and Practice committee (with the support of the Executive Committee) is working to provide support and opportunities for scholars to learn how to think about policy research and how to disseminate their research for policymakers.
  - Policy briefs
  - APA Conference Workshop (Friday, August 8, 5-7 PM, Place TBD)
Implications for Educational Psychologists
A call to action

- The evolving educational policy environment has significantly impacted teachers’ professional experiences and practices.

- Educational psychologists are ideally suited to interrogate the intersections of policy-practice-outcomes.

- It seems time to take what we know about teaching, learning, and motivation, and consider how it all plays out within the educational policy terrain that directs what teachers do.

- This is especially critical as our student population diversifies. Educational psychologists can work with local school contexts to understand the policy-directed constraints and affordances that directly impact teachers’ work with their students.

- Edp scholarship collaborations could seek to conduct research in different contexts/locations, share findings, provide important implications to policymakers seeking to understand how policies play out in different locations with different populations and under different conditions. (working groups at conferences)

- By thinking about policy-informed scholarship, EdP can generate research that will have practical significance to practitioners and policymakers.
QUESTIONS?

thank you
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References


Relevant Websites

- AERA Congressional Fellowship: http://www.aera.net/Research-Policy-Advocacy/AERA-Congressional-Fellowship
- APA Congressional Fellowship: https://www.apa.org/about/awards/congress-fellow
- Education Policy Fellowship Program: https://epfp.iel.org/default.aspx