

Bridging Research and Policy: Pragmatic Perspectives and Empirical Needs

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Thesis 1

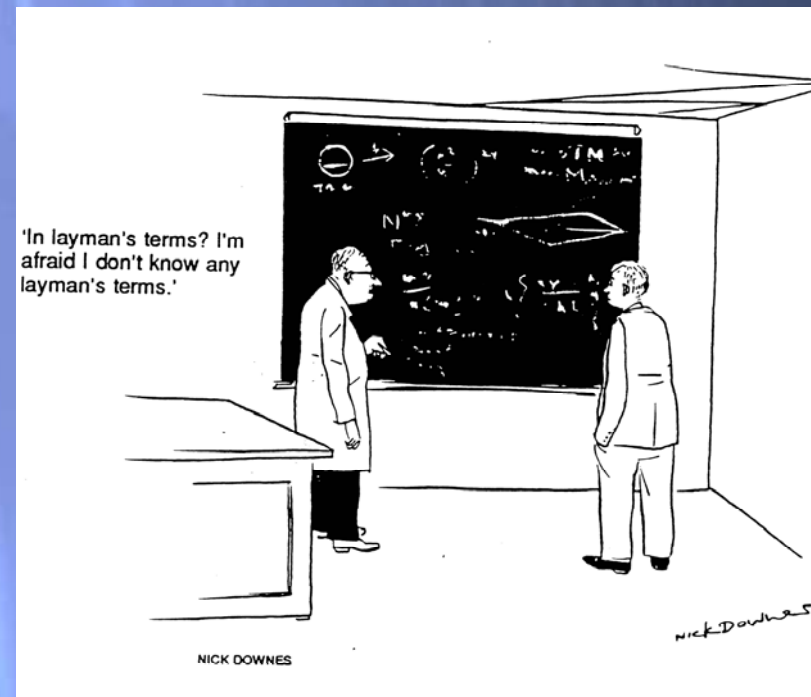
- ✦ Research can (and should) inform policy
 - ✦ How?
 - ✦ Testing policy assumptions
 - ✦ Identifying problems potentially amenable to policy action
 - ✦ Identifying actions which might prevent or ameliorate problems
 - ✦ Evaluating interventions growing out of policy actions

Thesis 2

- ✦ Research is less influential in policy than should be the case
 - ✦ Why?
 - ✦ We don't understand one another's language or culture

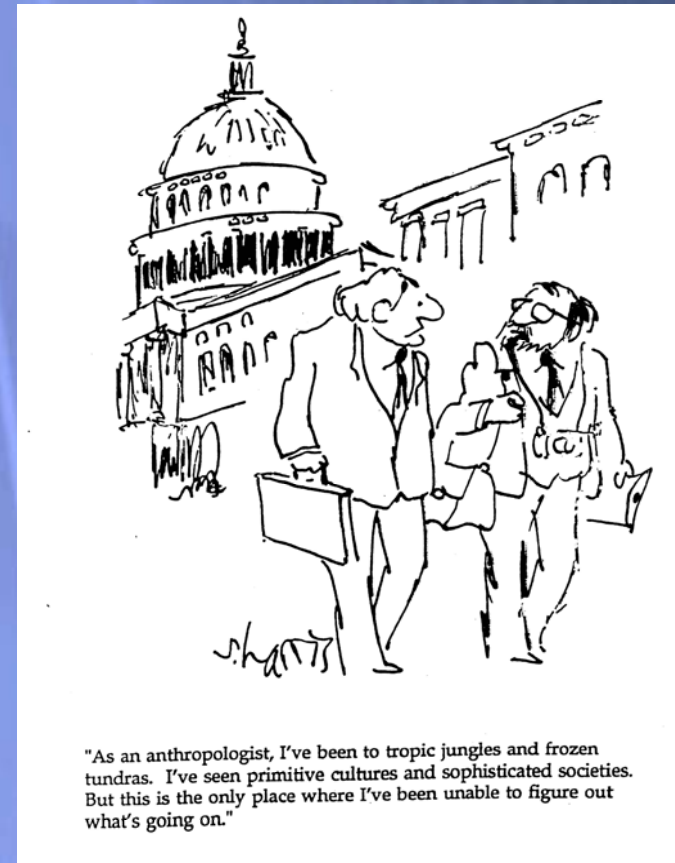
Linguistic Challenges

- ★ Each side thinks the other speaks a foreign language. Both are correct.



Cross-Cultural Understanding

- ✦ And they find our world just as perplexing!



We don't understand one another's
language or culture

✦ What to do?

- ✦ Study the language and culture of policymakers
- ✦ Try to communicate using our common language--English

Thesis 2

- ✦ Research is less influential in policy than should be the case
 - ✦ Why?
 - ✦ Lack of understanding of the actual nature of policy problems

Lack of understanding of the actual nature of policy problems

✦ What to do?

- ✦ Pay closer attention to policy debates on issues related to our research
- ✦ Talk with policymakers while you are framing your research questions

Thesis 2

- ✦ Research is less influential in policy than should be the case
 - ✦ Why?
 - ✦ Poor fit between research and policy options

Poor fit between research and policy options

- ✦ What to do?

- ✦ Talk with practitioners and policymakers about the realistic boundaries of possible interventions

Thesis 2

- ✦ Research is less influential in policy than should be the case
 - ✦ Why?
 - ✦ Our timing is frequently off

Academic vs Policy Time

<i>Research projects</i>	<i>Policy decisions</i>
Take years	The bill is being reauthorized this year
Have to wait on peer review	We're voting next week
The findings will be published soon	We voted on it last May

Our timing is frequently off

- ✦ What to do?
 - ✦ Timing problems are sometimes unavoidable, but...
 - ✦ Pay attention to the legislative agenda
 - ✦ Try to anticipate
 - ✦ Be ready to report “old” findings when they become relevant

Thesis 2

- ✦ Research is less influential in policy than should be the case
 - ✦ Why?
 - ✦ The policy process is political and, usually, adversarial

The policy process is political and,
usually, adversarial

✦ What to do?

✦ The best defense is:

✦ High-quality research...

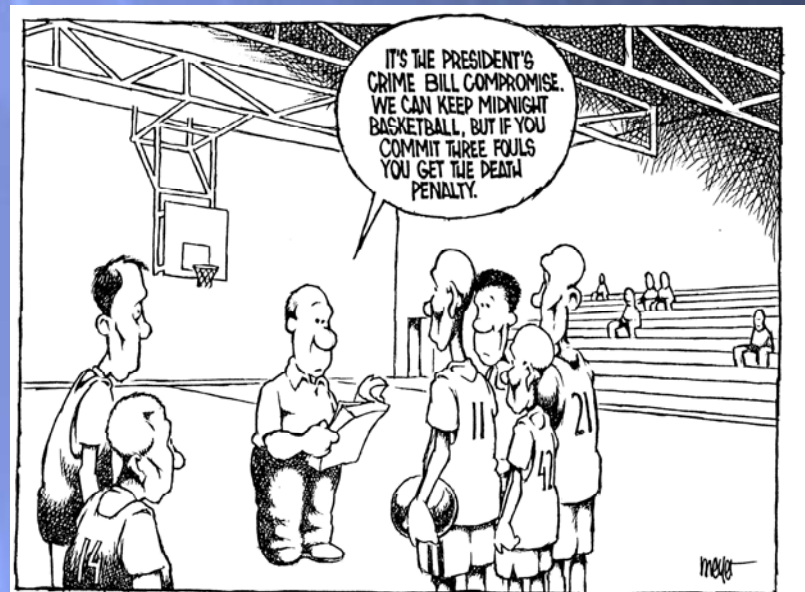
✦ Presented honestly

✦ Talk in advance with the adversaries

✦ Feel free to discuss policy options but
consider avoiding policy advocacy

Strange Outcomes

- ★ Predicting the directions policy will take can be challenging!



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Bring Research to Bear on the Research-Policy Nexus

- ✦ Question of when and how research is used by policymakers is understudied
 - ✦ Many case studies
 - ✦ Work by Carol Weiss
 - ✦ Handful of primarily qualitative studies

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✦ Current Research Interests
include:

✦ “Studies that strengthen our understanding of how and under what conditions research is used to influence policies and practices that affect youth’s settings.

- ✦ How do research findings come to the attention of policymakers?
- ✦ Which sources of research information do policymakers view as most trustworthy?
- ✦ How do policymakers evaluate research evidence?
- ✦ How do policymakers determine whether research findings are useful?
- ✦ How do policymakers weigh research findings against other sources of information?

William T. Grant Distinguished Fellows Program

- ★ Goal: To increase the supply of, demand for, and use of high quality research in the service of youth outcomes.

Our model

