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Psychologists in the Policy Arena

Policy Process, Use of Research, Vantage Points, Methods, and Skills

If you want to influence policy you have to begin with questions that policymakers either want or should want answers to.

—T. Vincent, June 7, 2012

This chapter sets the stage for those that follow by providing an overview of the policy process; the use of research within it; and the vantage points, methods, and skills psychologists employ to exert policy influence. The policy process is complex. Having basic knowledge about this complicated process is a precondition for effective policy influence work. An overview of the policy process is the focus of the first section of the chapter, including discussion of the four phases in the policy process where psychologists can exert influence: agenda setting, formulation and adoption, implementation, and evaluation and revision. The use of research by policymakers is not a given in any of these four phases and is of particular importance to the field of psychology. A description of the types of research used and the factors that facilitate and impede their use in the policy process constitutes the focus of the second section of the chapter.

Psychologists seek to influence policy from various **vantage points**, including universities, intermediary organizations, and as policy insiders. The distinctive features of each vantage point are discussed in the third section of the chapter. Across vantage points, psychologists use a variety of methods to influence policy. These methods, presented in the fourth section of the chapter, include serving on policy advisory groups, direct communication with policymakers, courtroom-focused activities, consultation and technical assistance, generation of policy-relevant documents, external advocacy, and use of the media. Some of these methods involve psychologists in direct communication with policymakers and their staff (direct policy pathway), whereas other methods involve psychologists in communication with others (e.g., advocacy groups, media, citizens) who

in turn exert influence on policymakers (indirect policy pathway). Furthermore, the methods vary in the extent to which the underlying mechanism of influence relies on education, guidance, persuasion, or pressure.

Regardless of vantage point and method, psychologists employ a core set of skills in their policy influence work. These include relationship building, communication, research, and strategic analysis. These skills are presented in the fifth section of the chapter. You may wonder how to get started in policy work, and this chapter concludes by highlighting some of the ways.

We begin our journey into the policy arena with a brief overview of the policy process.

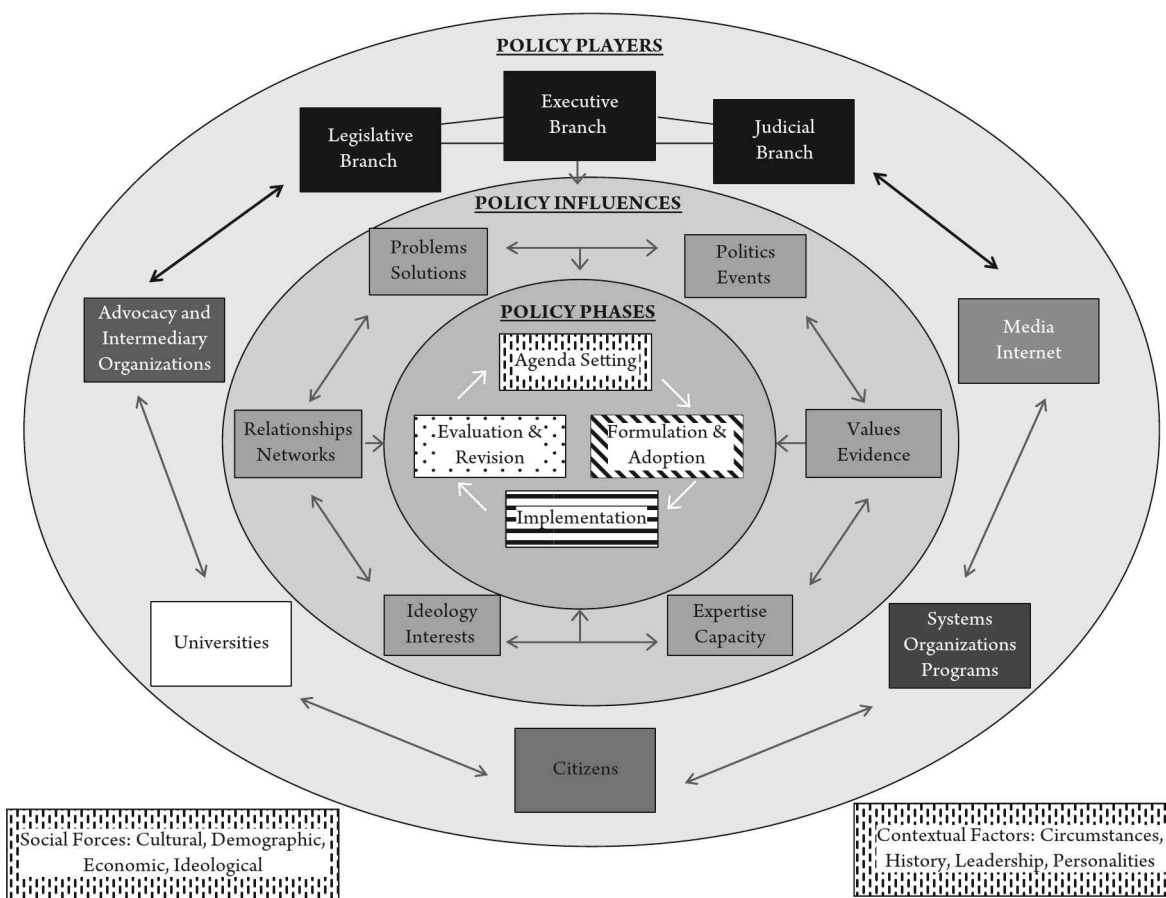# The Policy Process: An Ecological, Systemic Perspective

There is extensive literature in political science and related disciplines examining the world of social policy through varied lenses. Across theoretical and conceptual models, the policymaking process is described as highly complex, comprising multiple phases, levels, domains, sources of influence, and uses of evidence (e.g., Cochran, 2016; Kraft & Furlong, 2015; Oleszek, Oleszek, Rybicki, & Heniff, 2016; Peters, 2016). Figure 2.1 provides a visual representation of the process. The figure is simplified to focus on elements particularly important to psychologists who seek to influence policy. More comprehensive and contextualized versions can be found elsewhere (e.g., Oleszek, 2016).

Phases of the Policy Process

The four primary phases of the policy cycle are depicted in the center of Figure 2.1, surrounded by key influences and then the stakeholder groups involved. The bottom portion of the figure includes several underlying macro forces and additional contextual factors that exert influence on all aspects of the policy process. The four policy phases are:

- Agenda setting
- Policy formulation and adoption
- Policy implementation
- Policy evaluation and revision

These phases are interactive and iterative, and this dynamic and cyclical nature plays out at interrelated local, state, and national levels.

POLICY PLAYERS

Executive Branch

Legislative Branch

Judicial Branch

POLICY INFLUENCES

Problems Solutions

Politics Events

Advocacy and Intermediary Organizations

Media Internet

POLICY PHASES

Agenda Setting

Relationships Networks

Evaluation & Revision

Formulation & Adoption

Values Evidence

Implementation

Universities

Ideology Interests

Expertise Capacity

Systems Organizations Programs

Citizens

Social Forces: Cultural, Demographic, Economic, Ideological

Contextual Factors: Circumstances, History, Leadership, Personalities

olicy players, policy influences, and policy phases.

Phase 1: Agenda Setting

Myriad social issues compete for the attention of policymakers, and very few issues receive serious policy attention at any given point in time (Kingdon, 1984; Kraft & Furlong, 2015). Descriptive models of **agenda setting** underscore the importance of "**policy windows**"—discrete moments when a convergence of factors leads a social problem to rise to the top of the policy agenda. Kingdon (1984) asserts that the convergence of three sets of factors in particular contribute to the opening of a policy window: the problem stream, the policy stream, and the political stream.

- The **problem stream** refers to existing conditions identified as problematic in society.
- The **policy stream** involves policy ideas or solutions that can be applied to various problems.
- The **political stream** refers to political considerations and related macro events that privilege particular problems or solutions.

When two or three of these streams converge, odds are greatly increased that a social issue will make it onto the policy agenda and be addressed by policymakers. For example, in 2015, two South Carolina US senators (one a presidential candidate) and the state's Republican governor called for state legislative action to remove the Confederate flag from the state capitol. This proposal was subsequently approved by the state legislature. This example reflects the convergence of:

- The highly publicized, racially motivated shooting of nine Black churchgoers by a 21-year-old male White supremacist, shown in online images holding a Confederate flag and a gun (problem stream)
- Earlier calls, spanning decades, to remove the Confederate flag from the state capitol (policy stream)
- The 2015–16 competitive Republican presidential primary race and South Carolina's role in it (political stream)

Intrinsic characteristics of a social issue or problem that help attract the attention of policymakers include the particular individuals or groups affected by the issue, the number of people affected, and the nature of the issue's impact (e.g., degree and type of human suffering, economic and social consequences). How the problem is defined and how the evidence is framed are both extremely important. For example, a problem is more likely to rise to the top of the policy agenda if it is shown to be directly related to salient national values (e.g., freedom, justice; Peters, 2016). If feasible means to address a problem are not available, a problem is unlikely to receive consideration by policymakers.

Legislators at the local, state, and national levels have the final say in determining which items will be considered in the form of proposed new legislation. The various stakeholder groups (shown in Figure 2.1) each seek to exert influence with legislators. These groups include the elected officials in the executive branch (president, governors, county executives, mayors), political parties, executive branch agencies, advocacy groups, corporations, the media, human service delivery systems, and citizens.

The policy agendas of elected and appointed executive branch officials are influenced by many of the same groups that influence legislators, as well as by legislators themselves. The **judicial branch** agenda, especially at the highest levels (e.g., appellate and supreme court cases), is less directly affected by the various stakeholder groups given the independence of the judicial branch. Nonetheless, which cases reach the attention of appellate and supreme court justices and are ultimately selected for court action are partly affected by which cases have been brought to lower court levels, which in turn is directly influenced by various stakeholder and interest groups (Howard & Steigerwalt, 2012).

Several types of evidence contribute to agenda setting and problem definition. They include the personal experiences of policymakers, the experiences and perspectives of constituents, statistical data about the extent and nature of problems, social science research findings, and scholarly theory. Sources of evidence related to agenda setting are especially important to elected officials if they pertain to their specific jurisdiction (e.g., their town, city, county, state) and are conveyed by trusted sources (Bogenschneider & Corbett, 2010; Levine, 2009; Tseng, 2012). Trusted sources include individuals and organizations that have established and maintained positive and useful relationships with elected officials. Additional trusted sources include relevant organizations perceived to disseminate quality and politically neutral information.

Phase 2: Policy Formulation and Adoption

Various **policy stakeholders**, including legislative and executive branch officials and each of the nongovernmental groups depicted in Figure 2.1 may directly and indirectly contribute to the policy ideas that take form in a given piece of proposed legislation. Any legislator can submit legislation reflecting potential means to address issues of concern. Bipartisan sponsorship of proposed legislation increases the odds of legislative success. Various forms of evidence, ranging from personal experience to peer-reviewed research findings, may contribute to the proposed legislation.

The policy process includes a number of sequential, yet iterative, steps. What is described here is based on the federal level of government but remains relevant in many cases for state and local policy formulation policy processes as well. Proposed legislation is referred to the appropriate committee by the leader of the

chamber. The committee chairs, from the majority party, have great power in de-ciding if and when a proposed policy will be reviewed by committee members. Extensive policy formulation occurs prior to the time the legislation is formally submitted, and the process continues in committee for the small subset of pro-posed bills that are taken up. Lobbyists, constituents, and various experts meet with legislators, and especially with their staff, to contribute ideas and perspec-tives related to possible revisions to the proposed legislation. Hearings may be held where selected experts are asked to testify. Legislators on the committee consider various proposed changes, and, if negotiation is successful and the ma-jority of members vote affirmatively, the proposed legislation moves to the full chamber for discussion and a vote on the floor. If the legislation passes both cham-bers, with any differences reconciled in a joint committee, it is then up to the chief executive (e.g., president) to sign the legislation into law or to veto it.

Many factors contribute to legislator voting behaviors on a given piece of legislation, including personal values and experiences, evidence related to the legislation's perceived benefits and costs, the position taken on the issue by the legislator's political party, prior deals made to secure support, and how one's vote will be viewed by various stakeholder groups. Constituents and interest groups who contribute money and resources toward re-election are especially impor-tant stakeholders (Oleszek, 2016). If research exists that is directly relevant to the proposed legislation, it may be one among many factors that influence how a legislator votes. Research may be especially likely to play an influential role on issues that are relatively noncontroversial, such as aging issues and child welfare. Influential research knowledge often bears directly on key technical issues or con-tributes compelling evidence, for example, concerning the cost–benefit ratio as-sociated with a particular piece of policy change. Legislation that emerges often differs considerably from that initially submitted due to negotiation and compro-mise resulting from different perspectives along with cost and feasibility concerns (Oleszek, 2016; Peters, 2016).

The **incrementalism framework** asserts that only small-scale changes tend to occur at a given time in the policy arena. This may be due to resistance to more far-reaching, comprehensive change on the part of stakeholder groups with a vested interest in the current policy (whether related to power, profit, or ideology). Lack of agreement on the nature of the problem and preferred solutions and the inher-ently paradoxical nature of major social problems (i.e., equally valid but opposing social values or principles at play) require compromises to be made at the expense of more comprehensive or transformative changes. Similarly, the distribution of power between the legislative chambers and between the legislative and execu-tive branches contribute to the norm of incremental rather than transformative policy change (Oleszek, 2016; Peters, 2016).

The **advocacy-coalition framework**, in contrast, provides a perspective on the policy process that accounts for the occasional, far-reaching change that occurs

on contentious social issues. According to this perspective, it is the emergence of new coalitions among interest groups, experts, and political parties that allows such far-reaching change. For example, many typically unaligned groups joined forces to support passage of the Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA or Obamacare), including liberal progressive groups (e.g., consumer groups, unions, civil rights groups) and varied healthcare stakeholder groups (health insurers, doctors, the pharmaceutical industry, and hospital associations; Kirsch, 2013). According to the advocacy-coalition framework, the current equilibrium is punctuated by such new coalitions. After the significant change has occurred, however, a new status quo emerges, which once again makes fundamental change unlikely until the next transformation in the constitution of the advocacy coalition.

The executive and judicial branches also directly formulate and adopt policy. For example, the president may offer executive orders that do not require Congressional approval, and numerous consequential policy decisions are made by executive branch agencies in specifying how enacted legislation will be implemented. Supreme Court decisions determine the constitutionality of existing legislation and how contested laws are to be interpreted. Supreme Court decisions on social issues such as school desegregation, affirmative action, gender and race discrimination, and gay rights represent major policy changes, both at national and state levels. Advocacy groups and professional organizations often seek to influence court decisions by filing briefs that summarize research and provide interpretative frameworks that are relevant to important court cases (Levine, Wallach, & Levine, 2007).

Phase 3: Policy Implementation

Policy as adopted is distinct from policy as implemented. Implementation is a complicated process involving many actors at many levels. When legislatures pass laws, the implementation of policy typically falls first into the hands of executive branch agencies. These agencies devise the specific rules, regulations, and the many operational details of the laws passed. In many cases, the executive branch selects specific programs to develop and/or fund that ultimately lead to operationalizing the laws. There is extensive literature on implementation challenges that occur within executive branch agencies, including issues of turf, power, ideology, inadequate communication, and bureaucratic ineptitude. In addition, there will likely be multiple levels and layers of executive branch agencies involved spanning a number of departments and various levels of government (e.g., city, county, state, national). One recent and widely known implementation challenge involved the inability of the federal website developed for the ACA to handle millions of users when the website was launched, leading to an ineffective (and politically costly) start to enrollment of the previously uninsured.

Ultimately, in many cases, local education, health, human service, social welfare, and other organizations deliver government-funded or regulated services and programs to citizens with little if any day-to-day oversight from legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. Thus, these local organizations often make critical policy choices even if they are not explicitly labeled as such (e.g., how a university takes into account applicants' race/ethnicity in deciding who to admit). There is a growing literature detailing the facilitators of and challenges to successful implementation at the level of local organizations and delivery systems (Durlak, 2013; Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Hall & Hord, 2006; Hodges & Ferreira, 2013; Honig, 2006; Mihalic & Irwin, 2003). Challenges include resistance to change, limited organizational capacity (e.g., resources and staff), insufficient training and supervision, battles over turf and priorities, difficulty adapting new policies and government-funded initiatives to local contexts and populations, and, more generally, failure to obtain "buy-in" and commitment at the local level.

Many case studies have documented implementation problems in major national social policies ranging from school desegregation and the war on poverty to the rollout of the ACA, as noted earlier. Politics, economics, power dynamics, organizational dysfunction, and myriad other factors at multiple levels of complex systems serve as barriers to successful implementation. Given inadequate implementation, it is difficult to determine whether social programs are ineffective because of limitations in the policy solution itself or due to the inadequate implementation. Indeed, the enhanced focus on government funding of evidence-based programs in recent years belies the fact that programs shown to be effective under conditions where they were carefully and fully implemented on a small, local scale may not similarly prove effective when "scaled up" and implemented as part of the local, state, or federal government implementation systems.

Phase 4: Policy Evaluation and Revision

Historically, evaluation of governmental social policies has been based on whether the allocated funds were spent as intended and whether specified activities occurred. In recent decades, there has been greater focus on results accountability, in which outcomes of the policy are examined in some fashion. Data systems and internal data analysis capacities have been enhanced at all levels, ranging from local community agencies to state and federal executive branch agencies. Nonetheless, in many cases, available outcome indicators lack sufficient reliability and validity and cannot be uniquely or definitively linked to policy activities. Indeed, from a social science perspective, it has been difficult to achieve systematic, scientifically valid means to evaluate local, state, and federal policy outcomes. Nonetheless, increasingly in recent decades, there has been funding included in legislation explicitly set aside for systematic evaluation. In particular,

funding has been made available for legislation pertaining to discrete social programs serving individuals whose outcomes can be compared to others not receiving the program (McCartney & Weiss, 2007).

Of note, in 2009, building upon newly elected President Barack Obama's commitment to enhanced use of evidence to guide social policy, the federal Office of Management and Budget communicated to all federal agencies that federal policies should include programs that are backed by evidence (Haskins & Margolis, 2014). This commitment has further increased federal funding of social program evaluations and more generally increased focus on evaluation of government social policies and associated discrete social programs.

Although the level of resources devoted to policy and government-funded program evaluations has increased over time, it is not clear to what extent the resulting findings contribute to policy revision or termination. Social policies, once instituted, often develop their own constituencies, including those who carry out the program and receive related resources. Government-funded programs are notoriously difficult to terminate even when findings are negative because constituency groups are often effective at influencing elected officials. The decade of negative findings about the substance use prevention program Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) is often cited as an instance of negative findings proving insufficient to cause governmental program termination. The program's continuance—despite the absence of supportive evidence—was due in part to ardent support for the program from the police departments that implement it and their strong relationships with local politicians (Weiss, Murphy-Graham, & Birkeland, 2005).

Policy revision is much more likely to occur than outright policy termination. Required reauthorizations of existing policies represent a particularly opportune time for stakeholders to reexamine existing programs—to consider whether the policy should remain as is or be revised. Nonetheless, policy revision, even if part of a planned policy reauthorization, is best characterized as simply a new round of policy formulation and adoption. Thus, the full range of actors and forces at work during initial agenda setting, policy formulation, and policy adoption will again be present. Evaluation research findings are only one among many factors that contribute to policy formulation and adoption during the potential revision of existing legislation and related executive branch rules, regulations, and operational details. Furthermore, program evaluations that indicate negative or mixed findings may not necessarily include useful information specifying exactly how a major social policy or government-funded program should be modified.

Executive branch agencies that oversee program selection and funding often contract out evaluations of specific initiatives to social science researchers and research organizations. The limited use of the resulting evaluation findings is part of the larger question about research use in the policymaking process, a topic to which we turn next.

The Use of Research in the Policymaking Process

Research constitutes a key resource that psychologists bring to bear on social policy. As noted earlier, however, research findings are but one of the many sources of input in policy decision-making. Systematic knowledge about the conditions under which research contributes substantively to decisions in the various phases of the policy process does not exist to date. This section delineates several aspects of research use in the policy arena (Bogenschneider & Corbett, 2010; Contantdriopoulos, Lemire, Denis, & Tremblay, 2010; Finnigan & Daly, 2014; National Academy of Sciences, 2012; Nutley, Walter, & Davies, 2007; Weiss & Bucuvalas, 1980).

Types of Research Use

It is helpful to distinguish among several categories of research use, including conceptual, instrumental, and tactical.

Conceptual Research Use

Conceptual research use is also referred to as the "enlightenment" effect. In this type of use, research over time shapes a revised understanding of the nature of a problem and of the value of one or more new approaches to address it. This evolving understanding may occur in multiple stakeholder groups, including policymakers, practitioners, citizens, and the media as research findings and related ideas circulate and become part of the zeitgeist. A prime example of a conceptual research effect is the enhanced acceptance of the importance of early childhood education as a social policy priority for children growing up in poverty and its importance for brain development. As Deborah Phillips, one of the psychologists interviewed (see pp. 117–119) observes, "I don't think anyone at this point can deny that an investment in high-quality, early childhood education is going to be of benefit for children and for society. . . . I think the science is really incontrovertible now, and . . . it's an interdisciplinary science. Developmental science alone, without the marriage with neuroscience and economics, wouldn't have begun to have had the same impact."

Instrumental Research Use

Instrumental research use occurs when findings directly inform and shape specific policy decisions. Research that illustrates and highlights the prevalence and negative effects of a problem may galvanize decision-makers to place the development of policy that addresses the problem high on the policy agenda. Studies that demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of a programmatic approach to address a problem may persuade legislators or executive branch officials

to invest substantial funding in the new approach. Executive branch officials responsible for funding research and demonstration projects, for instance, may be persuaded by a new theoretical perspective or a new scientifically derived understanding of the causes of a given problem. A new potential then emerges to develop programs consistent with these new scholarship-based understandings. Findings that show that a current policy or government-funded program does not work may, on occasion, persuade policymakers to terminate the policy or program, or—more likely—to revise it in accordance with the policy evaluation findings. Examples of nurse home visiting programs for new mothers (pp. 64–67) and "housing first" programs for the homeless (pp. 182–185 exemplify areas where empirical findings on impact and cost-effectiveness of programs contributed in an instrumental fashion to policy adoption. As Sam Tsemberis, developer of the "housing first" model (pp. 182–185) observes, "The results from the research combined with the clear and systematic description of the program model and then the demonstrated effectiveness of implementation across a number of different settings and locations by different people drew attention. There were also the voices of key local and national advocates that were spreading the word about the effectiveness, social justice, and cost savings of the model. All that combined added up to eventually influence policy."

Tactical Research Use

Tactical research use occurs when stakeholders use research to justify positions already held, thus advancing courses of action consistent with policymaker interests. The research does not change the policymaker's understanding or policy position, and research that presents alternative perspectives or positions is ignored. Many scholars believe that tactical research use is, unfortunately, the primary mode of research use in the policymaking process. Many legislators, for example, are lawyers. Tactical use in the policymaking arena is fully congruent with the adversarial nature of the courtroom, in which opposing lawyers selectively interpret and contest evidence to make the best case for the position they wish to advance. A number of interviewees for the current volume emphasized the tactical uses of research. For example, Judith Meyers (pp. 126–129) worked as a Congressional Fellow (1982–83) for an influential member of Congress on the House Appropriations Committee. She notes:

> Jane Knitzer's book had just come out [*Unclaimed Children*], a real driving force. . . . That book was an analysis of data about the number of children who have mental health problems and the number who get served or don't get served. . . . I remember being in the Appropriations Committee with the Congressman when we were trying to get money in a line item for children's mental health. . . . I gave him the book. I don't

know that he read it, but he waved it around in the hearing and quoted the key findings.

In other words, the Congressman successfully used research to support his prior position. Meyers goes on to state that the findings "were influential in securing the funding," which suggests that a given set of findings may be used tactically by adherents and yet simultaneously have an instrumental effect on others they are seeking to influence.

Nature of the Policy Issue

The way in which research is used by policymakers may depend on the nature of the policy issue under consideration. For example, highly contested social issues in which personal values, political factors, important vested interests, and/or constituent perspectives are prominent (such as gun control) may leave little room for relevant research to have a persuasive, instrumental impact. On the other extreme, decisions about highly technical, noncontroversial issues free of significant adherents (i.e., food safety) may be especially likely to be influenced by research evidence. A given type of research use, then, may be more likely to occur with some types of policy issues than with others.

Nature of the Research

Research may be more likely to be used instrumentally in policy formulation and adoption when the research is timely, addressing issues under urgent consideration by policymakers at a particular moment. Given the length of time research takes from start to finish, it may be good fortune as much as conscious foresight that produces timely research. Considering how quickly policy issues emerge and then disappear from the agenda—only then to reappear some time later—good fortune indeed seems to be part of the equation. Additionally, foresight, intuition, and an in-depth understanding of policymakers' current and emerging interests and concerns can lead to the selection of research questions to examine that greatly increase the odds of timeliness and applicability of findings.

Research is also more likely to be useful if it supports policy ideas and approaches that are feasible for policymakers to implement. Including strong cost–benefit data is especially important in conservative fiscal times when there is concern about budget deficits and related political resistance to new government spending and to raising taxes. In addition, the quality of the research is important for instrumental use, in part because it must withstand scrutiny by opponents. Quality is also important given the movement in recent years toward selection of **evidence-based programs** for priority funding (e.g., Haskins & Margolis, 2014). Quality may be less important, however, for the tactical use of research. In

addition, policymakers may welcome qualitative findings that illustrate constituent experiences and that, together with compelling statistics, serve to engage a broader audience.

Communication of Research Findings

Generally speaking, policymakers appear to assume that intermediary organizations that interpret and translate research, as well as the researchers who produce it, have agendas that guide what they do. Policymakers more willingly accept findings that come from trusted and credible sources. Furthermore, jargon-free, unambiguous, and brief communication of findings is important for busy elected officials and their staff. Brevity may be less important for policymakers who are executive branch content experts and often social scientists themselves.

Nature of Individual, Organizational, and Systemic Decision-Making

The policymaking process from agenda setting through evaluation and revision involves a multitude of individual, organizational, and systems-level decisions. These decisions are made at multiple points in time. Decisions sometimes occur in formal policy decision-making contexts (e.g., a vote) and often in informal contexts (e.g., during a hurried meeting in the hallway). Research can enter into these decision processes in different ways at different times, making it very difficult to generalize about factors that contribute to the effective use of research. In fact, little is known about the dynamics of decision-making across phases and levels of the policy system. Individual policy case studies occasionally describe the use and influence of research on policy. However, it is difficult to generalize from case studies, in the absence of systematic research.

Scholars have increasingly called for enhanced attention to systematic research in this area. For example, a National Academy of Sciences (2012) report emphasized the need for systematic focus on policy argumentation (i.e., what makes for reliable, valid, and compelling arguments), psychological processes in decision-making (e.g., social judgment theory, heuristics and biases, learning and judgment-making teams, naturalistic decision-making), and systems theory (e.g., complex systems, critical systems thinking, activity systems, soft systems). A set of studies of the use of research in educational policymaking at local, state, and national levels revealed that other areas also need further attention. For example, little is known about how non-research types of evidence (e.g., local service system data, anecdotal accounts, personal experience) are integrated with research-based decision-making. More generally, this set of studies revealed that research is primarily used tactically rather than instrumentally. This tactical dominance implies that values, interests, and local circumstances have a major influence on

decision-making. Thus, enhanced conceptual and instrumental use of research will require increased levels of trust, capacity, and strong relationships among the varied participants seeking to influence policy and practice (Finnigan & Daly, 2014; Tseng & Nutley, 2014).

Despite the formidable obstacles to research use and the lack of systematic research to guide action, psychologists over the years appear to have made invaluable contributions to policy. This contribution has been achieved from various vantage points, using varied policy influence methods. We turn next to three major vantage points from which psychologists have sought to make a difference in the policy arena.

Vantage Points from Which Psychologists Can Influence Policy

Psychologists can seek to influence policy working for any of the stakeholder groups delineated in Figure 2.1. However, three particular vantage points appear especially common: positions within universities, within advocacy and intermediary organizations, and within government (legislative and executive branches). We start with the university as vantage point for policy influence.

Universities

Academic institutions provide faculty and administrators a unique vantage point through which to influence social policy at local, state, and national levels. In the course of their careers, faculty have the opportunity to develop policy-relevant content expertise, generate specific policy-related findings, promote empirically supported policy ideas and programs, work with professional associations and advocacy organizations, serve as policy advisors and consultants, and take on policy insider roles while on leave. Many major social policy developments have benefitted from the contributions of numerous university faculty members, in ways large and small, directly and indirectly, and often occurring across decades of involvement. Past examples include school desegregation (Pettigrew, 2011), early intervention/child development (Aber, Bishop-Josef, Jones, McLearn, & Phillips, 2007; Culp, 2013), women's rights (Fiske, Bersoff, Borgida, Deaux, & Heilman, 1991), and gay rights (Herek, 2006).

Apart from traditional academic departments, research and policy centers on many campuses serve as catalysts for interdisciplinary policy-relevant research collaborations, influential policy activities, and the training of policy-focused researchers and policy practitioners. Examples include the Center for Law and Social Policy (University of Nebraska), Center on the Developing Child (Harvard University), Institute for Research on Poverty (University of

Wisconsin–Madison), National Center for Children in Poverty (Columbia University), and Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity (University of Connecticut). Furthermore, centers explicitly focused on policy training, such as the Bush Centers in Child Development and Social Policy (e.g., Phillips & Styfco, 2007), have made distinct contributions by training both pre- and postdoctoral psychologists who have often proceeded to make important policy contributions (including a number interviewed for this volume).

Furthermore, higher education leaders, who often serve on important governmental advisory boards and become involved in policy-related initiatives, can contribute to enhanced faculty engagement in policy-relevant work (e.g., Cantor, 2012). Universities more generally serve as training grounds for future professionals who serve in various roles in government, in the nonprofit sector, and in service delivery systems. Universities also influence the development of social and civic attitudes and mindsets in our youngest citizens.

This volume highlights the policy work of 50 psychologists who contributed to social policy as university faculty or administrators (Chapters 3, 6, and 7). These examples serve to demonstrate the potential of the university as an important vantage point for efforts to influence social policy.

Policy-Focused Intermediary Organizations

Policy-focused organizations play a major role in the policy process. These organizations include advocacy groups (e.g., Children's Defense Fund); professional membership organizations (e.g., American Psychological Association); think tanks (e.g., Brookings Institution); the National Academies (e.g., National Academy of Science); research, evaluation, and consulting organizations (e.g., Child Trends); foundations (e.g., William T. Grant Foundation); and grassroots community organizations (e.g., People Improving Communities Through Organizing) (Andrews & Evans, 2004; Rich, 2004; Scott, Lubienski, Scott, DeBray, & Jabbar, 2014). Such organizations constitute a source of employment for applied psychologists pursuing policy-related careers, and many offer predoctoral internships and postdoctoral fellowships. Broadly speaking, these organizations can be viewed as intermediary organizations serving as a bridge between university-based researchers and policymakers, between communities of practice and policymakers, and between citizens and policymakers. Four specific types of intermediary organizations that have served as important vantage points for policy influence by psychologists are briefly discussed here: professional membership organizations; the National Academies; research, evaluation, and consulting firms; and foundations.

Professional Membership Organizations

A wide range of professional membership organizations exist in the United States that serve the occupational and/or public service interests of their members

through multiple means, including policy advocacy (Ainsworth, 2002; Andrews & Evans, 2004; Loomis, 2011; Maisel & Berry, 2010). For psychologists, the largest is the American Psychological Association (APA), which represents more than 134,000 members (researchers, clinicians, consultants, and students) and employs more than 500 staff, including approximately 50 psychologists. Advocating for key federal policies and legislation is an important goal of APA and one of the key activities of its staff (APA, 2015*c*). For example, the Government Relations Office at APA employs legislative officers (a number of whom are psychologists) who lobby Congress in the areas of public interest, education, and science. Other professional member organizations that devote resources to policy include the American Psychological Society, numerous specialized professional societies (e.g., Society for Research in Child Development [SRCD], Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues [SPSSI]), and related coalitions (e.g., Coalition of Social Science Associations).

The National Academies

The National Academies include the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, the Institute of Medicine, and the National Research Council. The National Academies describe themselves as "private, nonprofit institutions that provide expert advice on some of the most pressing challenges facing the nation and the world" (The National Academies, n.d.). The National Academies do not receive appropriations from Congress, although many of their activities are congressionally mandated. Contracts and grants from federal agencies are the primary source of funding. The private sector, state governments, and foundations also provide funding to address issues of concern. Numerous reports are produced each year by diverse committees of experts in a given area, directed by a full-time study director. The report process involves systematic review and feedback within each academy. Psychologists employed full-time by the National Academies have directed major reports as study directors, and many research psychologists have contributed as project members and chairs. Influential reports include those focused on early child development, health disparities, and prevention and have contributed over time to the development of government-funded initiatives and programs in these and many other areas.

Research, Evaluation, and Consultation Firms

Organizations of varied types, both for-profit and nonprofit, conduct policy-focused research, evaluation, and consultation. Perhaps the most well-known are the large evaluation firms that receive major contracts from federal agencies to conduct such work. A review of the 186 federal Department of Health and Human Services contracts awarded during 2011–12 reveals that approximately three-fifths (105) of such contracts were awarded to 10 well-known research, evaluation, and consulting organizations: Mathematica (25 contracts), Research Triangle

Institute International (RTI; 25), Abt Associates (13), Manpower Development Research Corporation (MDRC; 13), Child Trends (8), RAND (7), IRC/Macro International (5), National Opinion Research Center (NORC, 5), Westat (5), and the Urban Institute (4) (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Systematic literature reviews, major evaluations, and policy consultations provided by experts, including psychologists, in such organizations have contributed to social policy in areas such as welfare reform, manpower training programs, and international development (Haskins, 2006; Haskins & Margolis, 2014). Thus, these organizations represent important employers for psychologists who are interested in helping to shape policy through research, evaluation, and consultation. Furthermore, there are numerous other for-profit and nonprofit organizations of smaller size at the local, state, and federal levels that are involved in policy-related research, evaluation, and consultation.

Foundations

There are thousands of foundations in the United States, and their funding of advocacy and related policy activities has been increasing (Arons, 2007; Coffman, 2008; Ferris, 2009; Philanthropy Roundtable, 2005). Policy and advocacy activities funded by foundations include coalition building, community mobilization, community organizing, litigation, model legislation, media advocacy, public forums, policy analysis/research, policymaker education, and regulatory feedback. Psychologists have played key roles in several foundations focused on social issues, including leadership roles at the Child Fund, the Kellogg Foundation, the McArthur Foundation, and the William T. Grant Foundation. Specific activities supported by such foundations include development of the Congressional Fellowship programs of APA, SRCD, and SPSSI; support for the Bush Centers in Child Development and Social Policy; and funding for scores of policy-relevant research projects.

Working full-time within each of the four types of intermediary organizations (professional membership organizations; the National Academies; research, evaluation, and consulting firms; and foundations) provides psychologists the opportunity for focused effort to influence social policy. Furthermore, graduate students may find many opportunities for involvement as interns within the numerous intermediary organizations that address child and family issues, poverty, discrimination, health, education, violence, and many other social problems. Chapter 4 illustrates the policy issues addressed by 14 psychologists working for intermediary organizations and the policy influence methods and skills they employed.

Policy Insiders: Working Within Government

Psychologists who work within government possess a unique vantage point from which to influence policy. They work as policy insiders in both legislative (e.g.,

as a Congressional staffer) and executive (e.g., as an executive agency official) branches at the local, state, and federal levels. These policy insider roles may be attained through multiple means, including appointment by an elected official, obtaining civil service employment within an executive branch agency, and successfully running for elected office.

Legislative Branch

Within the **legislative branch**, the most common role is staff member for a legislator or legislative committee. The highest level position within a Congressional office is chief of staff, a position that has been held by a number of psychologists; the most well-known is Patrick DeLeon, who was chief of staff for the late US Senator Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii) for decades, during which time he worked on numerous social issues. Legislative director and policy advisor positions within Congressional offices have also been held by a number of psychologists over the decades. Committee staff, especially those who serve on committees for extended periods of time, develop expertise in the broad content area of the committee and thus can play important roles in developing legislation.

Executive Branch

Many psychologists have worked in **executive branch** agencies, in departments ranging from mental health to education and child welfare, at all levels of government. Perhaps the most well-known is Edward Zigler, who, as noted in Chapter 1, took leave from Yale University to serve as the first Director of the Office of Child Development and went on to develop the national Head Start Program (Zigler & Styfco, 2010). At the federal level, the **Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS) (an administrative agency) and the **National Institutes of Health** (NIH) (a research-funding agency) employ large numbers of psychologists, as do many other executive agencies. Within HHS, psychologists are especially likely to hold high-level leadership positions within the **Administration for Children and Families** (ACF) and the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration** (SAMHSA). In these and related positions, at state and local levels as well as nationally, psychologists have made important contributions to the development and implementation of federal and state policies.

Although psychologists generally do not run for elected office, there are notable exceptions. Most well-known is Ted Strickland (D-OH), who was the first psychologist elected to Congress, specifically to the House of Representatives, in 1992. In 2002, five psychologists, including Strickland, were elected to the House (Thomas, 2004), and currently there are three psychologists in the House. At the state level, in 2002, 16 psychologists won elections to serve on their state legislatures, with 13 elected in 2006 (more recent data are not available). Of special note, in 2006, Strickland was elected governor of Ohio.

Serving as a policy insider provides the unique opportunity to directly shape policy. Chapter 5 illustrates the wide range of policy issues addressed by 14 psychologists serving in policy insider roles and highlights the policy influence methods and skills they used.

Policy Influence Methods

Psychologists employ a wide variety of methods to exert policy influence. These methods vary on numerous dimensions, including policy target (e.g., legislative, executive, judicial branch), pathway (e.g., direct, indirect), and mechanism (e.g., education, guidance, persuasion, pressure). As noted earlier, direct pathways involve communication between psychologists and policymakers (or their staff). Indirect pathways involve communication between psychologists and others (e.g., advocacy groups, media, citizens) who exert influence on the policymaking process. When the primary purpose of communication is to provide policy-relevant information (e.g., the results of research), the mechanism of influence is education; the role of educator is a familiar and comfortable one for academic psychologists. When the primary purpose of communication is to influence decision-making, guidance and/or persuasion will likely be involved as mechanisms of influence as well, involving psychologists in the roles of consultant and advocate, respectively. The use of pressure as a mechanism of influence, involving, for example, mobilization of influential stakeholders, constituents, and public opinion, may not be a familiar or comfortable activity for many psychologists, except those working for advocacy organizations or as political insiders.

Seven policy influence methods used by psychologists are described in Table 2.1. The first two methods are **policy advisory groups** (e.g., boards, commissions, committees, councils, and task forces) and **direct communication** with policymakers (e.g., meetings, hearings, seminars, briefings, conferences). These two methods directly target legislative and executive branch officials and rely on education and persuasion as the primary mechanisms of influence.

The third method, **courtroom-focused influence** (e.g., amicus briefs, expert testimony, expert reports) targets the judiciary branch, involves a direct pathway of influence, and relies mainly on persuasion.

The fourth and fifth methods, **consultation** and **written documents**, primarily target legislative and executive branch officials and are commonly used as part of both direct and indirect pathways of influence. Consultation relies primarily on guidance as a mechanism of influence, whereas written policy-relevant documents rely on education and/or persuasion.

The final two methods, **external advocacy** and **media**, constitute indirect pathways. External advocacy generally targets legislators and elected executive branch officials, using pressure as a means of influence. Media, in the form of news

Table 2.1 **Policy Influence Methods: Pathway Type, Branch of Government Targeted, and Mechanism of Influence**

Activity	Pathway Type	Branch of Government Targeted	Mechanism of Influence
Policy Advisory Groups: Boards, commissions, committees, councils, task forces	Direct	Legislative, Executive	Persuasion, Education
Direct Communication: Face-to-face meetings, seminars, hearings, briefings, conferences	Direct	Legislative, Executive	Persuasion, Education
Courtroom: Amicus briefs, court testimony, expert reports	Direct	Judicial	Persuasion
Consultative Roles: Consultative relationships, technical assistance	Direct, Indirect	Legislative, Executive	Guidance
Documents and Products: Reports, policy & research briefs, fact sheets, publications, tools	Direct, Indirect	Legislative, Executive	Education, Persuasion
External Advocacy: Political pressure, community organizing, social movements	Indirect	Legislative, Executive	Pressure
Media: News coverage, op-eds, letters to the editor, media interviews, news conferences, press releases, social media, websites	Indirect	Legislative, Executive, Judicial	Education, Persuasion, Pressure

coverage, op-eds, letters to the editor, interviews, conferences, press releases, and social media can be used to target any of the three branches of government and involve education, persuasion, and/or pressure as the mechanism of influence. Each method is described further below.

Policy Advisory Groups: Boards, Commissions, Committees, Councils, and Task Forces

It is common practice for policymakers to convene advisory groups composed of content experts to help guide policy planning and decision-making. Such groups

vary greatly in mission, scope, size, composition, and type of evidence gathered and reviewed, as well as in the timeframe of their efforts. They may generate and analyze a set of policy options or make specific policy recommendations, and they generally produce policy reports, including policy "white papers" (concise, authoritative reports that set out government positions). Invitations to professionals such as psychologists to serve as members or to chair policy advisory groups may be based on numerous factors, including content expertise in the given policy area, reputation (both for knowledge and for work reliability and quality), and connections. Advisory groups represent a direct strategy for policy influence, drawing upon expert knowledge and skills to generate new policy options and examine existing ones with the end goal of providing actionable policy options and/or persuasive policy recommendations. For example, the federal Administration on Children, Youth and Families relied on three important advisory panels in the early 1990s to shape an expanded role for research in program planning for Head Start, with a focus on integrating programmatic questions, research, and program improvement (Love, Chazan-Cohen, & Raikes, 2007).

Many of the psychologists interviewed for this volume have served on one or more governmental advisory groups, with seven of these psychologists indicating that their greatest policy success resulted from an advisory group on which they served or chaired. Five of these seven individuals were university faculty. These advisory groups were convened by legislators or elected officials (governors, mayors) or were appointed by executive agency administrators. The two advisory groups created by legislators were the Civil Commitment Standards Task Force of the Virginia Commission on Mental Health Reform (see pp. 209–211) and the Family with Services Needs Advisory Board to the Connecticut General Assembly (pp. 68–70). The three convened by elected executive branch officials included the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Mental Health in Connecticut (pp. 126–129), the Governor's Council on Community Services for Youth and Families in Virginia (pp. 172–174), and the Mayor's Commission for Economic Opportunity in New York City (pp. 77–78). Finally, the two psychologists whose positions were created by appointed executive branch administrators served on the Research Advisory Board of the New York City Department of Homeless Services (pp. 182–185), and the Science Advisory Council for the Office of Justice Programs, US Department of Justice (pp. 213–215).

Direct Communication: Face-to-Face Meetings, Hearings, Seminars, Briefings, and Conferences

One important route to policy influence is through direct communication with policymakers or their staff. Such communication may occur in a variety of venues, including face-to-face meetings, hearings, seminars, briefings, and conferences. The opportunities to communicate may be initiated by the policymaker, by an

individual psychologist, or by an advocacy or intermediary organization. When the focus of the conversations relates directly to policy decisions on proposed legislation or executive branch rules and regulations, such communication represents a direct strategy with the major goal of persuasion. Ten of the psychologists interviewed for the current volume highlight direct communication with legislators as an integral part of their greatest policy success, achieved utilizing one or more of the following methods.

Face-to-Face Meetings

In the role of constituent, psychologists can meet with their elected representatives to share their research or practice expertise as it relates to a current social issue or piece of legislation (APA, 2010; Lee, DeLeon, Wedding, & Nordal, 1994). In the role of research or practice expert, psychologists can further meet with the specific legislators and executive branch officials directly responsible for policy decisions in the psychologist's area of expertise. Meetings can be initiated by the psychologist, by the policymaker, or by an advocacy or intermediary group that is coordinating education or advocacy campaigns on a given issue. Concerning the latter, for example, APA routinely arranges advocacy training and "Hill visits" for psychologists to meet with their elected representatives as part of efforts to influence Congress on specific pieces of legislation (e.g., ACA, APA, 2010*a*; also see pp. 101–104). Finally, in the role of certified lobbyist employed by a membership organization (e.g., APA, pp. 106–109) or advocacy organization (e.g., Center on Budget and Policy Priorities), psychologists work to influence legislators on issues of central concern for their employer.

The direct sharing of ideas, findings, experience, and perspectives in a face-to-face meeting has a number of critical advantages over more indirect forms of communication. These advantages include the opportunity for relationship- and trust-building and enhanced learning through discussion and asking and responding to questions. Written materials such as policy briefs and fact sheets (described later) are often left with the policymaker or staff, as well as personal contact information to follow up on subsequent actions.

Seminars for Legislators

Seminars specifically arranged for policymakers provide focused settings for the presentation of research ideas and interactive dialogue between policymakers, sometimes on opposing sides of the aisle. The most well-known state policymaker seminars are convened by universities affiliated with the Family Impact Seminars (Bogenschneider & Corbett, 2010; Wilcox, Weisz, & Miller, 2005). Legislators select topics of current or pending legislative concern prior to the seminar thereby enhancing the opportunity for research use. A number of instances of new legislation in states around the country have been attributed directly to the seminars

(pp. 70–72). Examples include a state children's health insurance program in Nebraska, a refundable child care tax credit in Oregon, and a bill addressing truancy in Virginia.

Congressional Hearings

Legislative committees regularly arrange **Congressional hearings** to pursue topics in their assigned areas. The topics are discussed across policy phases, from agenda setting to policy evaluation and revision. Participants in these Congressional hearings are selected by committee legislators of both parties. During the hearing, participants will have a set amount of time to present information and the opportunity to respond to questions. The participants provide a written version of their testimony, and these become part of the public record; one or more face-to-face meetings with legislators or their staff may precede the hearing. The extant case study literature presents examples of psychologists who have testified before legislatures as well as guidelines for such testimony (e.g., Francis & Turnbull, 2013; Jason & Fricano, 1999; McCartney & Phillips, 1993). Several of the psychologists interviewed for this volume describe experiences in Congressional hearings as important aspects of their policy contributions, such as in the areas of children's TV (pp. 229–231) and home visiting (pp. 65–66).

Congressional Briefings

Intermediary organizations regularly arrange opportunities for a panel of content experts to share emerging findings and perspectives on important social issues (Melton, 1995). These **Congressional briefings** are sponsored by a member of Congress, approved by a Congressional planning committee, and generally cost several thousand dollars (Research Caucus, n.d.). The briefing opens up for questions following presentations by the panelists. Elected officials are unlikely to attend; instead, staff members usually attend to become informed on the issue at hand. Several psychologists interviewed for this volume either organized or presented at Congressional briefings. For example, while serving as a Congressional fellow, one psychologist picked up an idea at a briefing that she shared with her legislative boss, a Congressperson. The idea called for a technical adjustment to existing requirements for free and reduced lunch eligibility, which resulted in millions of additional low-income children becoming eligible for the program (pp. 149–151).

Policy Conferences and Meetings

An additional means to influence executive branch administrators and employees is through presentation of research findings and policy ideas at policy conferences and meetings for policymakers. These venues are attended by executive branch officials, administrators, research experts, and staff. For example, the Council for

Juvenile Correctional Administrators, composed of directors of the juvenile correctional systems in all 50 states, holds annual professional meetings and invites experts to make presentations and share emerging findings and ideas. Various opportunities where psychologists shared ideas and policy-relevant research findings in the presence of executive branch officials are described within this volume (e.g., see pp. 192–194 and 213–215).

Courtroom-Focused: Amicus Briefs, Court Testimony, and Expert Reports

Key policy influence methods unique to the judicial arena include submitting amicus curiae briefs to state and federal appellate and supreme courts and providing expert evidence or reports (Borgida & Fiske, 2008). Amicus curiae ("friend of the court") briefs are documents submitted by persons or groups who are not parties in the case and are intended to inform the court about their perspectives or knowledge related to the issues involved. Expert evidence is provided by psychologists who meet legal definitions of "experts." In cases when scientific evidence is to be presented, that evidence must be determined "scientifically valid" by the judge (Levine et al., 2007). A written report of evidence (e.g., research findings) can also be shared with attorneys and introduced as documentary evidence, without the expert serving as a witness. Amicus briefs, testimonies, and reports represent direct strategies to influence policymakers. Such information is presented with the goal of helping to persuade judges to make decisions that are supported by extant research evidence and frameworks (Erickson & Simon, 1998).

The historic amicus brief developed by psychologist Kenneth Clark and colleagues is widely attributed to having played an important role in the US Supreme Court decision outlawing school segregation (Pettigrew, 2011). In the years following that decision, a number of psychologists served as expert witnesses in the court cases addressing issues that arose during implementation of the desegregation decision (Pettigrew, 2011). Ten of the psychologists interviewed for this book provide examples of contributions to social policy through courtroom-based methods including amicus briefs, expert witness testimony, and/or court reports. These contributions include research cited in court decisions in the areas of adolescent development and juvenile justice (pp. 93–95 and 132–134), affirmative action (pp. 197–198), eyewitness accounts of children (pp. 91–93), gender discrimination (pp. 86–87, 88–89, and 234–236), rights of the mentally ill (pp. 211–213), and same-sex marriage (pp. 89–90 and pp. 109–111).

Consultation: Consultative Relationships and Technical Assistance

Consultation represents another means of policy influence, one brought to bear both in direct and indirect pathways of policy influence depending on the

consultee and intentions of the initiative. As a direct pathway, many consultative and technical assistance relationships occur with executive branch agencies in need of content experts to provide guidance, training, and input on a wide range of issues under their jurisdiction. Activities may include policy analysis, evaluation of policies and programs or delivery systems, literature reviews, and guidance on implementation of government-funded programs. Consultative relationships with policymakers can be paid or unpaid, formal or informal, short-term or ongoing, at any level of government. Consultation relies on guidance as a primary mechanism of policy influence. Hadley Cantril is a historic example of a psychologist who consulted with a US president. He was a frequent advisor to President Franklin Roosevelt on a range of issues based on information from early national surveys of American public opinion (Pettigrew, 2011). The psychologists interviewed for this volume describe a wide range of consultative and technical assistance relationships including much ongoing involvement within both federal and state agencies, as well as with elected officials. Nine of the psychologists interviewed describe such activities as an integral part of their greatest policy successes, including providing consultation and/or technical assistance to city, state, or federal departments of child welfare (see pp. 186–187), education (see pp. 79–80), health and human services (see pp. 126–129), homelessness (see pp. 182–185), juvenile justice (see pp. 192–194), mental health (see pp. 172–174), social and health services (see pp. 207–209), and as advisors to mayors (see pp. 77–78 and 243–245).

As an indirect pathway of influence, psychologists in university settings develop consultative and technical assistance relationships with a wide range of advocacy and intermediary organizations working in their areas of expertise and interest. These relationships vary greatly in their nature, scope, and duration. They can be initiated by the psychologist or by the intermediary organization. Guidance about the extant research literature or the importance of one's specific research findings or ideas can inform the advocacy or educational campaigns of the intermediary organization. Thirteen of the psychologists interviewed report that working with intermediary organizations to influence social policy was an integral part of their greatest policy success. The intermediary organizations included the American Psychological Association (pp. 112–113, 113–114, 114–116), the National Academies (pp. 117–119, 119–121), advocacy organizations (PICO National Network, pp. 83–84; Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, 124–126; Education Trust, 152–154; New York Immigration Coalition, pp. 201–203; Chronic Fatigue Immune Dysfunction Syndrome Association, pp. 203–205), and the MacArthur Foundation (pp. 209–211).

Policy-Relevant Documents and Products: Reports, Briefs, Fact Sheets, Publications, and Tools

A range of policy-relevant documents and products are developed regularly to influence policymakers. These include reports, briefs, fact sheets, publications, and

tools (practical aids). They can influence policy via a direct pathway when disseminated directly by their authors to policymakers or their staff and indirectly when used by various groups to inform policy narratives, develop coalitions, conduct advocacy campaigns, and influence the media. When policy-relevant documents and products support a given policy position or perspective, the primary mechanism of influence is persuasion. When their primary focus is to present information, the mechanism of influence is educational.

Policy Reports

A wide range of reports are generated regularly by various groups with the intention of influencing policymakers. Some reports are commissioned by government, including the products of the advisory groups discussed earlier. Others are generated by intermediary organizations or university policy and research centers, often based on research findings and offering policy perspectives, guidelines, and recommendations. The intentions of policy and policy-relevant research reports include raising awareness about an emerging issue, redefining how a population or social issue is defined and conceptualized, promoting new approaches for addressing social issues, and demonstrating the value or lack of value of extant policies and government-funded social programs. On occasion, reports are widely disseminated, groundbreaking, and influence governmental officials. Examples of influential reports in which psychologists played central roles include *Unclaimed Children* (Knitzer, 1982), published by the Children's Defense Fund; *Five Million Children*, from the National Center for Children in Poverty (1990); and *Neurons to Neighborhoods* (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), published by the National Academy of Sciences. Three of the psychologists interviewed for the current volume point to influential reports as an integral part of their greatest policy success, in the areas of ethnic and cultural influences on mental health (pp. 81–82), early childhood (pp. 117–119), and health disparities (pp. 119–121).

Policy Briefs, Research Briefs, and Fact Sheets

The preparation of concise documents is widely recommended for effective communication of information and viewpoints to busy policymakers and their staff (e.g., Bishop-Josef & Dodgen, 2013). Such documents can be provided to legislators and/or interested other parties. They can also be included on the websites of intermediary organizations or university policy centers.

- *Policy briefs* often take a position on a given issue, and briefly summarize supporting evidence (for a sample, see American Psychological Association, 2004).
- *Research briefs* summarize a body of literature related to a policy issue without taking a specific position (for a sample, see MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice, n.d.).

- *Fact sheets* provide statistical data related to a social problem.

Many of the psychologists interviewed have written or contributed to policy briefs or fact sheets. A number of them have done so on a regular basis as part of their work in an intermediary organization or policy research center. One of the psychologists interviewed indicated that one of her intermediary organization's greatest policy successes was a widely disseminated fact sheet on teenage pregnancy rates distributed annually over the course of decades at national, state, and local levels (for a sample, see Child Trends, 2011; also see pp. 122–124).

Publications

Although publication in peer-reviewed journals is highly valued in academia, such scholarly products are unlikely to be read by busy policymakers or their staff who prefer more accessible, immediately actionable, and succinct accounts (Rothbaum, Martland, & Bishop-Josef, 2007; Shonkoff, 2000; Shonkoff & Bales, 2011). Nonetheless, policy-relevant findings and policy-relevant concepts published in peer-reviewed publications that are effectively promoted and reach the attention of important advocacy groups and intermediary organizations ultimately can enter into policy discussions. Furthermore, on occasion, scholarly books on pressing social topics can attract the attention of policymakers and their staff as well as citizens and thus contribute to the national dialogue. Examples include Gordon Allport's 1954 book, *The Nature of Prejudice* and William Julius Wilson's 1987 volume, *The Truly Disadvantaged*. The vast majority of the academic faculty interviewed for this book provided examples of the direct or indirect policy influence of empirical findings and generative concepts, both their own and those of others. These research findings and concepts were initially published for an academic audience and then effectively framed, translated, disseminated, and promoted through various means including advocacy and intermediary organizations.

Tools

Policy tools include practical aids and heuristic devices for use by delivery systems in implementing social policies. When developed by experts in a content area, such tools contribute to the evidence-based implementation of policies and practices, helping administrators and staff perform their work in an efficient, standardized, and effective manner. Examples include assessment measures, curricula, and manuals that guide agency delivery of services and programs. Three of the psychologists interviewed for this volume report such tools as integral to their greatest policy influence. These tools include a mental health screening instrument for use in detention centers (pp. 216–218) and heuristic guides for agency administrators and staff to guide, respectively, juvenile justice system program

selection (pp. 192–194) and the implementation of evidence-based teenage pregnancy prevention programs (pp. 218–220).

External Advocacy

External advocacy constitutes an indirect pathway to influence policy by placing constituent or political pressure on elected officials (Cigler & Loomis, 2012; Jansson, 2010; Nownes, 2013). Advocacy is often spearheaded by advocacy organizations. It may involve raising public awareness about an issue or a piece of legislation, mobilizing resources, and garnering experts in the field to support the campaign. Advocacy work may also require extensive networking and coalition building among citizens, powerful individuals, and stakeholder groups; extensive use of media; and citizen advocacy (grassroots lobbying) of policymakers. Different strategies and tactics may be employed depending on the issue at hand, the political context, the level (e.g., local, state, federal), and the resources available. Locality-based advocacy efforts may involve community organizing, in which trained organizers mobilize citizens to take actions of various sorts that pressure officials to respond (Shragge, 2012; Speer et al., 2003). Large-scale social movements represent a particularly impactful form of external advocacy in which citizens around the nation mobilize to challenge and seek change in existing governmental policies, as was the case in the civil rights, women's rights, and disability rights movements (e.g., Graham, 1990).

Some psychologists work closely with advocacy organizations in their policy influence work (e.g., Jason, 2013; Knitzer, 2005). This work may involve sharing of research findings, authorship of organization-sponsored reports, serving on organizational advisory boards and task forces, and working full- or part-time for the organization. Relationships between psychologists and advocacy organizations may be initiated by the organization, for example when research experts are sought on a given issue. Relationships can also be sought out by psychologists looking to help ensure that their research findings and ideas are put to use in the policy arena.

Nine of the psychologists interviewed for this volume describe work with advocacy organizations, citizen groups, and the media as an integral part of their greatest policy success. This work included external advocacy in the areas of abandoned housing (pp. 83–84), campaign ethics (pp. 258–260), early childhood education (pp. 134–136), health and health disparities (pp. 119–121, pp. 129–131, pp. 203–205), prevention (pp. 124–126), and sex education policy (pp. 252–254).

Media

Media of various kinds make up the major distributors of information related to cultural, economic, political, and social life. As such, media inform the entire

range of stakeholder groups, from constituents to elected officials, about events and emerging developments relevant to specific stakeholders and to the larger society. Media are a potent shaper of public attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge (Lee et al., 1994; Rozell & Mayer, 2008; Zigler & Hall, 2000). Specifically, print media, social media, and the Internet are important resources for mobilizing citizen and stakeholder group involvement to help advance policy agenda setting, formulation, and adoption. Media can be used strategically in grassroots advocacy campaigns. The media similarly influence policy implementation, evaluation, and revision, in part based on news coverage of implementation processes and outcomes including accomplishments, challenges, and failures. Politicians and their staff are regular consumers of the news. Groups attempting to influence the news cycle and the framing of social issues and potential policy solutions more generally utilize a range of media-related techniques. These techniques include media interviews, op-eds, letters to the editor or open letters to policymakers, news announcements, press releases, websites, and use of social media (Bishop-Josef & Dodgen, 2013; Kanter & Fine, 2010; Obar, Zube, & Lampe, 2012; Rothbaum et al., 2007).

Media interviews may be with newspaper, magazine, television, or radio reporters or hosts. They may be recorded or conducted live (television, radio, or social media). Tips for conducting successful media interviews are widely available, including the key advice of conveying and sticking to one or two talking points and speaking clearly and succinctly. Gaining the desired quality and quantity of media coverage is enhanced through the cultivation of relationships with individual reporters or commentators. Additional techniques to enhance the dissemination of policy-relevant information, products, and ideas include press releases, news announcements, and, increasingly, the effective use of social media and the Internet, including blogs and websites. Public relations (PR) offices and staff are present within larger government agencies, advocacy, and intermediary organizations, and research and policy centers on university campuses, as well as within colleges and universities more generally. The expertise, experience, and connections of PR offices and staff can enhance the quality and frequency of communications between psychologists (and others) who work in these settings and the media.

A unique tool that seeks to influence policy is the op-ed, an essay form that expresses the opinion of a writer not employed by the newspaper or magazine in which it is published (e.g., see Brownell, 1994). Op-eds appear on the page opposite to the editorial page and have the potential to bring attention to a given viewpoint on a social issue or policy and thus to influence public and policy-maker views. Op-eds or letters to the editor published in major local, state, or national newspapers or magazines are especially effective. Advocacy campaigns often circulate sample op-eds or letters to the editor through the Internet for

use by affiliated citizens and groups as part of systematic attempts to influence policymakers and public opinion.

Psychologists have increasingly focused on the importance of strategic media influence, including careful framing of research findings and related policy ideas, to create a compelling policy narrative (Gruendel & Aber, 2007; Thompson & Nelson, 2001). Nine of the psychologists interviewed for this volume report that effective use of media and the framing of findings were an integral part of their greatest policy success. These techniques include an extensive media campaign with carefully cultivated media interviews (pp. 93–95), meetings with editorial boards focused on state school board policy (pp. 252–254), news coverage in the widely circulated magazine *Consumer Reports* (pp. 232–233), op-eds about emerging policy ideas in the *New York Times* and other leading newspapers (pp. 72–74, 147, and 254), consequential national (pp. 114–116) and local newspaper coverage (pp. 252–254), and use of press releases and radio programming (pp. 258–260). The importance of the effective framing of policy narratives, in particular, is well illustrated in the case of enhanced government investment during the past 15 years in early childhood programs. One central aspect of the policy narrative communicated through the media is that provision of government-funded early childhood experiences for low-income children is cost-effective, contributing directly to healthy brain development and school readiness (e.g., pp. 117–119).

Several of the methods just described are primarily, although not exclusively, used by psychologists who are policy outsiders, working in academia or intermediary organizations (e.g., courtroom-focused, external advocacy). Others are part of the policy arsenal commonly used by psychologists working both inside and outside of government (e.g., direct communication, written documents, media). Several methods are unique to the policy insider role.

Policy Insiders: Working Inside Government

Psychologists working inside government have the opportunity for direct involvement in activities related to policy agenda setting, formulation and adoption, implementation, and evaluation and revision. The extent and nature of the contribution depends, at least in part, on the position held. Existing literature, including case study accounts (several by psychologists), detail the various activities and methods used by policy insiders in pursuing their agendas and carrying out their assigned responsibilities (Haskins, 2006; Lombardi, 2003; Nye, 2008; Oleszek, 2016; Zigler & Styfco, 2010). Psychologists in the roles of Congressional staffers or executive branch officials, for example, routinely participate in a vast array of activities ranging from the seeking and receiving of information to the preparing and adopting of legislation to the overseeing of policy implementation.

Seeking and Receiving Information from Policy Networks and Sources

Policy insiders learn about social issues, legislative possibilities, and related evidence from every group listed in Figure 2.1. These groups include fellow policymakers in various branches and levels of government, advocacy and intermediary organizations, university faculty, service delivery organizations, and citizens (constituents). In essence, psychologists working as policy insiders tend to be on the receiving end of information and ideas communicated via the methods described in the preceding section. As policy insiders, psychologists may, at times, explicitly seek information and ideas from other psychologists with expertise related to a given policy issue; they will also, at times, be the recipients of outreach initiated by psychologists in universities and intermediary organizations. The Congressional staffer who helped to draft the 2010 Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting legislation both sought out and was approached by psychologists knowledgeable in the area of home visiting (see pp. 66–67).

Preparing and Adopting Legislation

Policy insiders working for legislators and legislative committees contribute in various ways to the preparation of legislation. This may include direct involvement in the formulation and writing of legislation, supervision of others so involved, development of political strategies to build support and to disempower opponents, meetings with constituents and lobbyists, and work with external groups and the media to mobilize external support and advocacy pressure. Specific skills include policy analysis, document review, political strategy development, *research translation*, constituent and lobbyist liaison work, and the arts of negotiation and compromise (Maton, Humphreys, Jason, & Shinn, in press). Seven of the psychologists interviewed describe their greatest policy success as their contributions to the preparation and adoption of legislation as policy insiders. The areas addressed include education (pp. 152–154), healthcare reform (pp. 156–158), homelessness (pp. 159–160), home visiting programs (pp. 66–67), mental health parity (pp. 147–148), and welfare reform (pp. 154–156).

Policy Work in the Executive Branch

Executive branch agencies oversee policy implementation and evaluation through multiple, diverse activities. One important policy role is writing rules and regulations, which typically include a process of obtaining input and feedback from multiple stakeholders and experts. Another responsibility, one placed in the hands of those in higher level positions, is shaping implementation and evaluation priorities, including appropriation of staff and funding resources. Such work

will involve sensitivity to and involvement with political staff, on one hand, and hands-on, content-focused work with policy and professional experts including fellow psychologists, on the other. Another major activity is the development, implementation, and oversight of grants and contracts, which staff at all levels contribute to in various ways. Depending on the office and executive agency, such grants and activities may involve implementation of social policies and programs, contract-focused research and evaluation studies, or funding research through traditional granting mechanisms (the latter in research-focused agencies and units). Skills necessary for effective executive branch work include political acumen, leadership and management ability, capacity to work as a team player, and content expertise in one's area of responsibility. Seven of the psychologists interviewed describe their greatest policy success as involving work within the executive branch. Areas of focus include healthcare reform (pp. 162–164), juvenile justice (pp. 170–172), mental health system reform (pp. 172–174), policy implementation (pp. 164–167), substance abuse prevention (pp. 168–170), and teenage pregnancy prevention (pp. 164–167).

Policy Influence Skills

As noted at the outset, the policy system is extraordinarily complex and multifaceted, and psychologists seek to exert policy influence from multiple vantage points and employ multiple methods. Each vantage point, method, and role requires, to some extent, specialized skills. Nonetheless, there are some overarching skills that appear central to effective policy influence work across vantage points, methods, and roles. These skills are relationship building, communication, research, and strategic analysis. Although these skills will take distinctive forms in different policy contexts and additional skills will be essential for activities in a particular context, these four skills appear to represent underlying foundations for effective policy work by psychologists (Maton, Humphreys, Jason, & Shinn, in press).

Relationship-Building Skills

Relationships are critical for policy influence (Bogenschneider & Corbett, 2010; DeLeon, Loftis, Ball, & Sullivan, 2006; Dodgen & Portwood, 1995; Shinn, 2007; Tseng & Nutley, 2014; Vincent, 1990). Given many potential sources of information, decision-makers are especially likely to take into account policy ideas and research evidence when they come from trusted sources. Developing trusted working relationships often involves a considerable investment of time, including face-to-face meetings and network development. It also involves *mutuality*— a willingness to provide, in a timely manner, information or other resources of

value to the policymakers—as well as an understanding of confidentiality surrounding sensitive information. Relationships happen on the policymaker's turf; psychologists must proactively bring information to policymakers and not wait for them to seek it out. Furthermore, psychologists need to respond when called upon. Relationship development skills are central to the full gamut of policy influence methods and activities noted earlier.

Communication Skills

Communication skills, both oral and written, are essential to policy influence (Bogenschneider & Corbett, 2010; Wilcox et al., 2005). Since policymakers must consider a large array of issues in a limited amount of time, the ability to communicate clearly and succinctly (e.g., in a 5-minute face-to-face verbal briefing or a 500-word newspaper op-ed) is a critical policy influence skill. Demands of time and attention similarly explain the need for many written policy products to be concise (one- or two-page briefs or fact sheets), although length may be less critical for some executive branch officials or selected legislative staff who may be highly trained specialists in their given content areas.

Two critical aspects of oral and written communication are policy framing and research translation. **Policy framing** involves tailoring policy ideas and research-based findings to maximize leverage within the current policy debate, ideally providing a compelling, practical, and politically acceptable contributions to the policy issue (Gruendel & Aber, 2007; Shonkoff & Bales, 2011). **Research translation** refers to the ability to communicate complicated research findings in a digestible and useful form to non-researchers (Portwood & Dodgen, 2005). Research translation commonly involves summarizing the main findings of research in a clear and concise manner without use of jargon.

Research Skills

Research skills, along with substantive research expertise in a policy-relevant content area, represent critical assets psychologists bring to the policy arena (Jason, 2013; Miles & Howe, 2010; Levine et al., 2007; National Academy of Science, 2012; Phillips, 2000; Shinn, 2007; Speer et al., 2003). The generation of policy-relevant, high-quality research findings and scholarship in a policy-relevant area contributes to the status as "research expert" and enhances the possibility of cultivating productive relationships with policymakers. This expertise may lead to invitations to speak at legislative hearings, to serve on executive branch advisory committees, or to contribute to amicus briefs and provide expert testimony in court cases.

Two specific research skills of note are **research synthesis** and **critical analysis**. Research synthesis skills are important, given that the integration of accumulated

findings provides a more reliable basis for policy advice than does a single, unreplicated study. The capacity to critically appraise research is of special importance for those in translational research roles who, on the one hand, can select high-quality research studies to communicate to policymakers, and, on the other, critique any low-quality studies cited by advocates on the opposite side of the policy issue.

Strategic Analysis

A fourth overarching skill can be termed **strategic analysis**, which is the ability of the psychologist to critically evaluate social problems and potential solutions and to formulate a plan of action to achieve a policy goal. Strategic analysis encompasses both **policy analysis** and **strategy development** (Burton, 2013; Phillips, 2000; Speer et al., 2003). Policy analysis encompasses a multitude of activities, including generating novel policy approaches for a given social issue, contrasting the benefits and limitations of various approaches, exploring systemic and unintended consequences of proposed policies, and evaluating the implementation and impact of current policy initiatives (Kraft & Furlong, 2015). Policy decisions must often be made when evidence is murky.

Strategy analysis also covers a range of strategy development skills that vary depending on the policy domain and context (Olson, Viola, & Fromm-Reed, 2011). One such skill is formulating the means to gain access to and influence the opinion of a single decisionmaker concerning a specific piece of legislation. Another is generating a large-scale, multiyear advocacy campaign to thrust a new social policy approach onto the policy agenda. Yet another skill is political strategy-making on the part of policy insiders. Thus, skills vary in purpose and complexity. Strategy analysis is often a collaborative process, and it may involve contributions from a range of individuals with different expertise and perspectives.

Getting Started in Policy Work

Readers who are not yet involved in policy work, including graduate students and early-career psychologists, may wonder how they can become involved. Based on the personal experiences and the advice of the psychologists interviewed for this volume, here are practical suggestions for entering into and engaging with the policy world:

- *Participate* in the policy committee of your professional society (e.g., division of APA). Many policy committees actively seek out and desire the help of graduate students interested both in general policy work and specific policy initiatives.

- *Volunteer* for or join a policy-oriented organization (e.g., an advocacy organization) related to your research or personal experience.
- *Seek out* faculty, university research and policy institutes or centers, and practitioners actively involved in policy work, and *ask* about ways to get involved in specific policy-relevant projects.
- *Apply* for APA, SPSSI, or SRCD Congressional fellowship programs, or policy internships in your specific area of interest.
- *Learn to ask policy-relevant questions* through exposure to:
  - policy-relevant coursework in psychology and other disciplines
  - ecological and systemic theories
  - the policy focus and products (i.e., briefs and reports) of advocacy organizations and policymakers in your area(s) of interest
- *Invite input* from policy-informed faculty and/or policy practitioners on how to increase the policy relevance of your research projects (master's thesis, dissertation, grant proposals) early on in the planning process.
- *Gain experience* working in the settings and with the populations of interest to you to understand first-hand the contextual realities that policy must consider.

Summary

The policy process is complex, with many stakeholders and their interests and ideologies involved at each stage: agenda setting, policy formulation and adoption, implementation, and evaluation and revision. This process leaves much room for psychologists to get involved through research and action. Psychologists in university settings, in intermediary organizations, and as policy insiders each employ a myriad of tools and methods to design, conduct, evaluate, compile, and communicate research to influence the policy process. They may choose to directly involve themselves in the process or work more indirectly by informing others and contributing behind the scenes. Psychologists may seek only to educate and provide guidance or, in addition, seek to actively persuade and contribute to external pressure for change. Each role, method, and specific approach has many advantages and disadvantages. What all of the psychologists interviewed have in common, however, is their use of relationship building, communication, and research and strategic analysis skills to exert policy influence. These are skills that students can develop during their graduate education and strengthen and refine throughout their careers.

We now turn to concrete, real-world examples of successful efforts by psychologists to influence social policy.