

Influencing Policy Outside Your Research Comfort Zone

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Challenges

Assumptions

- “I don’t have the expertise”
- “I’m just one person... no one will listen”

Tradeoffs

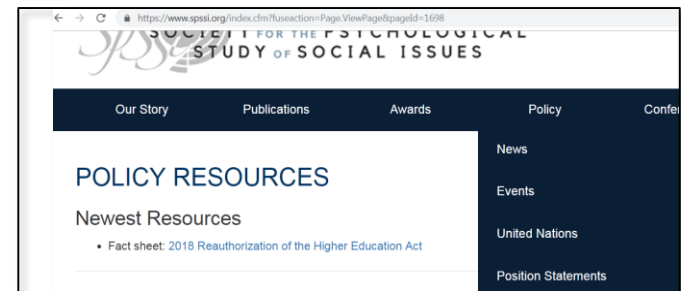
- Professional development/expectations
- Time

Topic: Armed Guards in Schools

- Bloomfield, NJ
 - ~50,000 people
 - 12 miles east of NYC
 - Third most racially diverse school district in NJ
 - 8% Asian, 29% Black, 36% Latinx, 26% White
- Spring 2018
 - Board of Education (BOE) approved budget that included \$550,00 for armed guards in public elementary schools and preschool
 - Bloomfield Families for Sensible Safety (BFFSS) formed

But, it's not my area of expertise...

- No one in the group (BFFSS) had expertise in this topic... nor did anyone creating the policy!
- But, we know how to synthesize research!
 - Reviewed SPSSI's website (policy section)
 - Contacted Sarah Mancoll
 - Literature review
 - Created Fact Sheet
 - Created talking points
- Key point: We're researchers. We know how to review literature and synthesize research.



“But will people listen?”

- Next steps happened organically... and quickly!
 - Needed to raise awareness of the issue
 - Needed to get information to stakeholders

Actions

- Created online presence with links to fact sheets & talking points (website, Facebook page)
- Circulated fact sheets & petitions
- Informal conversations with parents
- Formal communications (email, phone calls) to BOE members, superintendent, elected officials, etc.
- Contacted the media
- Attended BOE meetings—organized speakers
- Organized protests & distributed fact sheets

Did people listen?

Challenges engaging folks with the research and data

- “I’m not a numbers person.”
- “You can find data to say anything...”
- “I just *feel* safer.”

As psychologists, we often understand the mechanisms underlying this thinking.

- We can try to address the faulty thinking (e.g., logical fallacies, etc.)

Tradeoffs

- Impact on career development
 - However, can often be put in promotion/tenure packages
 - Service to community
 - Consulting
- Time consuming
 - Important to set boundaries

Epilogue

- Summer 2018–BOE delayed decision (armed guards would not be placed in the schools in Fall 2018)
- Convinced folks to run for BOE in Fall 2018 election
- Campaigned for BOE candidates
- Succeeded in persuading some BOE members; voted out other members
- Fall 2018 – BOE announced it was no longer considering armed guards in schools; money would be redirected
- BFFSS approached by parents in other communities for support in starting similar action groups

Thank You!

Chelsea Crittle

Sarah Mancoll

Leah Warner

