STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT (AY 2014-2015)

PROGRAM: Forensic and Legal Psychology MA
SUBMITTED BY: Jason Doll, PhD
DATE: 09/12/15

BRIEFLY DESCRIBE WHERE AND HOW ARE DATA AND DOCUMENTS USED TO GENERATE THIS REPORT BEING STORED: All documents and data are stored on faculty computers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Program description from the Course Catalog: This program provides graduates with the skills and knowledge they need to provide effective, high-quality services in a variety of forensic and legal settings. These include probation and parole, victim assistance, mitigation and sentencing advocacy, law enforcement, intelligence, trial consultation, policy, advocacy, and research. To accomplish this goal, the program balances traditional psychological knowledge and skills with a specialized understanding of the legal system.

List all of the program’s learning outcomes: (regardless of whether or not they are being assessed this year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome1,2</th>
<th>Year of Last Assessment</th>
<th>Year of Next Planned Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research and write critically about issues in forensic and legal psychology.</td>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and deliver effective oral presentations on topics in forensic and legal psychology.</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argue the strengths and weaknesses of policy issues relevant to the field of forensic and legal psychology.</td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propose and evaluate solutions to major problems in the legal system.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify strategies to appropriately address ethical dilemmas in the field.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think and write critically about issues in forensic psychology and deliver conclusions in an effective oral presentation.</td>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discriminate between the various types of criminal behaviors</td>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 As part of the program revision that went into effect in Fall 2014, the learning outcomes were updated. This explains why there is an absence of dates for “Year of Last Assessment” for most of the revised (non-bolded) outcomes.

2 Early in AY 12-13, it was brought to the department’s attention that we were assessing the wrong learning outcomes. We rectified this error by beginning to assess the correct learning outcomes (i.e., the outcomes listed in the catalog) in AY 12-13. However, starting in AY 14-15, because of a program revision, the outcomes were modified. This explains why some of the old (bolded) outcomes do not have a date for “Year of Last Assessment.”
Examine justice and legal issues via various lenses, including, but not limited to, social psychology, neuropsychology, abnormal psychology, and developmental psychology and sociology.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2012-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compare and contrast biopsychosocial theories that explain the reasons why people engage in deviant and criminal acts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraise the legitimacy and utility of numerous investigative and assessment techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess the structure of the American adversary system, its strengths and weaknesses, and its relationship to our democratic society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propose and evaluate solutions to major problems in the system, taking into account political and ethical considerations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe how the program’s outcomes support Marymount’s mission, strategic plan, and relevant school plan:

The Department of Forensic and Legal Psychology meets the University’s mission of academic excellence via all of the learning outcomes that were assessed in AY 2014-15. Each of the learning outcomes assessed in 2014-2015 emphasize the importance of writing critically about issues and proposing and evaluating solutions to major problems in the field. Given the careers that our graduates pursue, the ability to analyze information effectively to support a well-reasoned conclusion is vital to their success in the program, as well as in the field.

Turning to the Strategic Plan, the department supports academic excellence because the assignments are intellectually rigorous. In addition, in order to successfully teach and communicate the requirements of these assignments, faculty must possess an extremely high level of expertise and be able to teach the material to forensic psychology students.

Finally, with regard to the school plan, the learning outcomes also support academic excellence and rigor (see explanations as mentioned above). Specifically, regarding “Work to provide excellence in career and program advising:”, department faculty use feedback from the Board of Visitors and current employers to address their advice on what our graduates need to learn and know in order to succeed. Recently, the department surveyed professionals who supervised our students as they completed their internships to identify areas where our students excel as well as areas faculty can address to improve the competitiveness and success of our students.

In sum, the Forensic and Legal Psychology faculty continuously reexamine all of our courses to increase academic rigor. We are finding that more undergraduate programs are offering forensic psychology courses, concentrations or majors, and we are working to make sure each course and assignment reflects advanced instruction, is differentiated from that received in undergraduate programs, and meets the expectations of an increasingly demanding marketplace.
Provide a brief description of the assessment process used including strengths, challenges and planned improvements and provide evidence of the existence of a culture of continuous improvement based on assessment:

The Forensic and Legal Psychology faculty is small, but collegial and committed to intellectual rigor. Our challenges include a small number of faculty for a large body of students, numerous adjuncts, and an increase in the number of forensic psychology master’s programs in the Washington, DC region. We are working to improve mentoring and communication with our adjuncts. One of the ways we are accomplishing this is via the creation of a Blackboard site, which consists of information, documents, and forms which adjuncts need. We also host an Annual Appreciation Dinner, in which we recognize the efforts of our adjuncts. During this event, we also spend time discussing the program and planned/suggested improvements and solicit feedback from our adjuncts. In addition, we are re-examining our curriculum to ensure that it reflects, as accurate as possible, the career opportunities in the field and diversifying the types of electives offered.

Currently, the faculty are examining the possibility of implementing concentrations to reflect the changes in the field and ensure that the program remains competitive and prepares students for the recent evolutions in the work place. In addition to changes within the department’s curriculum, the faculty are working with Graduate Admissions to identify ways to collaborate with regional universities (e.g., George Mason University Law School) and other programs at the university (e.g., the Cybersecurity MA program) to offer a wider breadth of courses to our students to ensure that they are able to tailor their education to the changing needs of our field. We are also working with various agencies and organizations in the Metro DC area (e.g., members of the Intelligence Community, private security and intelligence consulting firms, public defender offices, police departments).

Describe how the program implemented its planned improvements from last year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Planned Improvement</th>
<th>Update</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compare and contrast biopsychosocial theories that explain the reasons why people engage in deviant and criminal acts.</td>
<td>Based on the assessment of this outcome, several modifications will be made to better prepare students’ abilities to use their research and writing abilities to answer a structured task. First, samples of effective and ineffective (unprofessional) analytical argument pieces will be provided as examples of persuasive writing approaches. A second modification will be to encourage students to utilize peer-review prior to submitting their</td>
<td>All of the proposed planned improvements were implemented into the course. Students reported that the writing samples and peer-review opportunity were helpful in both identifying well-written argumentative works, as well as incorporating techniques of good writing into their own assignments. Of those students who utilized peer-review, some reported that it can be intimidating (since their peers become aware of their writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Argue the strengths and weaknesses of relevant public policy issues to the field of forensic psychology

- Assignments, and for offering extra-credit points for those students who submit evidence of a peer review and subsequent modifications to their paper prior to its final version. Furthermore, students will be encouraged to make use of the University’s writing center for assistance. Finally, the directions of the assignment will be modified to highlight the importance of strictly adhering to APA format guidelines.

- In examining the results of this outcome assessment, the department faculty realized that they need to be much more explicit in the teaching of policy development and its relationship to the field. Therefore, as part of the recent program revision, FLP 527 (Psychology, Public Policy and Law...formerly Psychology, Social Policy, and Law) will move from an elective to a required course.

- The rubric for the take-home examination in the Child Victimization course will be revised to more explicitly grade for the understanding of policy.

- On the direct standards the faculty will be discussing how to work with the students to help them see how their coursework and internships relate to the issues of applying knowledge and skills to new situations and solving problems in the field.

- Two of the three planned improvements were implemented. FLP 529 became a required course for students beginning the program in Fall 2014. The take-home exam rubric was modified to more explicitly grade for the understanding of policy (which some students have reported as being helpful in understanding the expectations for the exam).

- Faculty need to have additional and more in-depth discussions regarding how to effectively work with the students to help them see how their coursework and internships relate to the issues of applying knowledge and skills to new situations and solving problems in the field.

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**Provide a response to last year’s University Assessment Committee review of the program’s learning assessment report:** The 2013-14 learning assessment report was accepted as submitted. According to the UAC, “This is a solid report. It appears as though the program regularly reviews student progress and makes adjustments where necessary.” The department’s response – we agree.
Outcomes and Past Assessment

Learning Outcome 1: Research and write critically about issues in forensic and legal psychology.

Is this outcome being reexamined?  ☐ Yes  ☒ No
If yes, give a brief summary of previous results (including trends) and any changes made to the program.

Assessment Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Measures</th>
<th>Performance Standard</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect. | Define and explain acceptable level of student performance. | Discuss the data collected and student population | 1) Describe the analysis process.  
2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable. |
| Direct: FLP 512 (Issues in the American Legal System) is an advanced course in the program which teaches students how courts decide cases and the interaction between legal and psychological modes of reasoning. The students learn the structure of the American adversary system and assess its strengths and weaknesses. The direct measure for this outcome is a 1250 word essay (see Appendix A) where students compare the majority opinion and |
| The standard for this assignment is a score of 90% or above on the assignment for 85% of the students enrolled in a section. | The population consists of graduate forensic and legal psychology students enrolled in FLP 512 (Issues in the American Legal System) for AY 14-15. This course has a prerequisite of 15 credits in the program. The total number of students in 5 sections enrolled in this assessment (FA 14, SP 15, and SU 15) is 89 students. | Results of the five sections of FLP 512 taught in AY 2014-2015 are as follows: 1. FA 2015 Section A (19 students): 11/19 (58%) met the standard 2. FA 2015 Section B (21 students): 18/21 (86%) met the standard 3. SP 2015 (25 students): 22/25 (88%) met the standard 4. SU 2015 (24 students): 15/24 (63%) met the standard |
dissent in a case decided by the Supreme Court, arguing which opinion they find more persuasive.

| Indirect: We are using the question on the Graduating Student Survey which asks how well the program prepares students to “develop a coherent written argument.” | The standard for this measure is 90% of the respondents answering “good” or “excellent.” | The population consists of 27 graduating students answering the 2014-2015 Graduating Student Survey. | Results of the measure are as follows: 81.5% of the graduating students answered “good” or “excellent.” Therefore the standard was not met. |

**Interpretation of Results**

**Extent this learning outcome has been achieved by students (Use both direct and indirect measure results):**
It is puzzling that the results of the essay assignment differed so much from section to section. In the Fall 2014 sections, it appeared that one class had more capable and motivated students. The result for the Summer 2015 section appears to reflect the fact that the class material has to be compressed into a five week period. The material in the class is challenging, and there is quite a bit of reading as well as a number of assignments to be completed. The Summer section was extended from 4 to 5 weeks because of this issue but it did not seem to address the problem adequately.

**Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:**
The ability of our students to write a clear and well-reasoned argument as well as to critique the reasoning of others (e.g., various legal opinions) is crucial to their future success. We have found that some of the students do not come to the program with adequate writing and reasoning skills. It is encouraging that many of our students are able to do well on this challenging assignment. However, it is discouraging that only 81.5% of the students answered on the GSS that they felt the program had prepared them to develop a coherent written argument.

**Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:**
The faculty will be discussing these issues together to develop techniques to help our students with their critical writing skills. Sample effective analytical argument pieces will be provided as examples of persuasive writing approaches. Additionally, students who are struggling will be encouraged to use the university’s writing center for assistance with the second required essay.
Learning Outcome 2: Propose and evaluate solutions to major problems in the system, taking into account political and ethical considerations.

Is this outcome being reexamined?  ☑ Yes  ☐ No
If yes, give a brief summary of previous results (including trends) and any changes made to the program.

Assessment Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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| Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect. | Define and explain acceptable level of student performance. | Discuss the data collected and student population | 1) Describe the analysis process.  
2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable. |
| Direct: In Fall 2014, the department changed “Psychology, Public Policy, and Law” (FLP 527) from an elective to a required course, in recognition of the fact that there are policy aspects to almost any type of employment opportunities our students would encounter. One of the assignments students complete is the development of a policy brief, an argument for a particular course of action concerning a current policy debate. The brief is very different from any assignment the students have ever worked on. The | The standard for the student draft presented for peer critique was 20/25. The standard for the final policy brief using the same measure was 23/25. | The population is the 19 students in Section A of FLP 527 (Psychology, Public Policy, and Law) taught in Spring 2015. | Of the 19 students in the class, none met the criterion of a score of 20/25 for the initial draft. Of the 19 students in the class, 15 (79%) met the criterion for a score of 23 for their final brief. Therefore, the standard was not met. |
brief must be focused, persuasive, and targeted to a professional rather than academic audience, although the material in the brief is derived from theory and research.

The professor gives the class instruction on how to write the brief throughout the semester (see Appendix B) and the students are given some briefs from the semester before to examine.

The following will apply to Section A of the course where the professor is developing instruction and rubrics for the policy brief. During classes 11 and 12 of the semester, the classroom time is used for peer critique of each student’s draft.

The measure used is the original score on a scale of 1-5 (for a total score of 25) given by the instructor according to the following criteria: content, including
ethical considerations; format; effectiveness of writing; persuasiveness; and appropriateness for the targeted audience (see Appendix C)

The students were quite anxious about this very different type of assignment. The instructor did not share the results of the initial grading with the students as the primary purpose of using this outcome was for the professor to develop more effective ways to teach how to write the brief.

This is a mastery learning assignment. The concept of mastery learning was developed by Benjamin Bloom coined in 1968 to describe “an educational method in which each student stays with a certain unit of learning material in a process of assessing and correcting until the objectives of that unit are mastered” (http://www.mastery-
learning.com). One of the students has given her permission to attach her first draft presented for peer critique and the final product after peer critique. Appendix D presents an initial and final draft of one of the students.

Indirect: The indirect measure was taken from the following question from the Graduating Student Survey: how well has the program prepared you to “solve problems in your field using your knowledge and skills.” The standard for this outcome was 90%. The population was the 27 graduating students from the program who answered the Graduating Student Survey. On the Graduating Student Survey, 85.2% of the graduating students agreed that the program prepared them to solve problems in their field using their knowledge and skills. Therefore the standard was not met.

Interpretation of Results

Extent this learning outcome has been achieved by students (Use both direct and indirect measure results):
This is the first time this assignment has been presented and taught in this manner. The results of the teaching technique using in-class peer critique were encouraging. However, even when students had an opportunity to examine effective policy briefs before beginning theirs, they were not able to apply what they saw to their initial draft. The ultimate goal is to improve the instruction so that the students do better on both the initial draft and the final brief. As is often the case when a new assignment or teaching technique is piloted, the instructor’s student evaluations were lower than usual at the end of the course, with some students feeling that the course was not organized enough and the student expectations were not clear enough.

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:
Although the students were anxious, and some actually panicked, about this assignment due to the fact that they had never written anything like this brief, many were quite proud of their final brief. The briefs were displayed at a special event held at the end of the course for peers in the program and outside guests.
A number of the students stated that they would use their brief for a work product in securing internships and jobs. Writing an effective policy brief is a skill that should be highly desirable to many future employers.

**Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:**
The instructor is gathering materials to help the students understand earlier in the course how to write an effective brief. The students were initially anxious and negative about having two classes using peer critiques but ultimately came to view the process as helpful as they saw the dramatic difference in their briefs from initial draft to final.

The instructor has reorganized the structure and assignments in the course to make expectations more clear and has supplied a graphic syllabus to help students visually grasp the course structure.

After more materials are gathered, developed, and piloted, the plan is to share, and discuss, and assess with the other faculty members who teach the course.
Appendix A

FLP 512 Essay #1

1. Read the case *Morse v. Frederick* decided by the Supreme Court June 25, 2007 (the majority and the dissent; you do not need to read the concurring opinions). You may find the best copy by googling the case name and “Cornell.” Reread Porto, pp. 20-26, discussing *Tinker*.

2. Porto argues that a well-reasoned Constitutional decision integrates the following four elements:
   1) the facts of the case that emerged at trial;
   2) social background facts, which are social conditions that have created or affected the case; (What cultural attitudes are involved?)
   3) moral values held in the community in which the case occurred (as well as in the US as a whole);
   4) the rules of constitutional law, as reflected in statutes and prior court decisions.

3. Porto argues that the well-reasoned decision does not depend on:
   1) an incorrect factual determination of what was reached at trial;
   2) a false assumption about relevant social conditions;
   3) a value judgment that the community will surely reject;
   4) a mistaken reading of a rule of constitutional law.

We have discussed these issues in class applied to different Supreme Court cases.

Using these elements, discuss whether you believe that the majority or the dissent has written the more persuasive legal opinion. You do not need to address the concurring opinions unless you find something there you would like to discuss. Be sure you discuss each of the four elements, preferably in separate sections. The paper should be 5 pages (about 1250 words, 50 words either way OK), excluding title page and any citations. Please attach a screenshot of your word count at the end of the paper.
## FLP 512 Grading Sheet

### Essay #1 “Bong Hits for Jesus”

Name ______________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Possible Points</th>
<th>Your Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facts of Case</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Background Facts</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing: Organization, clarity, grammar and punctuation, structure, integration of elements</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Getting Started Writing a Policy Brief

1. Brookings Institution, a distinguished think tank in Washington, defines policy briefs as “short and informative analyses on some of the nation’s most pressing domestic and foreign policy challenges that bring background and recommendations to policy-makers, journalists and the general public.”

2. As the handout states, the brief must be persuasive, focused, professional, not overly academic, evidence-based, succinct, understandable, limited, accessible, promotional, practical, feasible, and action-oriented.

3. The title is important: it must catch the reader’s imagination. This is not like a title for a research paper. You are making an argument.

4. Create a fictional name and address for your organization. As I ask students if we can keep the briefs for display for our future students, please don’t put your name on it.

5. It is important for you to make your brief visually interesting. Don’t put too much text as the audience you are asking to take action will not read it.

6. To get started developing your template, go to Microsoft Word, click on New, and go to such options as Newsletter and Flyer.
Guidelines for Writing a Policy Brief

What is a Policy Brief?
The Policy Brief is a "short, neutral summary of what is known about a particular issue or problem. Policy briefs are a form of report designed to facilitate policy-making" (Eisele, 2006). The main purpose is to "succinctly evaluate policy options regarding a specific issue, for a specific policy-maker audience" (Eisele, n.d.). Policy-makers need to make practical decisions under time-constraints, so the brief should provide evidence and actionable recommendations (Eisele, n.d.).

The issue brief distills or synthesizes a large amount of complex detail, so the reader can easily understand the heart of the issue, its background, the players ("stakeholders") and any recommendations, or even educated guesses about the future of the issue. It may have tables and graphs; usually, it has a short list of references, so the reader knows something about the sources on which it is based, and where to go for more information. Most of the time, the brief has its own "brief"—a one page "executive summary," allowing the reader to quickly grasp the essence of the report (Eisele, n.d.).

In short, "the purpose of the policy brief is to convince the target audience of the urgency of the current problem and the need to adopt the preferred alternative or course of action outlined and therefore, serve as an impetus for action" (Young & Quinn, n.d.).

What are the components of a Policy Brief? (Lifted from Tsai, 2006)

Executive Summary
The executive summary aims to convince the reader further that the brief is worth in-depth investigation. It is especially important for an audience that is short of time to clearly see the relevance and importance of the brief in reading the summary. As such, a 1 to 2 paragraph executive summary commonly includes:
1. A description of the problem addressed;
2. A statement on why the current approach/policy option needs to be changed;
3. Your recommendations for action.

Context and importance of the problem
The purpose of this element of the brief is to convince the target audience that a current and urgent problem exists which requires them to take action. The context and importance of the problem is both the introductory and first building block of the brief. As such, it usually includes the following:
1. A clear statement of the problem or issue in focus.
2. A short overview of the root causes of the problem
3. A clear statement of the policy implications of the problem that clearly establishes the current importance and policy relevance of the issue.

It is worth noting that the length of the problem description may vary considerably from brief to brief depending on the stage on the policy process in focus, e.g., there may be a need to have a much more extensive problem description for policy at the evaluation stage than for one at the option choosing stage.
Critique of policy option(s)
The aim of this element is to detail shortcomings of the current approach or options being implemented and therefore, illustrate both the need for change and focus of where change needs to occur. In doing so, the critique of policy options usually includes the following:
1. A short overview of the policy option(s) in focus
2. An argument illustrating why and how the current or proposed approach is failing. It is important for the sake of credibility to recognize all opinions in the debate of the issue.

Policy recommendations
The aim of the policy recommendations element is to provide a detailed and convincing proposal of how the failings of the current policy approach need to change. As such this is achieved by including:
1. A breakdown of the specific practical steps or measures that need to be implemented
2. Sometimes also includes a closing paragraph re-emphasizing the importance of action.

Appendices
Although the brief is a short and targeted document, authors sometimes decide that their argument needs further support and so include an appendix. Appendices should be included only when absolutely necessary.

What a persuasive Policy Brief should be (Lifted from Young and Quinn, n.d.)
As with all good marketing tools, the key to success is targeting the particular audience for your message. The most common audience for a policy brief is the decision-maker but, it is also not unusual to use the document to support broader advocacy initiatives targeting a wide but knowledgeable audience (e.g. decision makers, journalists, diplomats, administrators, researchers). In constructing a policy brief that can effectively serve its intended purpose, it is common for a brief to be:

FOCUSED All aspects of the policy brief (from the message to the layout) need to strategically focused on achieving the intended goal of convincing the target audience. For example, the argument provided must build on what they do know about the problem, provide insight about what they don’t know about the problem and be presented in language that reflects their values, i.e. using ideas, evidence and language that will convince them.

PROFESSIONAL, NOT ACADEMIC The common audience for a policy brief is not interested in the research/analysis procedures conducted to produce the evidence, but are very interested to know the writer’s perspective on the problem and potential solutions based on the new evidence.

EVIDENCED-BASED The policy brief is a communication tool produced by policy analysts and therefore all potential audiences not only expect a rational argument but will only be convinced by argumentation supported by evidence that the problem exists and the consequences of adopting particular alternatives.

LIMITED To provide adequately comprehensive but targeted argument within a limited space, the focus of the brief needs to be limited to a particular problem or area of a problem.
SUCCINCT The type of audiences targeted commonly do not have the time or inclination to read an in-depth 20 page argument on a policy problem. Therefore, it is common that policy briefs do not exceed 6 – 8 pages in length (i.e. usually not longer than 3,000 words).

UNDERSTANDBALE This not only refers to using clear and simple language (i.e. not the jargon and concepts of an academic discipline) but also to providing a well explained and easy to follow argument targeting a wide but knowledgeable audience.

ACCESSIBLE The writer of the policy brief should facilitate the ease of use of the document by the target audience and therefore, should subdivide the text using clear descriptive titles to guide the reader.

PROMOTIONAL The policy brief should catch the eye of the potential audience in order to create a favourable impression (e.g. professional, innovative etc) in this way many brief writers many of the features of the promotional leaflet (use of colour, use of logos, photographs, slogans, illustrative quotes etc).

PRACTICAL AND FEASIBLE The policy brief is an action-oriented tool targeting policy practitioners. As such the brief must provide arguments based on what is actually happening in practice with a particular policy and propose recommendations which seem realistic to the target audience.

6 Steps for a Competing Policy Brief (Lifted from Young and Quinn, n.d.)

1. **Issue:** examine the issue you will be dealing with. Answer these questions: is the issue general or specific? How general/specific?

2. **Audience:** take your primary audience into serious consideration. Your brief should be tailored to the needs of your audience. It makes a fundamental difference for how you must frame your analysis and your recommendation. Is your audience an individual (i.e. Prime Minister) or an organization (i.e. the Government as a whole)?

3. **Actors:** identify the relevant actors for the issue you are dealing with. This is an essential step, since you will have to analyze their interests in order to make sensible and viable policy recommendations. Identifying the relevant actors is also essential to produce a good assessment of the context and of the interests that are plug into the issue.

4. **Interests:** once you have identified the relevant actors, it is necessary to analyze their interests. What are the actors' interests? Which of the relevant actors have similar interests to your audience? Which ones have different interests? How different? This step is important both for the context part of your brief and for the critique of policy options/policy recommendations. Without a clear identification of the actors involved in the issue and their interests, your brief will result vague, and therefore not useful.

5. **Recommendations:** your policy recommendations should reflect the above analysis. Remember that, according to the issue and the audience, your recommendation[s] might not suggest the best policy, but instead the most viable one. This should not limit your recommendation to just compromise policies. If you want to recommend radical change, you can remember though that such radical action has to be implemented in some ways.

6. **How-To:** the last step is to suggest your audience the way to 'sell' the policy to its public (the public could be other members of the organizations, voters, other parties, etc.). This last step helps your audience build support/consensus to implement the policy you recommended.
Online Resources
You can check the following policy briefs online to serve as your guides in writing your own policy briefs:


http://portal.pep-net.org/documents/download/id/16736
http://portal.pep-net.org/documents/download/id/16737


Submission Guidelines:
1. All submissions should be in MS Word Format (.doc, .docx), 2 pages in length and should be in a 2-column form.
2. Images, tables, charts and graphs present in the layout of the Policy Brief should be submitted separately, i.e., all .jpg, .png, .bmp, .gif, .pdf, etc., should be submitted individually.
3. Check policy briefs from the Poverty and Economic Policy (PEP) Website (www.pep-net.org), particularly those from the Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS) to serve as guides in preparing your policy briefs.
References:


Prepared by the Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS) Network Coordinating Team
10th Floor Angelo King International Center
Estrada corner Arellano Streets, Malate, Manila
Philippines 1004
Telephone: (02) 5262067
Email: celia.reyes@benilde.edu.ph; cbms.network@gmail.com
Website: http://www.pep-net.org; http://www.cbmsphilippines.webs.com/

Guidelines for Writing a Policy Brief | 5
### Appendix C

**FLP 527 Rubric for Grading Policy Brief**

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<th>Criterion</th>
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<td>Content: including political and ethical issues, underlying research and theory sound. Evidence-based.</td>
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<td>Effectiveness of writing: correct grammar, punctuation, APA style in references; flow of writing, sentence structure, organization.</td>
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<td>Persuasiveness: cohesiveness and reasoning of argument. Convinces audience of urgency of the problem and effectiveness of the recommendations. Title grabs the attention of the reader and sets forth the argument.</td>
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<td>Overall, brief appropriate for target audience: written for professionals for academics. Not too much text.</td>
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MITIGATION EVIDENCE: A PLEA FOR EQUALITY

The post Furman v. Georgia (1972) and Gregg v. Georgia (1976) paved the way for a less arbitrary and more consistent means by which judges and juries would determine a capital defendant’s sentence. In 1991 the United States Supreme Court effected a dramatic change in capital sentencing by ruling that the Eighth Amendment does not prohibit testimony about the character of the murder victim and the effect on the murder victim’s family Payne v. Tennessee, 501 U.S. 808 (1991). The decision permits testimony from family members to be given at the penalty phase of a death penalty trial. Virginia has adopted the Court’s ruling in Payne and incorporated it into the state’s death penalty procedure. In Weeks v. Commonwealth the court stated, “Under Virginia’s modern, bifurcated capital procedure, victim impact evidence is probative, which the jury in this case found as a basis for imposing the death penalty. As the Supreme Court said in Payne, “for the jury to assess meaningfully the defendant’s moral culpability and blameworthiness, it should have before it at the sentencing phase, evidence of the specific harm caused by the defendant” 501 U.S. at 825, 111 S. Ct. at 2608. Virginia codified this ruling...In any proceeding conducted pursuant to this section, the court shall permit the victim...upon the motion of the attorney for the Commonwealth, and consent of the victim, to testify in the presence of the accused regarding the impact of the offense on the victim. For purposes of clarification...Victims mean any person who suffered physical, psychological, or emotional injury or threat of injury by reason of the current or former abuse or victimization of the defendant by the victim. The terms victimization and abuse include, but are not limited to, psychological or emotional injury or threat of injury by reason of the current or former abuse or victimization of the defendant by the victim.
CREATING MORE VICTIMS: THE BABBITT FAMILY

Bill Babbit’s brother, Manny Babbitt, was executed in California in 1999. “The police promised me that my bother would get the help he needed. After they arrested Manny, an officer said to him, “You’re not going to go to the gas chamber or anything like that.” I believed that. My mother believed it. We never really thought he would be executed, right up until the last half hour when I watched my brother be put to death at San Quentin. For the rest of my life I have to live with the fact that I turned my mentally ill brother in and that led to his death.”

Desiree Babbit’s father, Manny Babbitt, was executed in 1999. “I have always felt like my father raised me from prison. I loved him and felt his love for me. There were a lot of secrets in our family, and although I knew my father was in prison, on one told me that he was facing a death sentence until I was 20 and the whole family was going to California to beg for his life before the pardon board. I spoke at the hearing and talked about what my father meant to me, and everyone seemed to be listening. I thought we had saved him, but we didn’t. Sometimes I think that if I had understood the truth earlier, I might have been able to do more. I wish people could understand how much it hurt me that he was executed.”

Can’t from A Plea for Equality p.1
NATIONAL STATISTICS ON CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS

“They’re going to kill him because he killed somebody, so when they kill him, who do we get to kill?”
A ten-year-old’s question, learning of her father’s execution in the USA.

- More than 2.7 million children in the U.S. have an incarcerated parent and approximately 10 million children have experienced parental incarceration at some point in their lives.5
- One in 9 African American children (11.4%), 1 in 28 Hispanic children (3.5%), and 1 in 57 white children (1.8%) in the United States have an incarcerated parent.
- Nationally, there are more than 120,000 incarcerated mothers and 1.1 million incarcerated fathers who are parents with minor children (ages 0-17).
- A national study conducted in 1998 estimated that of parents arrested, 67% were handcuffed in front of their children, 27% reported weapons drawn in front of their children, 4.3% reported a physical struggle, and 3.2% reported the use of pepper spray.
- In 2004, approximately 59% of parents in a state correctional facility and 45% of parents in a federal correctional facility reported never having had a personal visit from their children.
INITIATIVES TO CHANGE POLICY, LAWS, AND LIVES

Policy: One Mind at a Time

From a Connecticut news story, “Advocates Rally to Abolish the Death Penalty”:

Not only is it not a deterrent, advocates like Rev. Walter Everett said it hinders the healing process. “I realized that I could not heal as long as I sought vengeance,” Everett whose son was murdered in Bridgeport in 1987 said. He said telling his son’s killer “I forgive you” was the only thing that led to his healing. “I’ve got to be honest. I didn’t feel good about it,” Everett said. “I didn’t like him at all.” Now Everett and his son’s killer often speak together about the difference God made in both of their lives. To kill somebody to prove that it’s wrong to kill somebody doesn’t make any sense,” Everett said. He said one of the most effective ways to change minds is to speak individually to legislators, changing one mind at a time.

Law: Dignity Denied: The Experience of Murder Victims’ Family Members Who Oppose the Death Penalty” (2002). This report released by Murder Victims’ Families for Reconciliation provides an account of the experiences of murder victims’ family members who oppose capital punishment and steps that can be taken to protect these individuals from discrimination based on this opposition. “Dignity Denied” challenges lawmakers, the federal government’s Office of Victims of Crime, and leaders within the victims’ services community to address past and current discrimination and commit to equitable treatment of survivors of homicide victims. Specifically, the report offers model legislation and recommends that victims’ rights laws be amended to ban unequal treatment based upon a victim’s position on the death penalty. It also states that victims’ services should be administered independently, not as part of the prosecutor’s office, and that leaders in the victims’ services community should develop protocols for serving victims’ families who oppose the death penalty.

Lives: Repercussions: While focus of this brief remains the impact of execution upon the families of the condemned, it is important to consider how far the repercussions extend both out into the communities and over generations. Beyond the immediately impacted loss of a family member capital punishment has a huge symbolic significance. Studies have repeatedly show that children’s exposure to violence can predict attitudes justifying their own use of violence.
BALANCING JUSTICE

A Plea for Equality: Execution Impact Evidence

Furman v. Georgia (1972) and Gregg v. Georgia (1976) paved the way for a less arbitrary and more consistent means by which judges and juries would determine a capital defendant’s sentence. In 1993, the United States Supreme Court effected a dramatic change in capital sentencing by ruling that the Eighth Amendment does not prohibit testimony about the character of the murder victim and the effect on the murder victim’s family Payne v. Tennessee, 501 U.S. 825 (1991). The decision permits testimony from family members to be given at the penalty phase of a death penalty trial. Virginia has adopted the Court’s ruling in Payne and incorporated it into the state’s death penalty procedure. In Weeks v. Commonwealth, the court stated, “Under Virginia’s modern, bifurcated capital procedure, victim impact evidence is probative, which the jury in this case found as a basis for imposing the death penalty. As the Supreme Court said in Payne, “for the jury to assess meaningfully the defendant’s moral culpability and blameworthiness, it should have before it at the sentencing phase, evidence of the specific harm caused by the defendant.” (501 U.S. at 833, 111 S.Ct. at 2609). Virginia codified this ruling. In any proceeding conducted pursuant to this section, the court shall permit the victim ... only upon the motion of the attorney for the Commonwealth, and consent of the victim, to testify in the presence of the accused regarding the impact of the offense on the victim. For purposes of clarification “victim” means (i) a person who has suffered physical, psychological or economic harm as a direct result of the commission of a felony...or (v) a spouse, or legal guardian of such a person.

Murder Victims Families for Human Rights

In the shadow... the cruelty of the death penalty is not confined to the prisoner whose life is taken with in the name of justice. Families of the condemned are also ensnared in the cycle of hope and despair that this degrading punishment inevitably breeds. The mistakes and implications of the capital justice system are perpetuated not only on the defendants, but also on their relatives. And in the end, and for no measurable benefit, all the state achieves by an execution is one more dead body and more grieving family members. Larry Cox, Director, Amnesty International.

Inside this issue:

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Psychological & Emotional Implications 2
Children Left Behind 3
Policy 4

Little attention has been given to the children of those sentenced to death or executed, profoundly complicated and socially isolating loss.

Robert Meeropol, 2003

Con’t p.5
Creating More Victims: The Babbitt Family

Bill Babbitt’s brother, Manny Babbitt, was executed in California in 1999. “The police promised me that my brother would get the help he needed. After they arrested Manny, an officer said to him, “You’re not going to go to the gas chamber or anything like that.” I believe that. My mother believed it. We never really thought he would be executed, right up until the last half hour when I watched my brother be put to death at San Quentin. For the rest of my life I have to live with the fact that I turned my mentally ill brother in and that led to his death.” Desiree Babbitt’s father, Manny Babbitt, was executed in 1999. “I have always felt like my father raised me from prison. I loved him and felt his love for me. There were a lot of secrets in our family, and although I knew my father was in prison, no one told me that he was facing a death sentence until I was 20 and the whole family was going to California to beg for his life before the pardon board. I spoke at the hearing and talked about what my father meant to me, and everyone seemed to be listening. I thought we had saved him, but we didn’t. Sometimes I think that if I had understood the truth earlier, I might have been able to do more. I wish people could understand how much it hurt me that he was executed” (Babbitt, 2001, p.1).

Psychological and Emotional Implications

Existing research has consistently connected a parent’s death sentence or execution with major psychological and emotional implications for children and families. Observed reactions include: low self-esteem; embarrassment about oneself or others; lying to oneself and others about the situation; inability to explain the situation to others; anger; loss of appetite (in some cases development of eating disorders); loss of interest in playing; loss of interest in school and poor performance in school, potentially requiring extra help; loss of concentration; loss of sleep; dreams and nightmares (particularly about the parent); bedwetting; hurt in menstruation; and psychosomatic pains. These symptoms are referred to as results of ‘Disenfranchised grief.’ The circumstances surrounding execution leave family of those condemned to death outside the ‘grieving rules’ with no one to validate their pain (Doka, 1989, p.2).

Murder Victims’ Families for Human Rights

- Speaking Out
- Prevention Not Execution
- No Silence
- No Shame
- Right to be Treated Equally
Children Left Behind

- More than 2.7 million children in the U.S. have an incarcerated parent and approximately 10 million children have experienced parental incarceration at some point in their lives.
- One in 9 African American children (11.4%), 1 in 28 Hispanic children (3.5%), and 1 in 57 white children (1.8%) in the United States have an incarcerated parent.
- Nationally, there are more than 120,000 incarcerated mothers and 1.1 million incarcerated fathers who are parents with minor children (ages 0-17).
- A national study conducted in 1996 estimated that of parents arrested, 67% were handcuffed in front of their children, 27% reported weapons drawn in front of their children, 43% reported a physical struggle, and 32% reported the use of pepper spray.

By the Numbers

![Graph showing rising numbers of children with incarcerated parents](image)

Source: Original analysis for The Pew Charitable Trusts by Bruce Western and Becky Pettit, 2009.

The Ripple Effect: Capital Consequences

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<th>FAMILIES</th>
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<td>Stigmatization</td>
<td>Economic disadvantages</td>
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<td>Social Isolation</td>
<td>Breakdown of social networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depression and</td>
<td>Attitudes toward authority</td>
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<td>Chronic Grief</td>
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“Decisions made within the criminal justice system, including sentencing decisions, have ripple effects on other systems on communities, families, and the approximately 10 million American children who have experienced their parent’s incarceration or execution” (Osborne, 2010, p.1).
POLICY

POLICY: Changing One Mind at a Time

Many people opposed to the death penalty have stories of conversion, yet none are more powerful than those victimized by the crimes eligible for the death penalty. Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights share powerful stories of personal experience—responsible for changing minds.

LAWS: Dignity Denied

The concept of human dignity plays an important role in the development of human rights adjudication. The legal system must ensure that all adjudications and interpretation of the law are based on human rights. Dignity for human rights and the guarantee of Eighth Amendment rights must trump unjust laws.

LIVES: Forever Changed

The repercussions extend both out into the communities and over generations. Beyond the immediately impacted loss of a family member, capital punishment has a huge symbolic significance. Studies have repeatedly shown that children's exposure to violence can predict attitudes justifying their own use of violence.
or (v) a spouse, parent, sibling or legal guardian of such a person who... was the victim of a homicide (Va. Code § 19.2-301.1(B)(2009)). In the years since Payne, attention has gradually come to be paid to another group of people who might be seen as victims of both the crime and of the legal process that it triggers: the family members of capital offenders. Elizabeth Beck analyzes the issue: "The defendant's family is important because their loss is personal and has devastating consequences for their entire family system. They are also important because the siblings and children of offenders grow up with a shared sense of familial dread and in this context face increased risk for mental health problems and involvement in the criminal justice system. They matter because personal involvement with the loved one's capital case invariably results in the loss of confidence in the criminal justice system and the U.S. government, which is unhealthy for a democracy. They matter because some are active members of our communities who have contributions to make to society and find themselves unable to participate when bearing the burden of their loved one's execution (Beck, 2007, p.1)."

"If someone's basic human rights are upheld as a result of our legal advocacy and the efforts of our client, then that is a big win for all of humanity."

-Margot Morris-
References


familyimpactstatementsfactsheet.Osborne.pdf


left behind. Retrieved from nosilence@murdervictimsfamilies.org


For Further Information

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617-443-1102