

# Research & Program evaluation: Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Keynote Address:  
KAPC – 9<sup>th</sup> counselling conference

Andrew P. Daire, Ph.D.  
University of Central Florida

# Overview

- Appreciations
- Our Colleagues Amongst Us
- 3 Key Family-Related Research in U.S.
- Ideas & Suggestions for Kenyan Researchers
- Lessons Learned
- Best Practices
- Wishes, Hopes & Dreams

# Fragile Families

- Followed 5,000 children born between '98 – '00
- Four questions of interest (to policy makers):
  - 1) What are the conditions and capabilities of unmarried parents, especially fathers?;
  - (2) What is the nature of the relationships between unmarried parents?;
  - (3) How do children born into these families fare?; and
  - (4) How do policies and environmental conditions affect families and children?
  - [www.fragilefamilies.princeton.edu](http://www.fragilefamilies.princeton.edu)

# Why Marriage Matters

- Marriage is an important social good, associated with an impressively broad array of positive outcomes for children and adults alike.
- Marriage is an important public good, associated with a range of economic, health, educational, and safety benefits that help local, state, and federal governments serve the common good.
- The benefits of marriage extend to poor and minority communities, despite the fact that marriage is particularly fragile in these communities.
- [www.americanvalues.org](http://www.americanvalues.org)

# Hot Off the Press!

- ‘The Taxpayer Costs of Divorce and Unwed Childbearing’
  - Partnership between sociologists, public policy, & family researchers led by an economist;
  - \$112 billion/annually and over \$1 trillion/decade
  - Improving family fragmentation (divorce and unwed childbearing) by 1% = \$1 billion in annual savings to taxpayers (and it’s an underestimate)!
  - Data for each state is also available
  - [www.americanvalues.org](http://www.americanvalues.org)

# Relevance to Kenya?

- Suggestion – consider these points:
  - Innovative cross-disciplinary research collaborations – creative synergy;
  - Research goals and objectives that speak directly to policymakers, decision makers, and funders;
  - Social service is nice but most decisions are based on economics and ROI's; and
  - Validates strong and stable marriages and families as the foundation!

# Lessons Learned: 1 – 3

1. Collect data! Collect data! Collect data!...
  - Whether exceptional or not, your program data is a valuable contribution
2. Capture Demographic Information
  - Cannot generalize to different groups without grouping data – 'generalizability'
3. Operationalize and Manualize
  - Cannot be effectively replicated or evaluated without a standard process – 'replicability'

# Lessons Learned: 4 – 6

## 4. Use Five to Seven-Level Likert Scales

- Except for demographics (categorical), use Likert scales (ex. strongly disagree to strongly agree) to allow for greater statistical analyses

## 5. Value of Qualitative and Process Data

- Qualitative helps to explain and describe
- Process data can provide program feedback

## 6. Disseminate, Disseminate, and Disseminate!

- If you didn't publish, write about it, or present on it, it didn't happen.

# Best Practices

- These somewhat humorous vignettes will hopefully help you understand the importance of a few best practices...

BP: ?

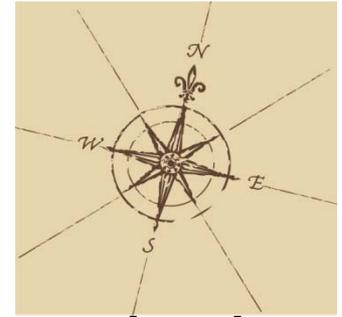


- **One day I was walking down the beach with some Friends when one of them shouted, "Look at that dead bird!" Someone looked up at the sky and said, "Where?"**

# BP: Look Where the Data IS

- **One day I was walking down the beach with some Friends when one of them shouted, "Look at that dead bird!" Someone looked up at the sky and said, "Where?"**

# BP: ?



- While looking at a house, my brother asked the real estate agent which direction was north because, he explained, he didn't want the sun waking him up every morning. She asked, "Does the sun rise in the North?" When my brother explained that the sun rises in the East, and has for sometime, she shook her head and said, "Oh I don't keep up with all that stuff."

# BP: Worry About the Details!

- While looking at a house, my brother asked the real estate agent which direction was north because, he explained, he didn't want the sun waking him up every morning. She asked, "Does the sun rise in the North?" When my brother explained that the sun rises in the East, and has for sometime, she shook her head and said, "Oh I don't keep up with all that stuff."

BP: ?



- **I used to work in technical support for a 24/7 call center. One day I got a call from an individual who asked what hours the call center was open. I told him, "The number you dialed is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week." He responded, "What time zone?" Wanting to end the call quickly, I said, "Uh, Central Time Zone."**

# BP: Don't Ignore the Obvious

- **I used to work in technical support for a 24/7 call center. One day I got a call from an individual who asked what hours the call center was open. I told him, "The number you dialed is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week." He responded, "What time zone?" Wanting to end the call quickly, I said, "Uh, Central Time Zone."**

# BP: ?



- **My friend has a lifesaving tool in her car designed to cut through a seat belt if she gets trapped. She keeps it in the trunk.**

# BP: Have Tools Available

- **My sister has a lifesaving tool in her car designed to cut through a seat belt if she gets trapped. She keeps it in the trunk.**

# BP: ?



- **My friends and I stopped at a store to buy beer and noticed that the cases were discounted 10%. Since it was a big party, we bought 2 cases. The cashier multiplied 2 times 10% and gave us a 20% discount.**

# BP: Don't Double Count Data

- **My friends and I stopped at a store to buy beer and noticed that the cases were discounted 10%. Since it was a big party, we bought 2 cases. The cashier multiplied 2 times 10% and gave us a 20% discount.**

BP: ?



- **While working at a pizza parlor I observed a man ordering a small pizza to go. He appeared to be alone and the cook asked him if he would like it cut into 4 pieces or 6. He thought about it for some time before responding. "Just cut it into 4 pieces; I don't think I'm hungry enough to eat 6 pieces."**

# BP: Cautiously Split Data

- **While working at a pizza parlor I observed a man ordering a small pizza to go. He appeared to be alone and the cook asked him if he would like it cut into 4 pieces or 6. He thought about it for some time before responding. "Just cut it into 4 pieces; I don't think I'm hungry enough to eat 6 pieces."**



# Wishes, Hopes and Dreams

...let's stand together!

# Andrew P. Daire, Ph.D., LMHC, NCC

University of Central Florida

Associate Professor - Counselor Education

Executive Director - UCF Marriage & Family Research Institute

[adaire@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:adaire@mail.ucf.edu)

Yahoo & Skype IM username: andrewdaire