

National Child Welfare Evaluation Summit

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**What is sufficient rigor
in child welfare evaluation to
determine what works?**

Lisbeth B. Schorr

Center for the Study of Social Policy

Once upon a time ...

We thought we had to choose between

**ANECDOTES,
IDEOLOGY, and
EVIDENCE OF
GOOD INTENTIONS**

or

**EVIDENCE
FROM
RANDOMIZED
EXPERIMENTS**

Now we know that choosing between these two alternatives is too limiting:

ANECDOTES, etc. are too weak to rely on

RCTs illuminate too narrow a range of interventions

A Broader Approach to Evidence

**EVIDENCE FROM
RANDOMIZED
EXPERIMENTS**



To illuminate

Circumscribed
stylized
interventions
that can be
proven effective

**EVIDENCE FROM RESEARCH,
THEORY AND PRACTICE**

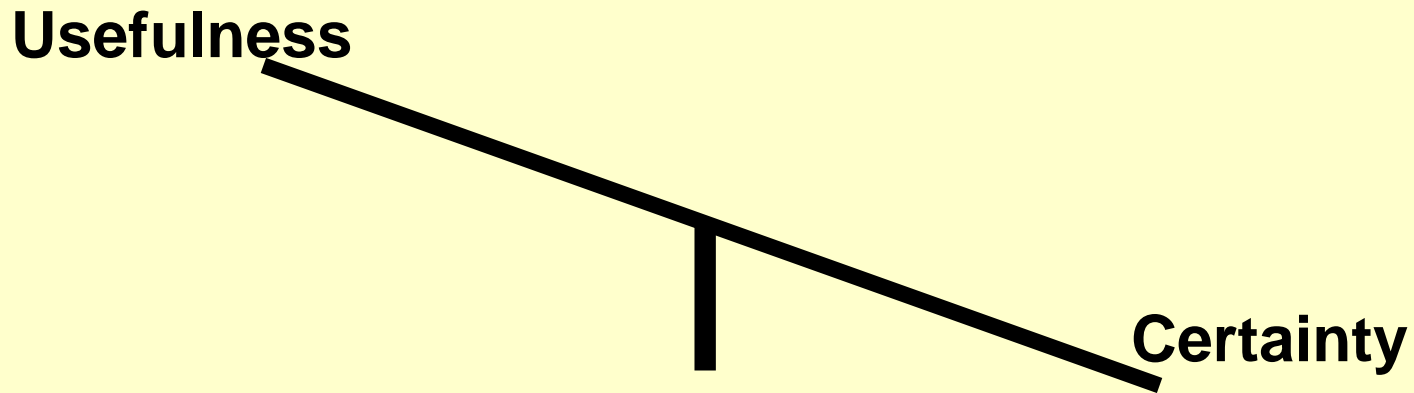


To illuminate

- Promising programs and strategies
- Interventions that are complex, ecological, evolving
- Essential ingredients of effective interventions and implementation
- Changes needed in policy and funding context, in connections and infrastructure



Should certainty always outweigh usefulness?



To understand interventions that are complex, interactive, evolving, and ecological, obtain richer, more usable information by being rigorous in combining evidence from research, theory and practice.

Approaches to “what works” that are both rigorous and inclusive

- Use evidence from theory, research, and practice
- Fit assessment tools to the purposes they are meant to serve
- Develop consensus outcomes
- Recognize that outcomes for program participants are not community outcomes
- Use intelligence and judgments to understand data