

# Collaborative Action Evaluation: A Catalyst for Empowerment

Canadian Public Health Association  
Workshop  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
June 7, 2017

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# Overview

- **Introductory comments**
- **Describe Collaborative Action Evaluation (CAE)**
- **Embed it in Participatory Paradigm**
- **Outline the planning process**
- **Engage in planning process for transforming practices & programs**

# Introductory Comments

- **Evaluation – programs, people & practice**
- **Concerns practice with people**
  - What is the relationship between the evaluator and those delivering the program?
  - What should be accepted as evidence upon which to base practice?
- **An evaluation approach that counters the currency academic / orthodox evaluation**
- **Based on Freire, Reason, Heron**
- **An evaluation approach that changes the way people work, think and relate to others**

- **Evaluation “with” people, not “on”, “to”, or “about” them**
- **Evaluation approach that counters the currency of academic / orthodox evaluation**
- **Evaluation that attempts to make a difference in the way people work, think and relate to others**

# Comparison of Evaluation Traditions

	<b>Orthodox Evaluation</b>	<b>Social Science Evaluation</b>	<b>Collaborative Action Evaluation</b>
<b>Paradigm</b>	Empiricist or positivist	Human science	Emancipatory paradigm
<b>View of Participants</b>	Subjects	Informants	Partners
<b>View of Evaluator</b>	Methodologist	Facilitator	Social activist
<b>Values</b>	Objectivity	Subjectivity	Relational ontology
<b>Focus</b>	Facts and theories	Individual experiences	Collective understanding
<b>Purpose</b>	Empirical knowledge or Individual behavioral change	Meaning and understanding	Systemic change
<b>View of Evaluation</b>	Collecting evidence	Explication	Transforming practice and structures

# Five Emerging Approaches to Evaluation

- **Fourth Generation Evaluation (Guba & Lincoln)**
- **Empowerment Evaluation (Fetterman)**
- **Realistic Evaluation (Pawson & Tilley)**
- **Developmental Evaluation (Patton)**
- **Collaborative Action Evaluation (Hills & Carroll)**

# Collaborative Action Evaluation

Collaborative Action Evaluation (CAE) plans and simultaneously implements and investigates change through a series of iterations. The CAE process ensures that all who are interested in the outcome of the evaluation, participate and collaborate in every aspect of it from its initiation to its conclusion. CAE creates evidence upon which to base practice and catalyzes change to practice. CAE is, therefore, collaborative, participatory, empowering, systematic and transformative.

# Collaboration ...



To work together especially in a joint intellectual effort

Or...

To co-operate treasonably, as with an enemy occupying one's country

# Collaboration...

**Collaboration is the creation of a synergistic alliance that honours and utilizes each person's contribution in order to create collective wisdom and collective action. Collaboration is not synonymous with co-operation, partnership, participation or compromise. Those words do not convey the fundamental importance of being in relationship nor the depth of caring and commitment that is needed to create the kind of reciprocity that is collaboration. Collaborators are committed to, care about and trust in each other. They recognize that, despite their differences, each has unique and valuable knowledge, perspectives and experiences to contribute to the collaboration.**

# CAE Principles

- **Participation & Collaboration**
- **Iterative -Reflection, Planning & Action (Praxis)**
- **Change**
- **Relevance**
- **Empowerment**
- **Sustainability**

# Assumptions

- **Truth is a matter of consensus**
- **Facts have no meaning except within a value framework**
- **Causes & effects do not exist**
- **Phenomena can only be understood within the context in which they are studied**
- **Evaluators are subjective partners with stakeholders**
- **Worthwhile learning is often personal, obscure, and private**
- **Only some learning appears as behavioural change**
- **Many things that exist are not empirically verifiable**

***To generate knowledge about persons without their full participation in deciding how to generate it, is to misrepresent their personhood and to abuse by neglect their capacity for autonomous intentionally. It is fundamentally unethical. (Heron, 1996)***

# Planning Phases: Transforming Practices and Programs

1. **Establishing the Evaluation Inquiry Team**
2. **Identify the purpose of the evaluation and outline the evaluation questions**
3. **Choose a Methodology and Methods**
4. **Develop a plan for disseminating evaluation results**

# 1. Establishing the Evaluation Inquiry Team

- **Identify the people who will participate in the development of evaluation plan**
- **Think of who the stakeholders are? Who are the people that have a stake in the evaluation? Who are the people that have the potential to implement the evaluation results?**
- **Considering your chosen evaluation project, what factors do you need to think about to figure out to know who to involve in the evaluation project?**

## **2. Identify the purpose of the evaluation and outline the evaluation questions.**

- Articulate the purpose of the evaluation**
- Identify the evaluation questions. Begin by describing the background of the program, practice or system that you are evaluating**
- Think about “what you want to know that you don’t already know”**

### **3. Choosing a Methodology and Methods.**

- To a great extent your methodology and methods are determined by your evaluation question(s).**
- Identify the methodology that you will use and provide a rationale for your choice.**
- Consider what methods might be used.**
- Select strategies for managing and analyzing the data.**
- Remember to consider who will do the data collection and analysis.**

“Orthodox evaluation methods, as part of their rationale, exclude participants from all the thinking and decision-making that generates designs, manages and draws conclusions from the evaluation. Such exclusions treat the participants as less than self determining persons, alienates them from the inquiry process and from the knowledge that is its outcome, and thus invalidates any claim the methods have to a science of persons”.

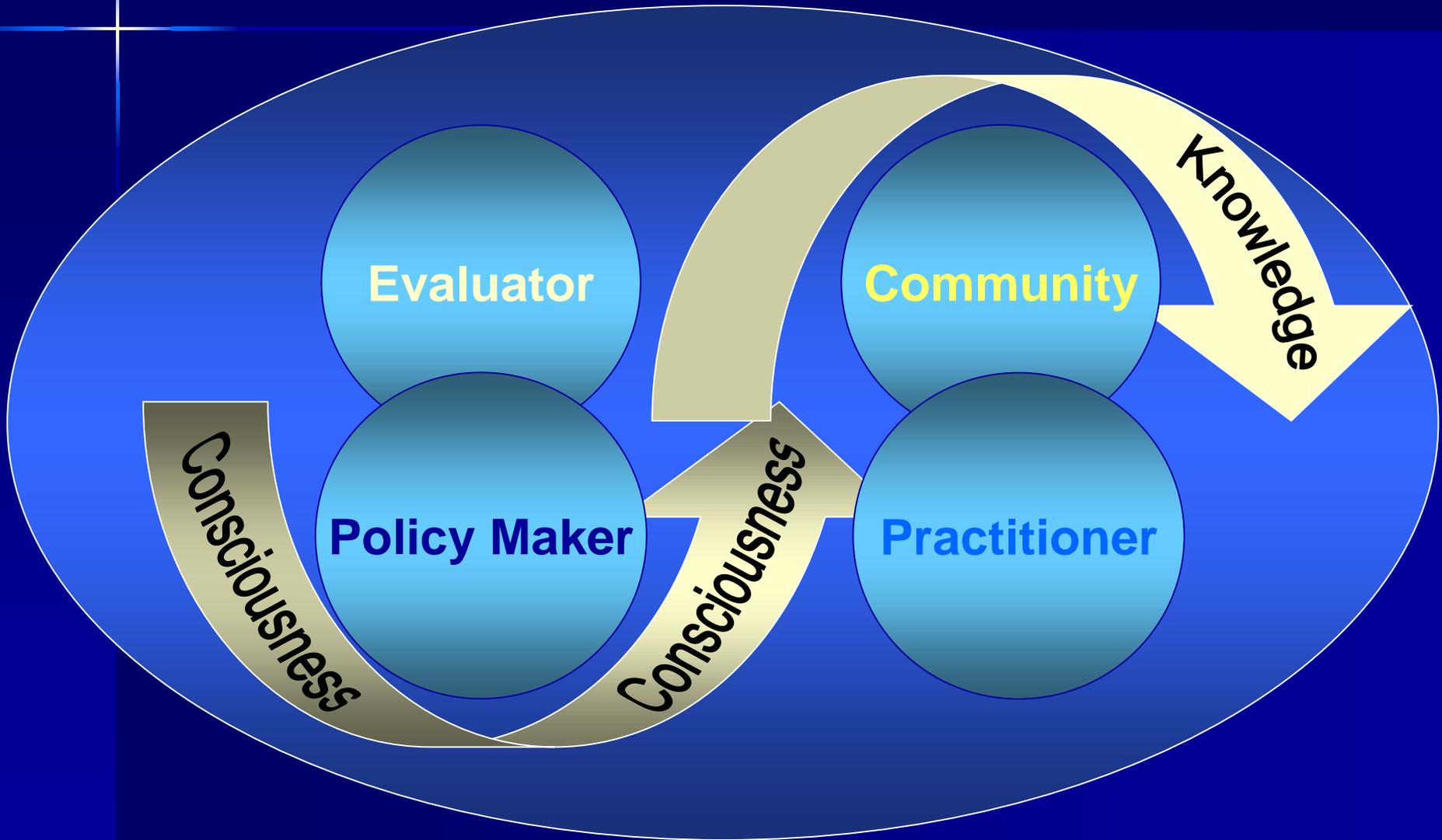
(Reason, 1994)

# Data Collection Methods (Participatory)

- **Reflective narrative accounts of practice**
- **Critical incidents**
- **In depth interviews**
- **Taped interactions**
- **Peer observations**
- **Journal writing**
- **Audio taping actions or reflections as they are occurring**
- **Focus groups**

# Knowledge

...Transformation of Consciousness



# Praxis: The Relationship Between Theory and Practice



- *Praxis is like a dance between theory and practice - each informing the other*
- *Not a linear relationship between theory and (action) practice*
- *A reflexive relationship in which both action and reflection build on one another*

**“The act of knowing involves a dialectical movement which goes from action to reflection and from reflection to new action”**

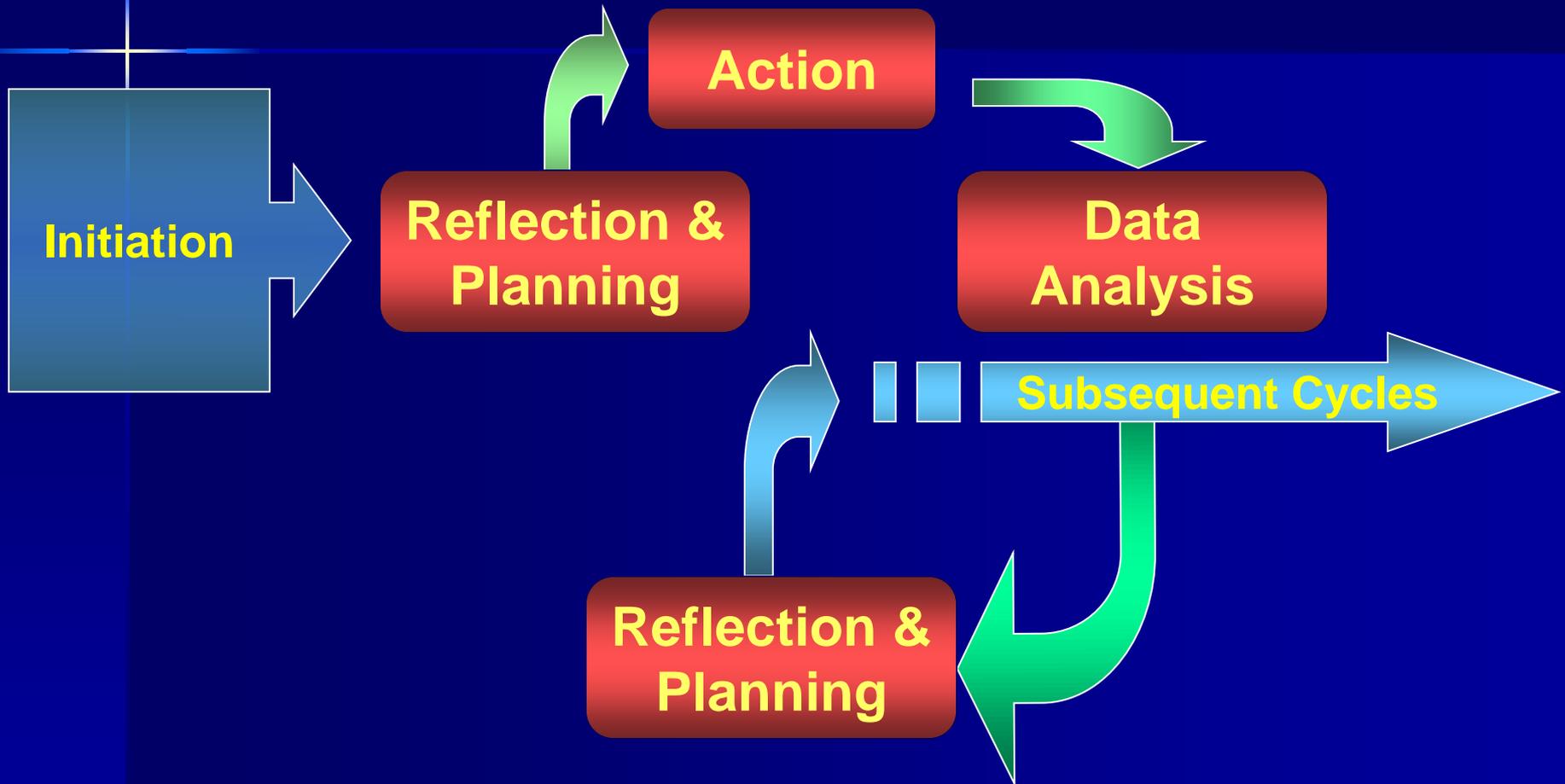
*(Freire, 1972, p.31)*

## **4. Develop a plan for disseminating evaluation results.**

- Consider that different audiences that may require different forms of dissemination. For example, if policy/ decision-makers are involved, they usually prefer a brief report of the findings. Non-profit organizations may require a more detailed report and the evaluators and others may want to write a scholarly article. All these forms of dissemination are appropriate and should be discussed during the initial planning process. Consider the following questions:**
  - What information will be disseminated?**
  - Who will disseminate it?**
  - Who is the target audience?**



# CAE Protocol – Iterations



# Empowering & Transformative Processes

## Creating collaborative relationships

- ◆ Developing partnerships
- ◆ Negotiating power
- ◆ Creating participatory environments

## Reflection-in-Action

- ◆ Reflection in action
- ◆ As a dialectic (praxis)

## Engaging in Critical Dialogue

- ◆ Listening
- ◆ Critical questioning
  - problem posing
- ◆ Critical thinking

# Knowledge...

- **Different types of knowledge...**
  - ◆ **Experiential**
  - ◆ **Presentational**
  - ◆ **Propositional**
  - ◆ **Practical**

# Empowering process...

- **“People become master of their thinking by discussing their thinking and their views of the world explicitly or implicitly which are manifest in their own suggestions and those of their comrades” (Freire, 1972, p 35)**

***It is possible to inquire systematically and rigorously into a complex field of human action, and to do justice to its wholeness without distorting or fragmenting it; it is possible to co-opt busy practitioners into committed inquiry into their own professional and personal processes; it is possible for co-researchers to descend into the confusion that is real life without the protective clothing of questionnaires, experimental designs, and other forms of defensive armour and to emerge with worthwhile understandings (and evidence for practice) (Reason, 1988)***



# Why Evaluation?

**Efficiency**

**Effe**

**Maximize ability to  
enhance health status  
in communities**

**ce  
on**

**Evidence for  
Decision-making**

**Accountability**

# How does the traditional evaluation process disempower?

## Phase 1:

**Starts with pre-determined protocols and evaluation questions according to canonical (qualitative or quantitative) methodological criteria**

**Does not allow participants to voice concerns about relevance of evaluation approach:  
initiates disengagement**

# How does the traditional evaluation process disempower?

## Phase 2:

**Collects data and 'leaves the scene' in order to produce analytic results**

- No opportunity for participants to reflect, examine and learn from data.
- No opportunity to develop data analysis capacity.
- Produces anxiety and cynicism about the process and alienates participants

# How does the traditional evaluation process disempower?

**Phase 3:**

**Returns to announce judgment based on analysis**

- 'Relevance' arises too late for improving evaluation
- Participants feel 'outside' of the process as objects of analysis

# Empowerment as “Voice”

