

Research & Evaluation in our Non-Profit Sector

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Justin Lee

Opening Seminar

Transforming the Non-Profit Sector

CONTENT

1. What do we mean by ‘research’ and the use of evidence?
 - What are the types of research?
 - Who produces & who consumes research?
2. Challenges in creating and using evidence for our non-profit sector
 - Research capability, setting the research agenda, doing the research, and sharing it
3. What can we do?

Part 1: DEFINITIONS

What is ‘non-profit sector’?

- NPO, NGO, Voluntary Sector, Third Sector, Civil Society, ‘People Sector’

What do we mean by ‘research’ and ‘evidence’ anyway?

- Archetypes of research (Academic vs Applied e.g. ‘R&D’)
- Systematic and scientific? (instead of ad hoc trial & error, or creative?)

Unpacking 'research'

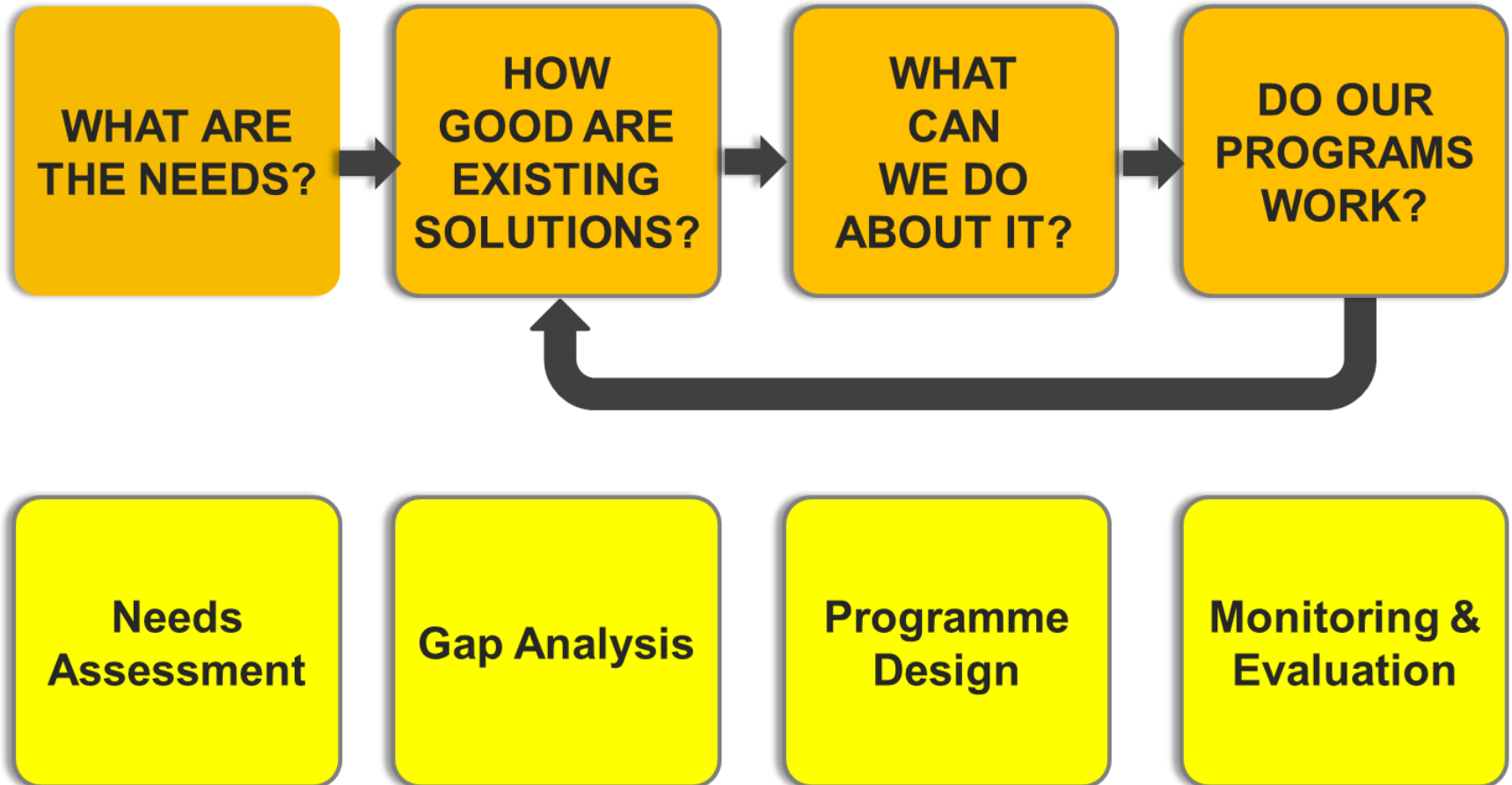
Evidence-production ecosystem

is made up of **different players** (those who produce or consume research, and all sorts of intermediaries in between) with **varying powers and resources**

negotiating with one another (sometimes collaborating, sometimes bitterly struggling about)

what counts as credible knowledge, and the legitimate approaches that create them.

A simplified map of applied research:



A more detailed map:

Types of research or 'analytic tasks' relevant
for each stage of policy / programme
development

Stage of Programme Development	Questions to be Asked	Research / Analytic Tasks to Undertake
1. Asses social problems and needs	What are the needs of clients or community?	Needs assessment
2. Determine the range of existing services	What are the range of services, programmes or communal resources available?	Asset mapping
3. Assess the adequacy of existing services	-To what extent have client or community needs been met by these services and policies? (capacity gaps, quality gaps) -What are the causes of the service gaps?	Gap analysis
4. Identify a range of solutions and assess feasibility	What services could be used to produce the desired changes?	-Environmental scan of evidence-base & innovative practices -Feasibility study (to determine if appropriate to adapt some intervention to local context)
5. Programme design	-What activities and components should be in the programme and how do they add up to achieve the change you want to see? -Is the programme well conceptualised and designed? -Is the performance monitoring system robust and have meaningful indicators?	-Logic model / theory of change (check for theory failure) -Design (Thinking) Process
6. Programme implementation	-How should the programme be put into operation? -Is the program implemented according to the intended design?	-Implementation assessment (check for implementation failure) -Treatment fidelity study
7. Programme in operation	How well is service delivery organised? Adequacy of resources? Client experience?	Process evaluation
	-Is the programme showing desired effects? -Are there unplanned negative effects?	Programme monitoring
8. Intentions to scale up the programme	Are outcomes attributable to programme itself?	Outcome or Impact Evaluation (experimental design)
	Are outcomes attained at a reasonable cost?	-Cost-benefit analysis -Cost-effectiveness analysis

Scale of Types of Research

UNDERSTANDING NEEDS & PROBLEMS	DEVELOPING & IMPLEMENTING SOLUTIONS	EVALUATION
<p>Overall Landscape of Needs</p> <p>Early intervention Education Employment</p>	<p>Sector-Wide Solutions / Investment Strategy</p> <p>Enabling Masterplan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIPIC • SPED • Job Training & Support 	<p>Social Impact Assessment</p> <p>Are PWDs fully included in Singapore society?</p>
<p>General Needs</p> <p>PWDs need employment</p>	<p>Portfolio Design</p> <p>Job Training & Support portfolio:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational training • Internships • Job matching 	<p>Portfolio Evaluation</p> <p>Did PWDs secure jobs?</p>
<p>Specific Needs</p> <p>Persons with Down Syndrome need work skills</p>	<p>Programme Design</p> <p>Vocational training</p>	<p>Programme Evaluation</p> <p>Did clients acquire marketable work skills?</p>

Choosing the relevant research for the right purpose

- Do we offer programmes without adequate understanding of user needs or assets available?
- Do we implement the best solution we know, or the solution our practitioners are the most comfortable implementing?
- Do we push to measure social impact even though it is a pilot programme that needs to be tweaked along the way?

Some Key Actors



- Academics
- Research Institutes / Centres
- Government Research Units
- Apex organisations / Associations
- Market Research / Consultants
- NPO Researchers
- Professionals & Practitioners
- Clients & Community

Part 2: KEY ISSUES

1. Research Capability

Are we equipped to do research?

2. Setting the Agenda / Conducting the Research

Do we focus on the right types of research and do we do it well?

3. Sharing & Translation

Was research useful and did it contribute to some kind of impact?

1. Research Capability

- Tools
- Training
- Funding

2. Research Agenda

A. Understanding Problems:

- Expert-driven mapping of needs

B. Developing Solutions:

- Academic research and evidence-based practice as dominant model
- Underemphasis on research focused on creating solutions

C. Evaluating Solutions:

- Not just a technical issue, also normative

A. Research to Understand Problems & Needs

- Takes a lot of effort, even just to identify different social needs and existing services or policies.
- This basic mapping is necessary before we can make higher level assessments like determining gaps, opportunities for intervention and strategic priorities.
- Fragmentation of knowledge = lack of information AND information overload *at the same time*

Who can contribute?

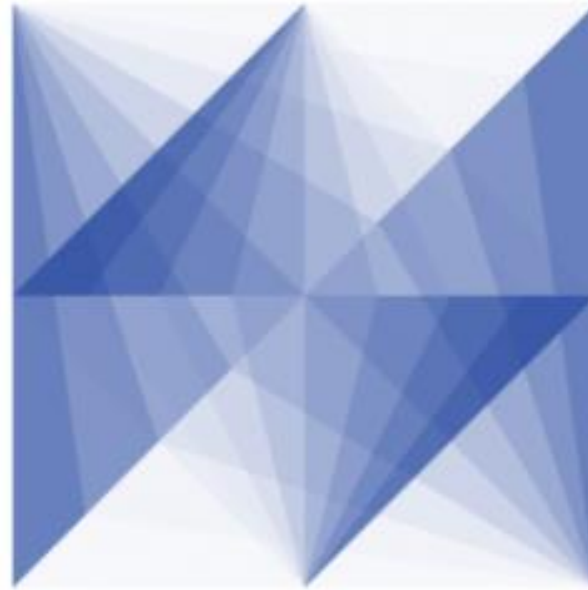
We tend to rely on Systems, Leaders & Experts

- Experts in policy (Policymakers)
- Experts in research (Academics)
- Experts in practice (Professionals)

And regard Clients, Caregivers, Citizens as merely Data

- But are they experts of their own lives?
- And can / should any group have monopoly over knowledge about social issues?

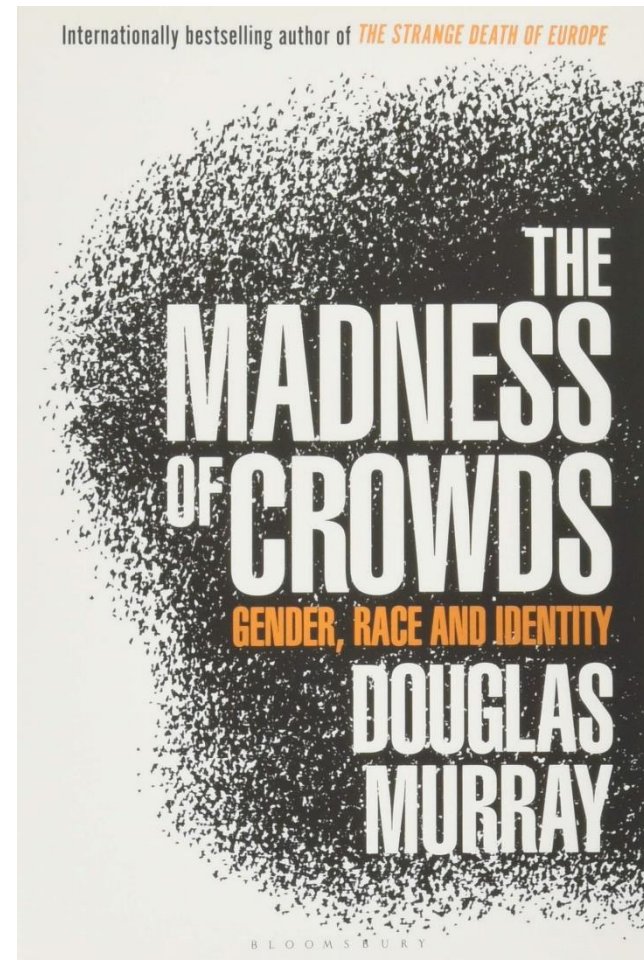
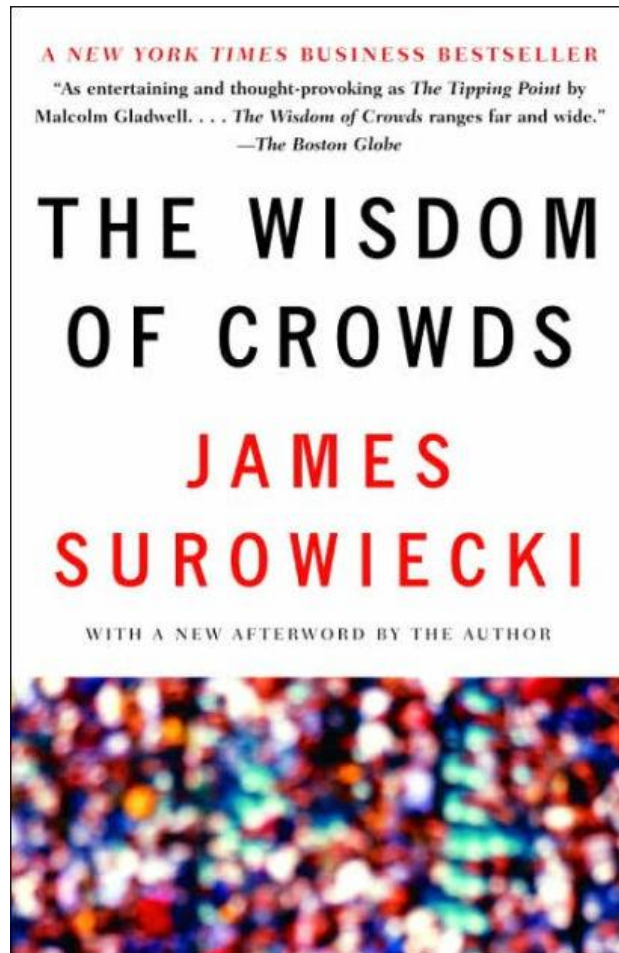
What if we let more people contribute?



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ALL CAN CONTRIBUTE

WHAT IF EVERYONE CONTRIBUTES?



3 types of pages

- 1. Social Causes:** Disability, End of Life, Ex-Offenders etc
- 2. Community Assets:** Community Arts, Tech for Good, Service Learning Offices etc
- 3. Locality Based:** Lengkok Bahru, Ubin etc

B. Research to Develop Solutions

- Academic research and evidence-based practice as dominant model
- Less emphasis on creative route to solutions

What is evidence-based practice?

- “Evidence based medicine is the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients. The practice of evidence based medicine means integrating individual clinical expertise with the best available external clinical evidence from systematic research” (Sackett 1996)
- Diffusion from medicine other domains like education and social work.

Evidence-based 'Clearing Houses'

Organisations that check and create resources on 'What Works'

- Campbell Collaboration
- Social Care Institute for Excellence (UK)
- National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices, of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (US)

Challenges perceived by advocates of evidence-based movement

Theoretically, academia produces new knowledge & professionals implement, but strong research-practice divide:

- Academics concerned with scholastic rather than practical issues.
- The easy thing for professionals/practitioners is to use same tools you are familiar with for all sorts of problems. But we should use the right tools for the right problem.

Advocates of EBP prescribe these solutions:

- Incentives so that academics can produce 'usable' knowledge
- Incentives for practitioners to utilise evidence, and also to generate knowledge
- Create 'scientist-practitioners' or 'practitioner-scientists'
- Help consolidate and make knowledge base more accessible
- Help scientists and practitioners communicate better

Limitations of Evidence-Based Practice?

Applicability to Other Sectors?

- What counts as a problem is contested

Is divorce or single parent families a 'problem'?

- How to determine the cause of the problem is not a straightforward technical issue

Is disability / drug addiction a medical or social problem?
Individual or structural causes?

- Multiple pathways and mechanisms to achieve social outcomes

When a 'programme' doesn't work, not easy to determine whether it is due to flawed design or bad implementation

Other Routes to Solutioning

1) Scientific Route

- Let's see what works; how do we know that it really worked?
- Can we borrow what has worked, and adapt it to our local context and circumstances?

2) Creative Approach

- We don't know what works, let's see if we can come up with something that does

Creative & Community-Based Solutioning

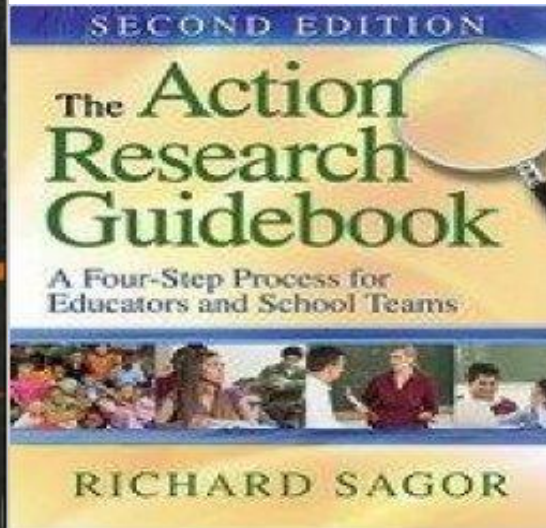
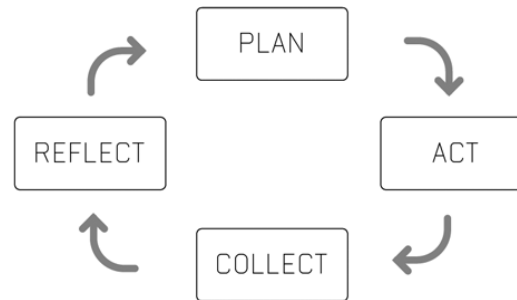
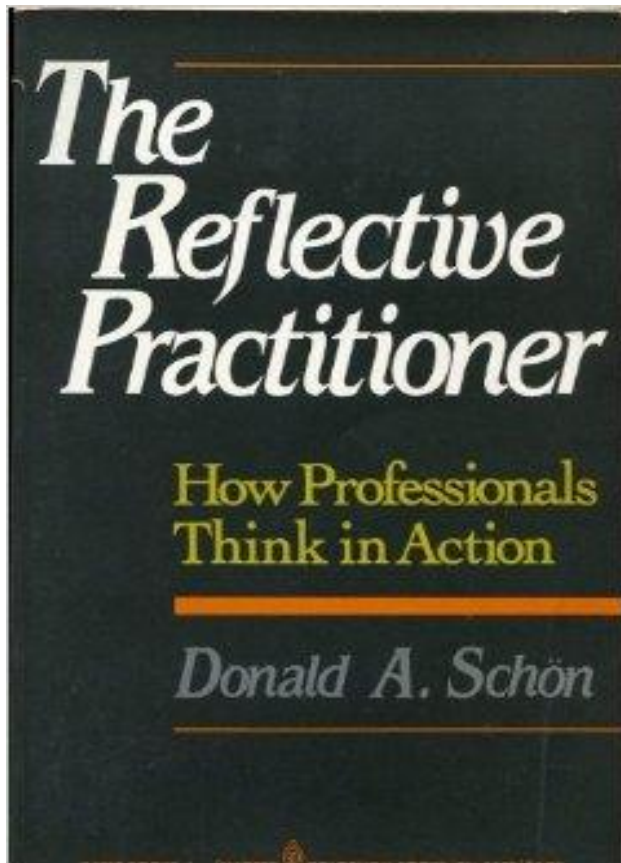
Design Thinking

Game Design + Gamification

Action Research

Arts-Based Community Development

Practice / Action Research



Practitioner-led reflective practice for learning and improvement

Purpose is to improve practice: "How can I improve what I am doing?"

Process is similar to any research project: select an area, identify research questions, find out more about the literature (explanations, contributing factors, best practices etc), take informed action or implement a change in practice, collect data to verify whether improvements worked, modify actions.

Eg Using hand-phone games to engage youth in a counselling session (Boystown)

Arts-Based Approaches

Purpose	Possible Roles of Arts
Understanding Client Needs -Emphatic understanding of circumstances and lived experience of vulnerable populations	Eg video ethnographies
Public Education & Advocacy -better awareness of conditions & resources available -reduce stigma attached to vulnerable populations	Eg Both Sides Now Eg Community theatre or Forum theatre
Intervention & Therapy	Art therapy: Music, dance, drawing
Community Development and Social Capital -Create stronger community ties and strengths so that members can help one another instead of rely on formal services	-Arts based community development -Various art forms and activities as social glue, opportunities to befriend and develop mutually helping relationships in a naturalized way
Evaluation -Arts-based evaluation; artists as evaluators.	Eg, Using unobtrusive measures such as examining how worn out the tiles are in front of various museum exhibit to determine their popularity.
Scenario Planning	Eg to help imagine and 'transport' policy-makers to different future circumstances for the purposes of scenario planning (previous IPS Prisms).
Research -Innovations in data collection methods -Sense-making	Eg using 'photo voice', collage, portraiture

Game Design + Gamification



How to create immersive and engaging experiences:

Clear goal for player and success feedback consistently

Right degree of challenge e.g. using nested victories

Create varied opportunities for players to master skill-sets that you want them to acquire

Design relevant resources and rewards

Design Thinking



Architecture
Engineering
Industrial
Product
Fashion
Interior
Graphic
Web
Instructional
Service

User-centric

More Emphasis?



UNDERSTANDING NEEDS / PROBLEMS	DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS	EVALUATION
Landscape of Needs & Gaps	Sector-Wide Solutions / Investment Strategy	Social Impact
Needs Assessment of Population Type	Development of Programme Types / Portfolio of Services	Portfolio Evaluation
Client or Community Needs Assessment	Programme / Intervention Design	Programme Evaluation

Approaches / tools can be used for specific programmes, or for more macro strategic design

The Logic of Evaluation vs The Logic of Design

No matter how much, “criticism won’t turn a lump of stone into an exquisite sculpture” Lao She, Chinese Author

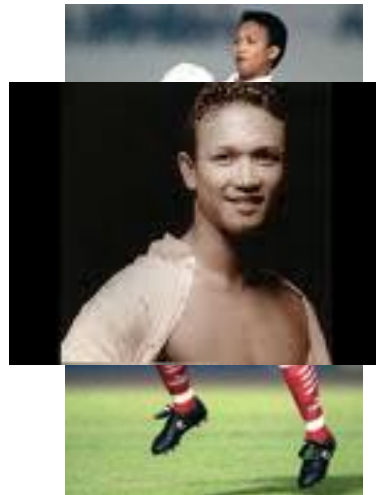
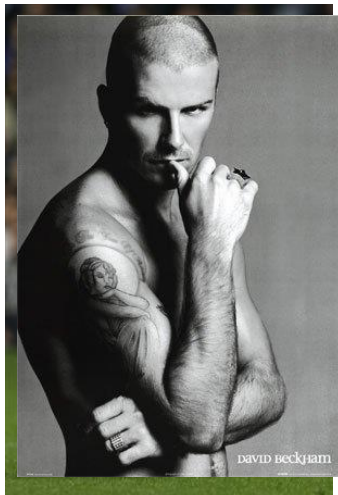


In Public Policy and Social Service, we understand Evaluation better than we understand Design, and consequently, we might be over-utilising evaluation as if it could address all our knowledge gaps

C. Evaluation

- Not a technical matter alone, but also normative and values-based.
- ‘Effectiveness’ or ‘performance’ or ‘social impact’ is therefore negotiated (not just measured and discovered).
- Useful to be transparent about values and design a process to negotiate what criteria should matter.

Example: What makes a good soccer player?

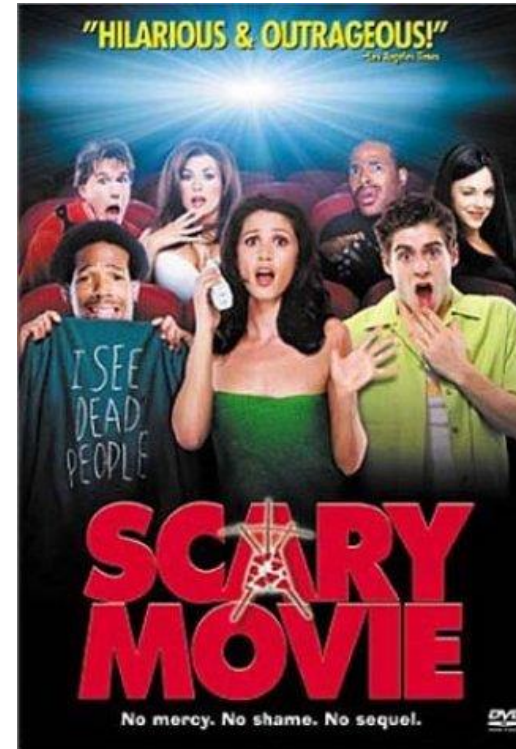
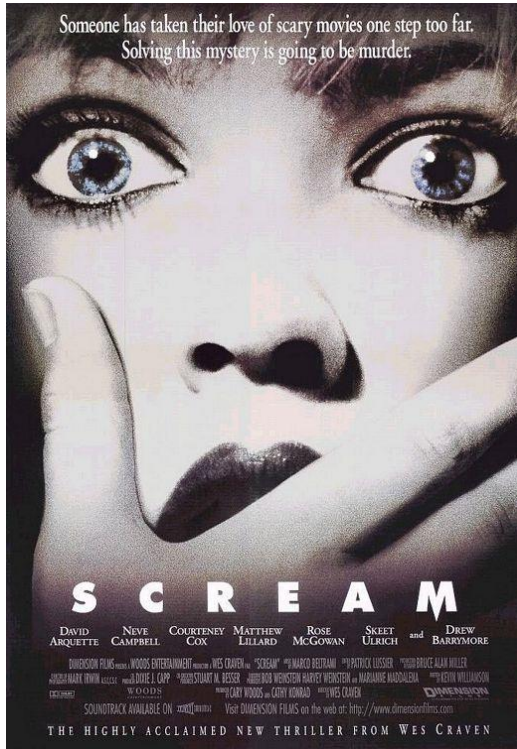


We use criteria & standards to help in evaluation

- Criteria are heuristics for evaluation
- But criteria have to be adequately defined to do its job well
- Standards are possible only after criteria are agreed upon



Genre mistakes in evaluation



- ▶ Criteria should be genre-specific for evaluation to be fair and incisive

IPPT

Individual Physical Proficiency Test

IPPT Score Table

Age Group	Grade	Pts	Sit-Up (Reps)	Standing Broad Jump (cm)	Chin Up (Reps)	4x10 m Shuttle Run (sec)	2.4km Run-Walk (mins:sec)
CAT X Below 25 Years	A	5	>39	>242	>11	<10.2	<10:21
	B	4	37-39	234-242			
	C	3	34-36	225-233			
	D	2	31-33	216-224			
	E	1	28-30	207-215			
CAT Y 25 to 29 Years	A	5	>38	>238			
	B	4	36-38	230-238			
	C	3	33-35	221-229			
	D	2	30-32	212-220			
	E	1	27-29	203-211			
CAT Y1 30 to 34 Years	A	5	>36	>233			
	B	4	34-36	225-233			
	C	3	31-33	216-224			
	D	2	28-30	207-215			
	E	1	25-27	198-206			
CAT Z 35 to 39 Years	A	5	>33	>224			
	B	4	31-33	216-224			
	C	3	28-30	207-215			
	D	2	25-27	198-206			
	E	1	22-24	189-197			
CAT Z1 40 to 44 Years	A	5	>32				
	B	4	30-32				
	C	3	27-29				
	D	2	24-26				
	E	1	21-23				
CAT Z2 45-49 Years	A	5	>30				
	B	4	28-30				
	C	3	25-27				
	D	2	22-24				
	E	1	19-21				

Updated Standards

From 1 Apr 2015 onwards, servicemen will be tested based on the scoring table below.

AWARD TYPE	POINTS REQUIRED
PASS (NSmen)	≥51 points
PASS (NSmen) WITH INCENTIVE PASS (Active)	≥61 points
SILVER	≥75 points
GOLD	≥85 points
GOLD (COMMANDOS/DIVERS/GUARDS)	≥90 points

PUSH-UP

- Bend arms comfortably by the side
- Lower body till a fist's distance from the ground
- Keep body parallel to the ground



Duration:
1 min
Max:
25 points

SIT-UP

Duration:
1 min
Max:
25 points



2.4KM RUN

Max:
50 points



TIMELINES



NSmen will have a year from 1 Apr 2015 to transit to the three-station IPPT.



New Physical Training Phase (PTP) exemption criteria shall apply to combat fit (i.e. PES A/B1) pre-enlistees. These pre-enlistees have to achieve 61 points and above to be exempted from PTP.

	Fitness	Inclusion
Values (often hidden)	Strength Stamina Flexibility	Choice, Knowledge, Autonomy, Equity, Social Justice, Respect
1. Establish criteria of merit	(Upper body strength) Pull ups (Lower body strength) Standing broad jump (Stamina) 2.4km (Flexibility) Sit & reach	Cost-effectiveness, efficiency E.g. Autonomy PWDs able to select jobs based on own authentic preferences rather than those of professionals or caregivers
2. Constructing Standards	How many pull-ups = gold, pass, fail; 2.4km under 10 mins = gold (for people of what age group)	Need to earn X amount, need to place Y people to get placed to count as success
3. Measure performance and compare with standards	Soldier A: pull-ups 2, 2.4-20 mins Soldier B: pull-ups 12, 2.4-9mins Soldier C: etc	Measure numbers placed, wages earned.
4. Synthesize and integrate data into an overall judgment of worth (one way: use weights)	IPPT uses equal weightage: overall synthesis of individual performance Soldier A = fail Soldier B = gold Overall synthesis of battalion: How fit are our soldiers? How many percent passed, what areas weakest?	Are our employment programs inclusive?

- Using composite indices \approx a little like measuring overall 'fitness'
- Helps coach determine how physically fit an athlete/team is broadly, but it is not the full diagnostics because it doesn't capture skill sets, and other dimensions that matter to a sporting team.
- Furthermore, even with context-specific measures, it alone cannot help coach fully determine what had gone right or wrong (whether it was the training regime, coaching philosophy, team chemistry etc)

3. Sharing & Translation

- Conferences are changing
- The ‘Spotify’ of research that allows discovery (researchgate.net)
- ‘Knowledge Mobilisation’ as emerging framework and role

Part 3: FIGURING OUT WHAT WE SHOULD DO

Some Questions for our Collective Learning Journey

1. If research to understand problems becomes more participatory, can it lead to more comprehensive and robust understanding without creating more fragmentation? Do we understand the worth and potential of various 'asset-classes'?
2. What are the limits of evidence-based practice, and how should we adapt? What are other productive avenues for creating solutions?
3. Are we over-relying on evaluation? If evaluation is also normative, what do we do about the often invisible values that inform assessments of social impact?

TNPS Series of Events

- Learning journeys
(some will be solutions-focused)
- Study trips
(deferred)
- Panel discussions
- Conference (TBC October)
- Policy paper

Panel Discussions

- 1. Evidence-based Practice** (The Orthodoxy: Research = Science)
- 2. Emerging Models of Research** (The Heterodoxy: Complementary & Alternative Forms of Knowledge Production)
- 3. Evaluation** (Do we know how to determine evaluability? Should we talk about values before we talk about metrics? When to do what kind of evaluation?)

Breakout Rooms

- Tell us your challenges in doing or consuming research
- Share some positive experiences we can learn from
- Discuss what you most want to figure out so that you can do/use research better

Thank You