

Responsive evaluation: an approach to assessment especially apt for health promotion initiatives?

HM|HC 2023 Summit Presentation

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creating connections. inspiring change.

Territorial Acknowledgement

I'm presenting today from an area within the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the Katzie, Kwikwetlem and Qayqayt First Nations, on which lands I along with others am privileged to learn, work and play.

[Pronunciation Guide of BC First Nations](#)

Pertinent comment?

“[T]wo people meeting just isn’t the same as two billiard balls meeting or two chemicals combining, the autonomy and individuality of the human are what prevent there being a true science of human behavior.”

Health promotion initiatives: distinct?

Hp initiatives seek to enhance human capacity to manage and improve wellbeing and positively influence factors involved

- complex endeavors
- that involve intentional agents
- acting in particular contexts &
- affected by their own values, goals, beliefs
- * seeking a desired good

Implications for evaluation?

Not predominantly about

- * positivist epistemology
- * instrumental reasoning
- * for prediction, control
- * means -> imposed end
- * systematic procedure

But primarily a matter of

- * hermeneutic approach
- * moral/pragmatic reasoning
- * for understanding, insight
- * path -> chosen end
- * substantive inquiry

Responsive evaluation: an introduction

This approach goes beyond quantifying effectiveness to

- address a broad range of stakeholder perspectives, concerns
- involve them in a participatory, transformative process
- focus on understanding experience, sense of meaning and value

Responsive evaluation: an introduction

This approach goes beyond quantifying effectiveness to

- elucidate a practice by attending to common and diverse views
- engage in dialogue and develop beneficial relationships
- assess impacts and improve outcomes that matter to participants

Responsive evaluation: process components

Process emerges in conversation with stakeholders; includes

- negotiating the scope, purpose and process of the evaluation
- identifying and documenting stories, perspectives and issues
- facilitating dialogue and interaction among participants on diverse viewpoints
- documenting consensus and ongoing differences with a view to continuing dialogue on questions pertinent to future improvement

Responsive evaluation: akin to health promotion?

Affinities in emphasis on

- community participation, empowerment, emergent initiatives
- social practice as holistic phenomena to be qualitatively understood
- contextual particularities to be explored, appreciated
- doing justice to diversity, seeking a shared say in assessment
- building trust among partners and continuing in dialogue

Responsive evaluation: a very apt approach?

Does it

- do more justice to situated human existence with its diversity?
- allow a richer capture of meaning and impact for stakeholders?
- involve mobilization of people in capacity building endeavor?

If so, is it not, then,

- more fitting for the aspirations and principles of health promotion and more fruitful for relating to the nature of that collegial work?

Responsive evaluation: some references

- Abma, T.A. (2005). Responsive evaluation in health promotion: its value for ambiguous contexts. *Health Promotion International*, 20(4), 391-397.
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- Abma, T.A. (2006). The practice and politics of responsive evaluation. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(1), 31-43.
- Widdershoven, G.A.M. (2001). Dialogue in evaluation: A hermeneutic perspective. *Evaluation*, 7(2), 253-263.

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Thank you!

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