The Changing Role of the Evaluator in Community-based Health Promotion Evaluation

Gwyn Jolley

South Australian Community Health Research Unit, Flinders University

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Aims

- This paper examines how developments in health promotion and evaluation have changed the role of the evaluator, and the implications of this for evaluation of community-based health promotion initiatives

Outline

- What is community-based health promotion?
- Evaluation challenges
- Timeline of evaluation approaches
- Changing evaluator roles
- Implications for evaluation of community-based health promotion initiatives

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Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion

- Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over the determinants of health and thereby improve their health

- Participation is essential to sustain health promotion action (World Health Organization, 1998 p1-2)

Health promotion practice

- Two broad approaches to health promotion practice:
  - Social marketing and education theory - leads to initiatives such as mass media campaigns to raise awareness of a health issue
  - Socio-environmental theory – stresses the importance of supportive environments such as legislation, social action and intersectoral collaboration
- These two understandings of health promotion often run concurrently but 'slippage' to the individual behavioural focus is common (Baum 2011)

Community-based health promotion (CBHP)

- Activity in community settings such as schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods
- Recognises impact of social determinants of health
- Emphasises individual and community empowerment
- Community participation
- Uses range of strategies and partnerships
- Concerned with equity

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Healthy Cities

- WHO project 'Healthy Cities', originally established in 1987, was the first health promoting settings initiative
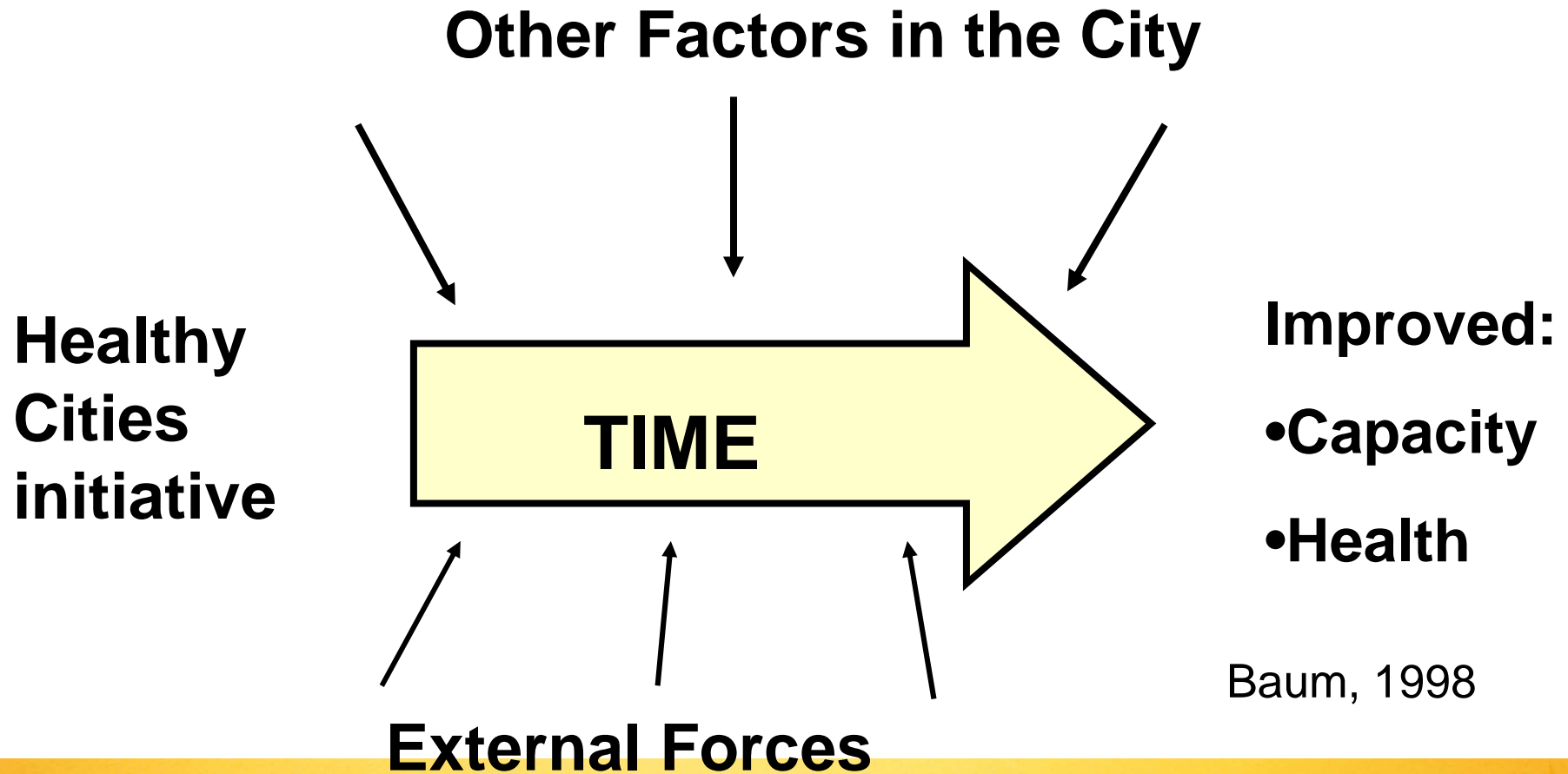
Challenges to CBHP evaluation

- Limited evidence of effectiveness
- Complexity of CBHP initiatives and their settings
- Using appropriate research approaches in this context
- Attribution and demonstrating causality

Causality in Healthy Cities Projects

Other Factors in the City

Healthy Cities initiative

TIME

Improved:

- **Capacity**
- **Health**

Baum, 1998

External Forces

Evaluation development

- Evaluation has moved from a ' black box' approach, looking only at resources in and results out, to a theory-based approach that attempts to unpack the intermediate steps and the mediators between inputs and outcomes

- Recent concepts emphasise the importance of understanding context and mechanisms for behaviour change

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Date	Evaluation type	Theoretical perspective and focus
1900	Measurement	Positivist; technical measures
1930	Descriptive	Positivist; goal attainment, technical measures
1967	Judgement	Positivist; development of program goals, extent of goal attainment, technical measures
1989	Fourth generation	Constructivist; dialectic and responsive
1980s	Theory-driven	Shift of focus from methods to theory, pluralist methods, sequential chain of events
1990s	Proceed-Precede & PLM	Focus on links between planning and evaluation, sequential
1997	Realistic	Realism; what works for whom and in what circumstances
2000	Developmental	Accepts turbulence and adapts to realities of complex, non-linear dynamics

Descriptor	Role
Technical measurer	measures the extent of achievement of pre-determined outcomes
Describer	describes the initiative and the apparent outcomes
Judge	judges worth or against standards
Hypothesis tester	tests the hypotheses upon which the program is based
Negotiator	creates a consensus of constructed reality
Theory provider	fills the gaps in the theory of action
Mediator	creates consensus among interest groups
Partner	embedded within the program

CBHP evaluation

- Reflect HP principles including participation and empowerment, equity and partnerships

- Integrated into the program

- Value and use multiple methods

- Focus on process and outcomes

- Provide timely feedback
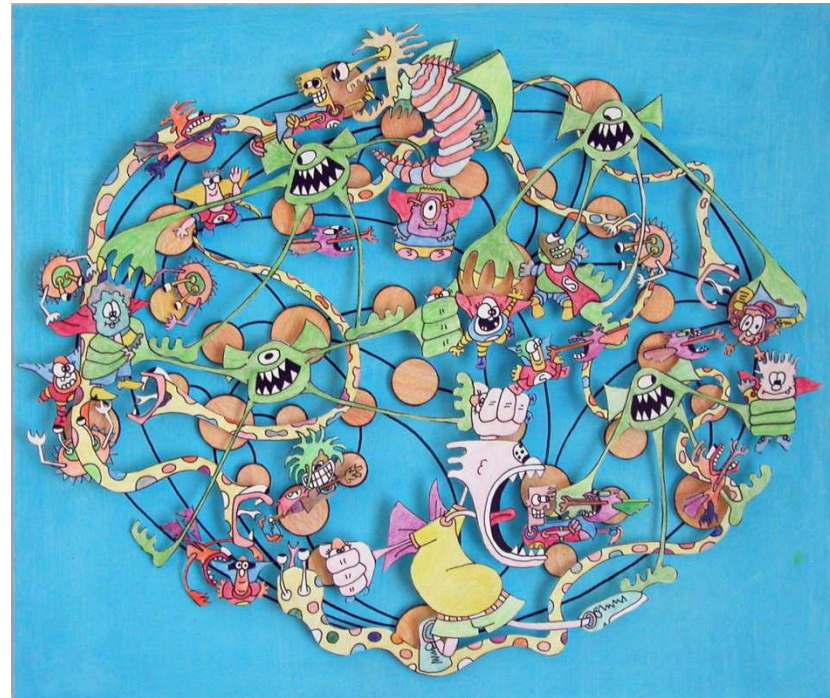
(Poland 1996)

Evaluator role in CBHP

Evaluator's role is to uncover theory or program logic and finds ways to test this.

Requires skills in:

- Multiple methods
- Negotiating with multiple stakeholders
- Sharing power
- Ensuring all voices are heard
- Managing evaluation resources

Complexity theory

- Non-linear, adaptive, dynamic
- Cause & effect unpredictable
- Patterns emerge through interaction
- Evaluation monitors what emerges

- http://sacswebsite.blogspot.com.au/2009/09/cartoon-comics-complexity-or-one-big.html

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Complexity and the evaluator

Evaluator needs to:

- Be open to uncertainty, dynamic interactions and changing contexts

- Encourage reflexive practice

- Provide rapid feedback

- Educate funders

- Take middle ground between expert and lay knowledge (Patton 2011)

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Conclusion

- Evaluator needs to balance ideal and pragmatic practice

- Reflect principles of HP & recognise complexity of CBHP initiatives

- Act as theory developer, negotiator, mediator, partner

- Balance methodological rigour with participatory, empowerment approach

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gwyn.jolley@flinders.edu.au

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