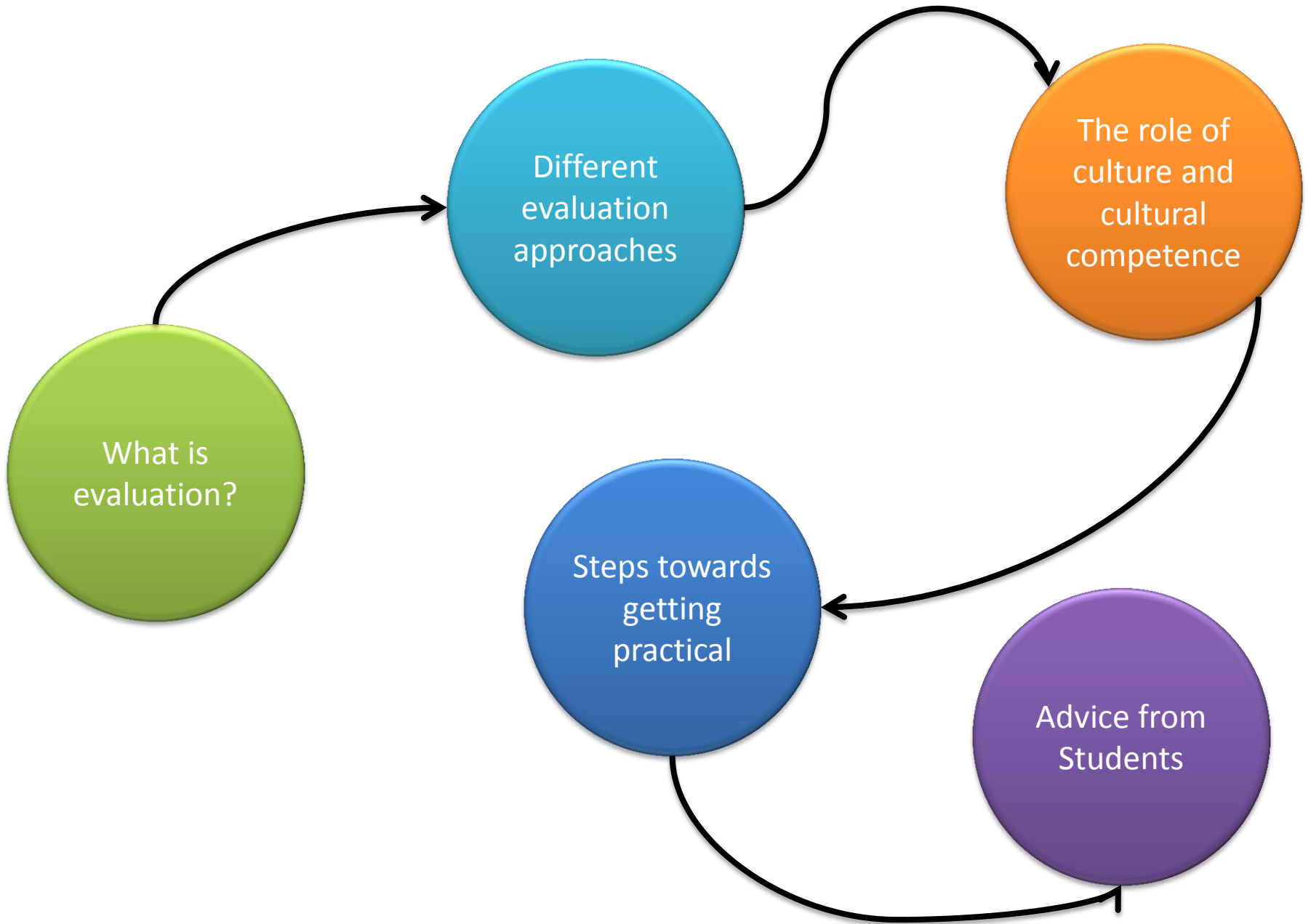


Cultural Competency

Presentation at the Ontario Chapter of the Canadian
Evaluation Society

Sanjeev Sridharan

The Evaluation Centre for Complex Health Intervention



My background

- Born in India
- Practiced Evaluation in North America and Europe
- Increasingly work in Asia
- Teach in Canadian, US and Asian Institutions
-Interested in building Evaluation as a field
-recognize the importance of cultural competence but have not formally thought about cultural competence

What is evaluation? A dull and incomplete definition

- Evaluation is defined both as a means of assessing performance and to identify alternative ways to deliver
- “evaluation is the systematic collection and analysis of evidence on the outcomes of programs to make judgments about their relevance, performance and alternative ways to deliver them or to achieve the same results.”

Purpose of evaluation (Mark, Henry and Julnes, 2000)

- **Assessing merit and worth**
 - Causal questions, RCT, observational studies
- **Programme and organizational improvement**
 - Formative evaluation
- **Oversight and compliance**
- **Knowledge development**
 - Neglected purpose of many evaluations
 - What role does culture play in the success of a program or policy?
How does evaluation incorporate such knowledge?

Features of programs (Pawson et al., 2004)

(Note: culture pervades every one of the features)

- The intervention is a theory or theories
- The intervention involves the actions of people.
- The intervention consists of a chain of steps
- These chains of steps or processes are often not linear, and involve negotiation and feedback at each stage.
- Interventions are embedded in social systems and how they work is shaped by this context.
- Interventions are prone to modification as they are implemented.
- Interventions are open systems and change through learning as stakeholders come to understand them.

Developmental Evaluation

Formative



Developmental

Summative



| MENU PLAN | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| DATE: _____ | GROUP: _____ |
| NAME(S): _____ | _____ |
| DETAILS OF: STOVE | |
| BREAKFAST | K. CALORIES |
| | TOTAL |
| LUNCH/SHACKS | L. CALORIES |
| | TOTAL |



So, what is cultural competence?
And, why does it matter for
evaluation?

The American Evaluation
Association's Statement on Cultural
Competence

What is culture?

- “Culture can be defined as the shared experiences of people, including their languages, values, customs, beliefs, and mores. It also includes worldviews, ways of knowing, and ways of communicating. Culturally significant factors encompass, but are not limited to, race/ethnicity, religion, social class, language, disability, sexual orientation, age, and gender. Contextual dimensions such as geographic region and socioeconomic circumstances are also essential to shaping culture”.
- “Culture is dynamic, fluid, and reciprocal.”

Evaluations reflect culture

- “Evaluations cannot be culture free. Those who engage in evaluation do so from perspectives that reflect their values, their ways of viewing the world, and their culture.”

What is cultural competence?

- “Cultural competence is not a state at which one arrives; rather, it is a process of learning, unlearning, and relearning. It is a sensibility cultivated throughout a lifetime.”
-
- “Cultural competence requires awareness of self, reflection on one’s own cultural position, awareness of others’ positions, and the ability to interact genuinely and respectfully with others. Culturally competent evaluators refrain from assuming they fully understand the perspectives of stakeholders whose backgrounds differ from their own.”

So...how does one bring such
humility and empathy in our work?

What does this mean for evaluation
practice?

Why Cultural Competence in Evaluation Is Important

- “Cultural competence is an ethical imperative”
- “Validity demands cultural competence.”
- “Theories are inherently cultural”
-our programs are inherently cultural. What programs are, how they work, why they work and what can be done to make it work are all related to culture.
- ...so what does this mean for practice?

Getting practical 1: The American Evaluation Association solutions

- “Acknowledge the complexity of cultural identity
- Recognize the dynamics of power
- Recognize and eliminate bias in language
- Employ culturally appropriate methods.”
 - “The methods and tools used for collection, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of data are not culture free.”
 -but are these really enough??

Getting practical 2: The supply and demand of evaluation

- How does one incorporate cultural competency into the **demand** for evaluation?
- How does one incorporate cultural competency into the **commissioning** of evaluations?
- What concepts are needed to stop giving lip-service to cultural competency?

Getting practical 3: Concepts that might help

- Heterogeneity
 - Does the program work differently for different individuals? Does the program address the needs of those who have the greatest needs?
- Dynamics
 - What is the anticipated trajectory of change? Will things get worse before they get better? For how long should the program be sustained?
 -
- Timeline of Impact
 - How long will it take for a program to impact outcomes?

- **Connections**

- What else is needed for a program to work? Does the program need connections to bring about change?
- Programs don't bring about change; people do.
- Boundary partners: Who are the partners that are necessary for a program to work?

- **Spread**

- What gets spread at the end of an evaluation? What is the process of spread? What role do local institutions play in the process of spread?

- **Sustainability**

- How long does a program need to be implemented before it can make a difference? How does an evaluation help decide

- **Values**

- What are we selling? Are we selling solutions or are we solving problems? What role do values play in finding solutions?

Getting practical 4: Methods to incorporate stories into our work

- Bring better storytelling into evaluation
- Connecting storytelling with measurement
- Use of video
- Heterogeneous and dynamic mechanisms

Getting practical 5: Advice from students

- How would we allow the group we are studying to frame the questions of research. Must explicitly identify who is asking the questions and for what purpose(s).
- Every institution has its own sense of sovereignty who value sense of place, language, history, and culture. Reclaim ways of determining merit and worth.
- Account for different ways of knowing: e.g. traditional, empirical and revealed knowledge
- Honor the place-based nature of many programs

Be respectful. Period.

Understand protocols of the culture.

Establish clarity about what each party needs from the other. Be clear about intentions. For example, establish early, “whose voice will be represented?”

Do your homework to learn about the context and, even after that, realize that you still don't know the whole story.

Understand that the solution is not imposed; you co-create the solution with the community and it needs to fit the context.

Understand the norms and protocols by which people engage, for example, in Hawai'i we talk story before business.

Allow for wait time in conversations.

Understand that within every group there will be heterogeneity, don't stereotype.

Show your appreciation.

Having respect, which build upon fostering relationships

Unpacking what respect means in an evaluation setting

Creating opportunities for participants to sit and share their “stories”.

Create ways to build in those moments for “story telling”

At the onset, be clear about the lens one is looking through. For example people may think it could be the indigenous lens but really one is looking through the lens of poverty.

Remember the context you are working in.

- Use the existing strengths to address weaker areas; Appreciative Inquiry.
- Build in voice giving to the indigenous group as part of the methodology
- Present the findings in a genuine way that cannot be invalidated later by any organization
- Remember the “Sense of becoming” is ongoing, the program is on a continuum somewhere