

Creating a Learning Community for Data-Based System Planning: An 8-Year Experience in Quality of Life Assessment



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Focus

- Participatory action framework
- 8-year Quality of Life evaluation
- Service areas:
 - Mental Health
 - Substance abuse
 - Developmental disabilities

Setting

- Publicly funded
- Urban/suburban (pop. about 5,000,000)
- Agency established by legislation 1989-90



Initial context

- Board policy
- Needs:
 - Assure accountability
 - Guide effective service delivery





Response

- University partnership
- Developed mixed method design responsive to policy goals

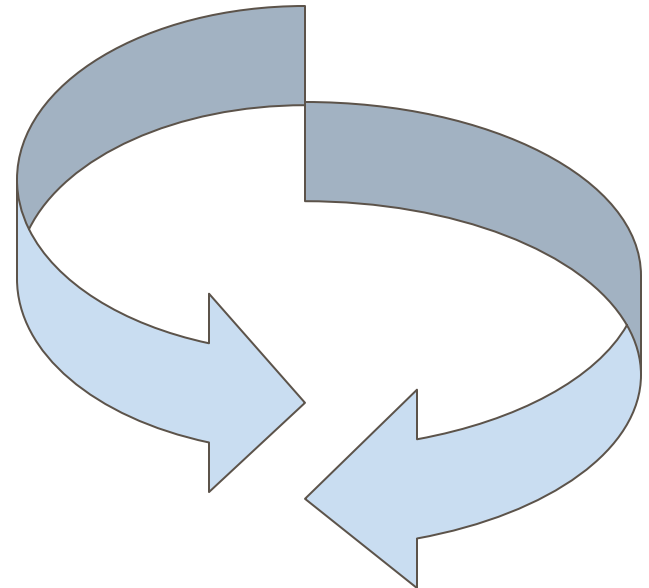
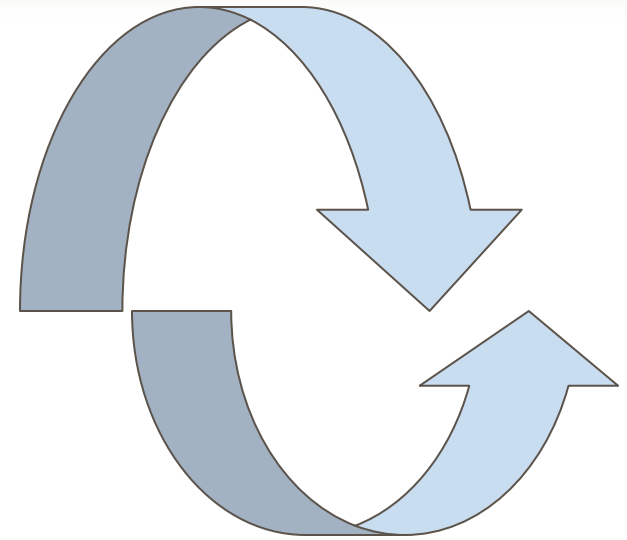


Plans

- Flexible and interactive participatory action research
- Balance evaluation objectivity with policy and program relevance and responsiveness

Result

- “Double loop” organizational learning over time
- Feeds back to impact service planning quality and effectiveness



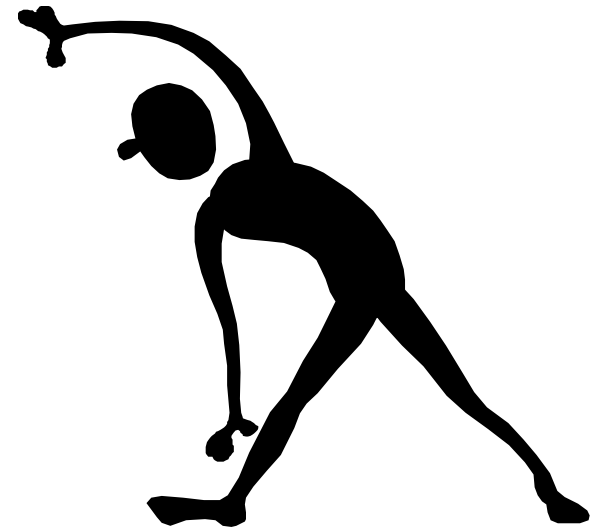


Purpose of the Evaluation

- Develop QoL assessment tools
- Assess QoL for clients in three service areas
- Assess client satisfaction with services received
- Assess agency success in improving QoL
- Suggest QoL factors amenable to improvements through changes in services

The Evaluator's Role

- *“Blessed is she who is flexible for she shall not be bent out of shape.”*



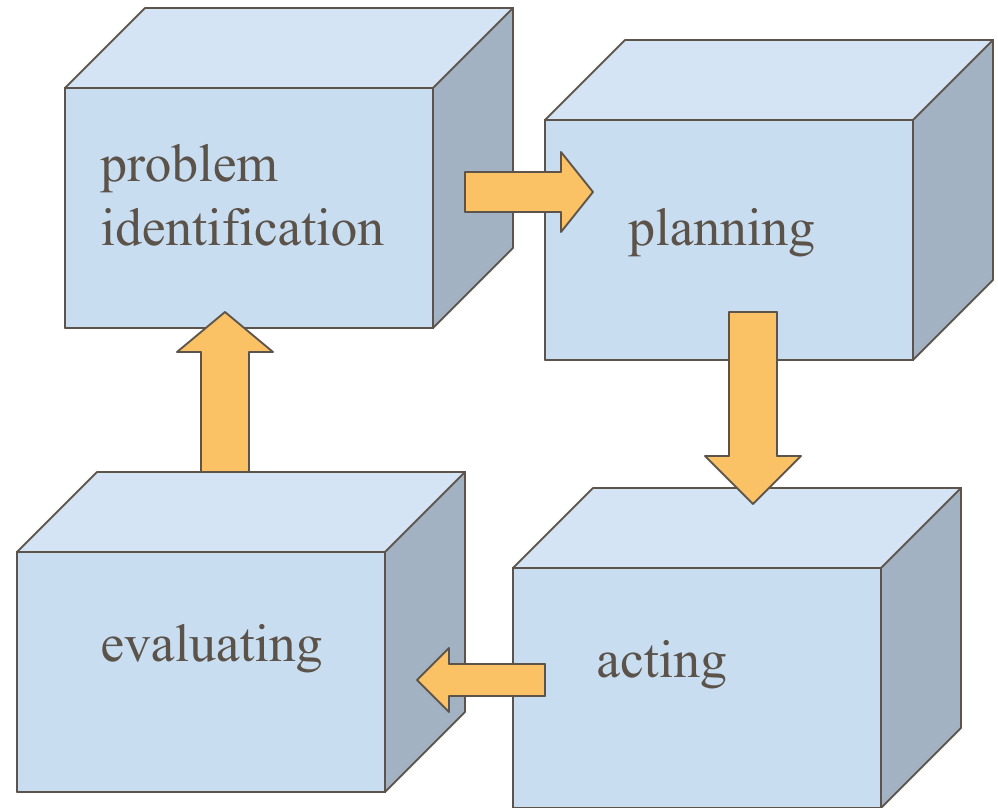


Evaluation Model

- Problem identification
- Problem clarification/literature review
- Instrument development
- Quantitative assessment of QoL
- Interpretation of results
- Development of interview protocol
- Outlier case studies
- Interpretation of results
- Recommended changes in services
- Implementation of changes
- Repeat assessment/Problem identification

Action Science

- Focus on real problems
- Emphasis on improvement
- Participation of clients





Considerations in QoL Assessment

- Subjective versus objective
- Cognitive versus affective
- Global versus domain-specific
- Quantitative versus qualitative
- Questions related to life domains
 - Importance
 - Satisfaction
 - Effectiveness



Multi-method design

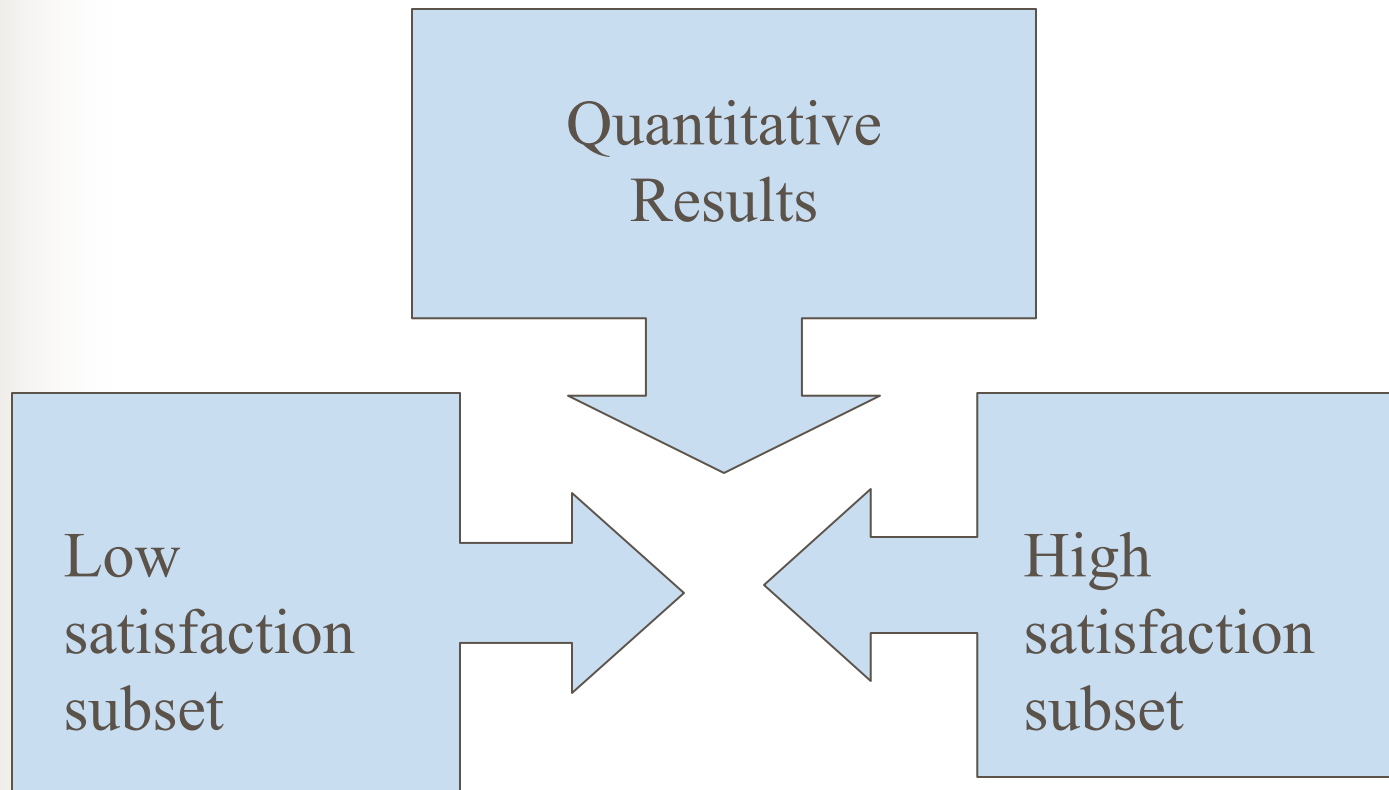
- Subjective global affective assessment
 - Index of well-being
- Subjective global cognitive assessment
 - Global satisfaction with life
- Subjective domain-specific cognitive assessment
 - Satisfaction with life
- Subjective/objective domain-specific qualitative assessment
 - Outlier interviews



Quality of Life Domains

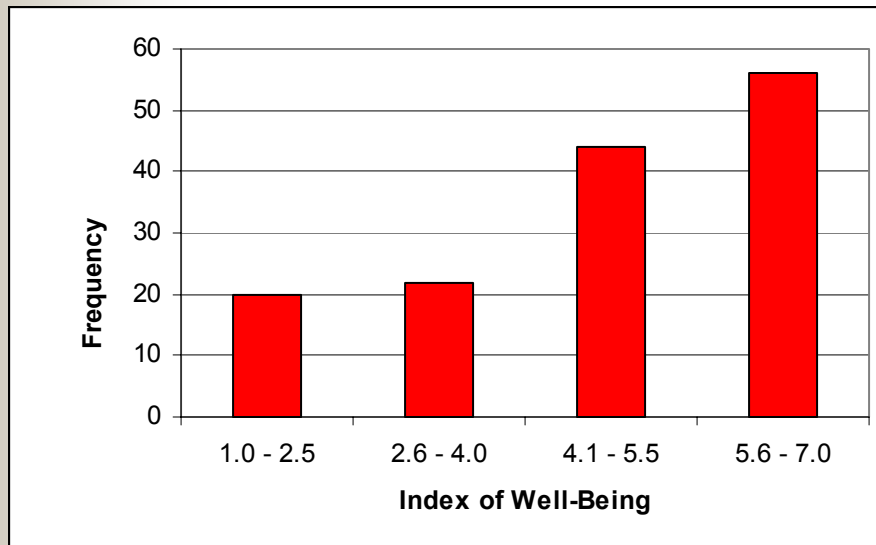
- Physical and Mental Health
- Social Relationships
- Community Service
- Personal Development and Fulfillment
- Recreation

Outlier Model



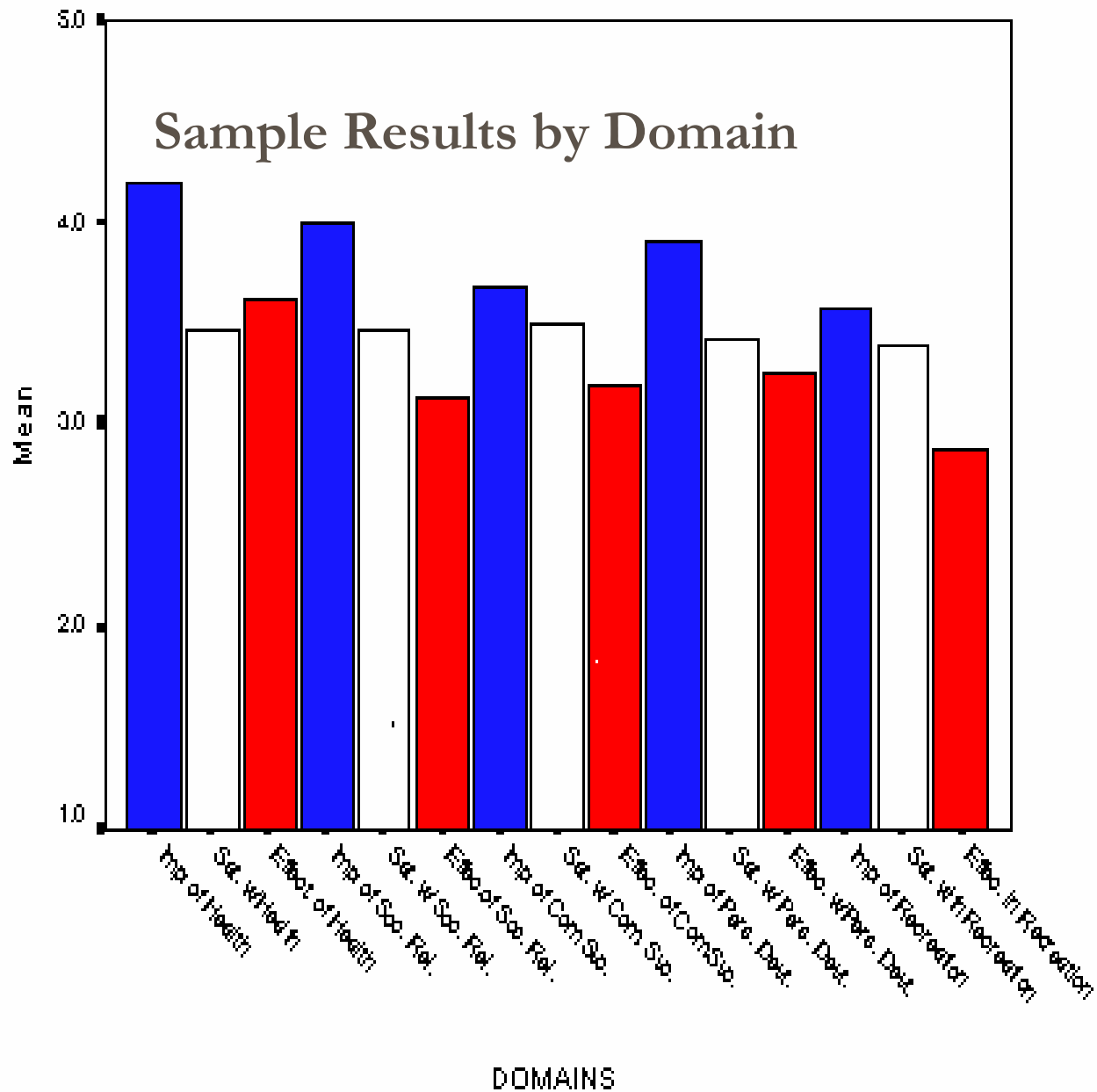
Sample results: General Well-being

■ Index of Well-Being



■ Global Satisfaction with Life

| | <u>Mean</u> | <u>Service Area</u> |
|---|-------------|----------------------------|
| ■ | 5.65 | Developmental Disabilities |
| ■ | 4.74 | Addictive Disorders |
| ■ | 4.41 | Mental Health |
| ■ | 4.69 | Total Sample |





Outlier Sample

- 6 Developmental Disabilities
 - 2 low satisfaction
 - 2 moderate satisfaction
 - 2 high satisfaction
- 6 Addictive Disorders
 - 2 low satisfaction
 - 2 moderate satisfaction
 - 2 high satisfaction
- 5 Mental Health
 - 2 low satisfaction
 - 2 moderate satisfaction
 - 2 high satisfaction



Sample suggestions

1. Assess the quality of case management as it relates to coordination of services.
2. Provide clear, concise information to clients (both at intake and again when clients are more stable) about what services are available and how to access them. Determine as a staff whether assistance in all quality of life domains continues to be a goal and if it is to be provided, make resources available in each.
3. Advocate for coordination of services and client education with other service providers.



Macro-level Results

- Internalized skills in QoL evaluations and utilization in planning
- Created broader learning community with agency, university, and related non-profit providers
- Major system change to focus on QoL improvements, family direction for planning
- Voice for consumer/family planning
- Increased use of consumer/family-driven evaluation processes and planning partnerships
- Commitment to continuing evaluation