



PHE5POL

Evelyn de Leeuw MSc MPH PhD

Public Health & Health Policy
La Trobe University

2014



Evidence

1. Our evidence may not be their evidence...
2. What evidence is needed?
3. Policy heuristics and evidence gaps



Why evidence?

- Flow-on from Evidence-Based Medicine (EBM) movement
- Pressure for accountability and value for money (demonstration of effectiveness and cost-effectiveness)
- Ethical responsibility to do the best possible and to inform community about likely impact and limitations



Why evidence?



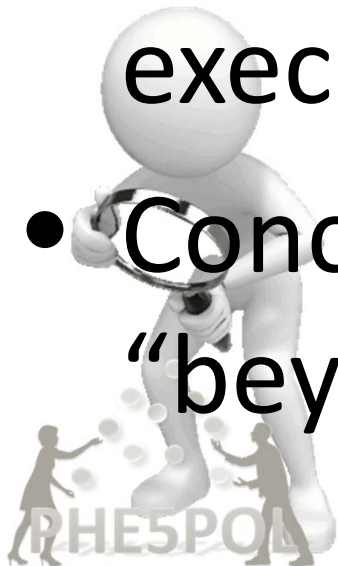
What is evidence?

“the available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid”

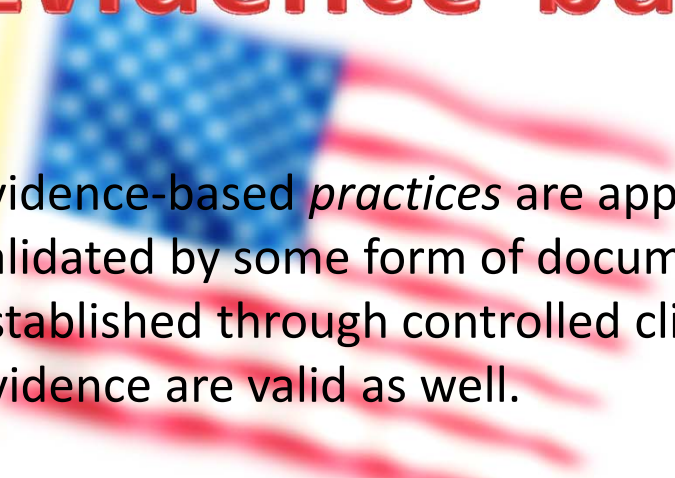


What is evidence?

- De-constructing
- Controlling for bias
- Search for universal truths
- Time needed for careful planning and execution
- Concern for rigour and accuracy -
“beyond reasonable doubt”



Evidence-based or -informed?



Evidence-based *practices* are approaches to prevention or treatment that are validated by some form of documented scientific evidence. This includes findings established through controlled clinical studies, but other methods of establishing evidence are valid as well.

Evidence-based *programs* use a defined curriculum or set of services that, when implemented with fidelity as a whole, has been validated by some form of scientific evidence. Evidence-based practices and programs may be described as "supported" or "well-supported", depending on the strength of the research design.

Evidence-*informed* practices use the best available research and practice knowledge to guide program design and implementation. This informed practice allows for innovation while incorporating the lessons learned from the existing research literature. Ideally, evidence-based and evidence-informed programs and practices should be responsive to families' cultural backgrounds, community values, and individual preferences.



Evidence-based or -informed?

Evidence-based *practices* are approaches to prevention or treatment that are validated through controlled clinical studies, but other methods of establishing evidence are also available.

Lawrence Green (of PRECEDE-PROCEED fame):

For more evidence-based practice we need more practice-based evidence

Would it thus be as simple as...:

For more evidence-based policy we need more policy-based evidence




Green, L. W. (2006) Public health asks of systems science: to advance our evidence-based practice, can you help us get more practice-based evidence? American Journal of Public Health, 96(3), 406.

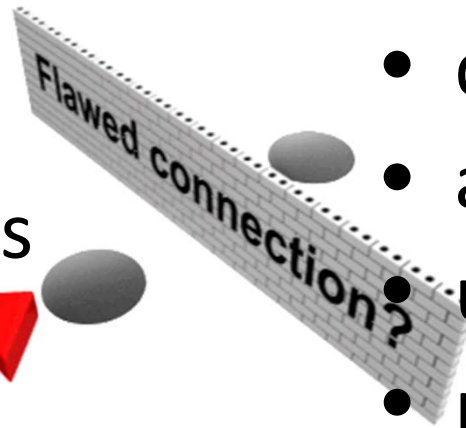
The two-cultures hypothesis

Policy

- identify problems
- understand context
- develop options
- assess reactions
- use judgment
- prepare for next crisis

Technical

- identify problems
- identify causes 
- develop options
- analyse options
- selection intervention
- implement
- evaluate



The two-cultures hypothesis

DIMENSIONS

RESEARCHERS

POLICY-MAKERS

Nature of work

Discrete, planned projects

Continuous, unplanned flow, ever-changing tasks

Incentives

Publications, grants

Re-election, recognition

Time frame for action

Longer

Shorter

Knowledge span

Deep but on fewer issues

Broadly across many issues

Accountability

Scientific peers and funding agencies

Politicians and electorate

Constraints

Research funding and ethics

Political and bureaucratic imperatives

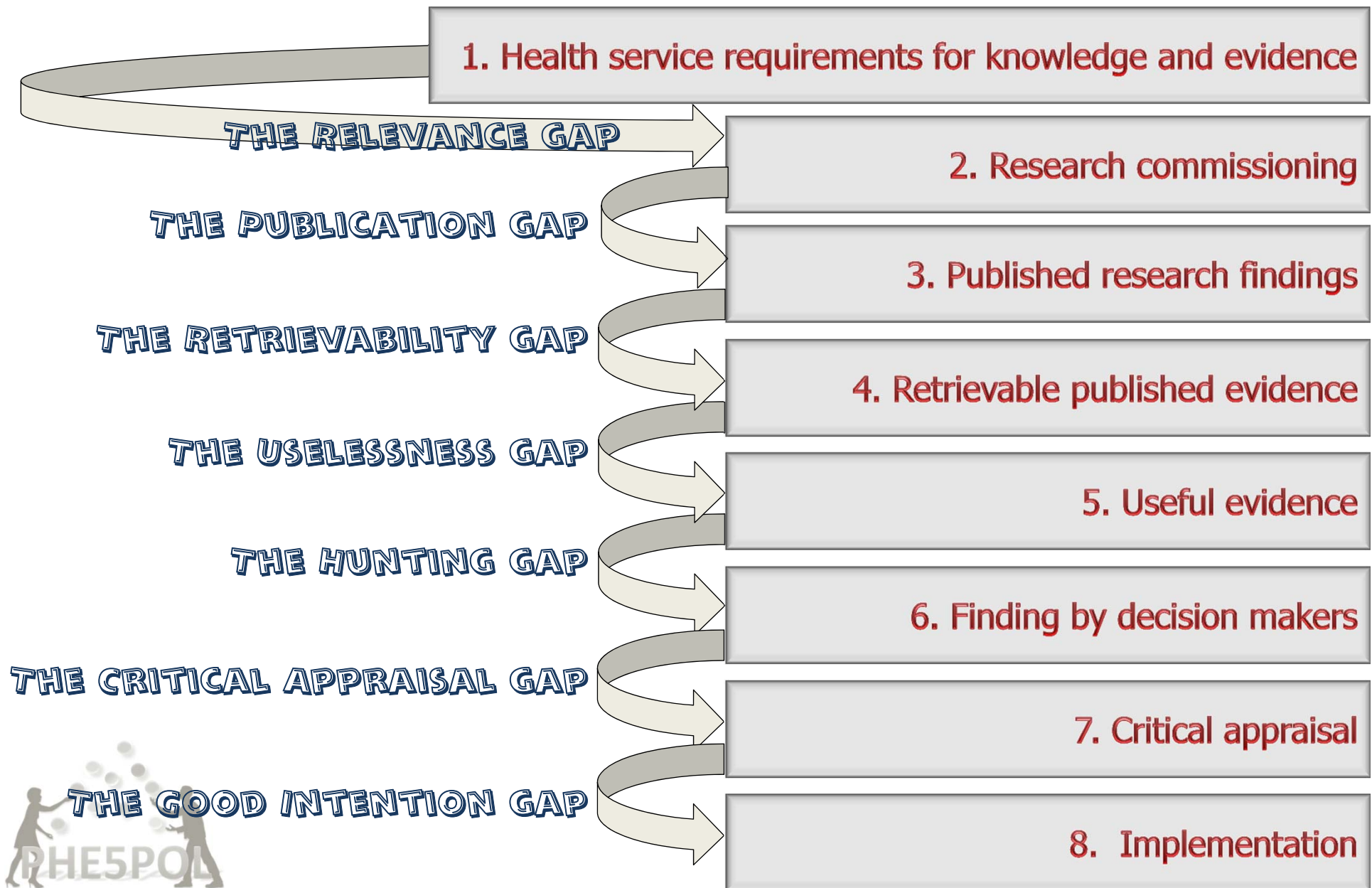
Uses of evidence

- The **knowledge-driven model**: new knowledge will lead to new policies
 - The **problem-solving model**: research findings are actively sought, and used for pending decisions
 - In the **interactive model** incremental policy change is interactively driven back and forth by emerging research outcomes.
 - The **political model** leads to research being used to support partisan political positions.
 - The **tactical model** says that research is being undertaken as an excuse for delaying decisions, or deflect criticism.
 - The **enlightenment model** assumes that concepts and theoretical perspectives that social science research has engendered permeate the policy-making process, rather than single studies or research programmes having a discernable impact on policy priorities.
- De Leeuw, E. & A. McNess (2007) Shifting the tipping point on achieving realistic outcome parameters for humanitarian and development aid. Ch. 16, pp. 323-336 in: Renzaho, A., ed. (2007) Measuring effectiveness in Humanitarian and Development aid. Conceptual frameworks, principles and practice. Nova Publishers, New York
 - Vedung, E.(2000) Public policy and programme evaluation. Transaction publishers, London
 - Weiss, C. (1977). Research for policy's sake: the Enlightenment function of social science research. Policy Analysis, 3(4): 531-545.
 - Weiss, C.H. (1979) The many meanings of research utilization. Public Administration Review, Sep/Oct, 426-431

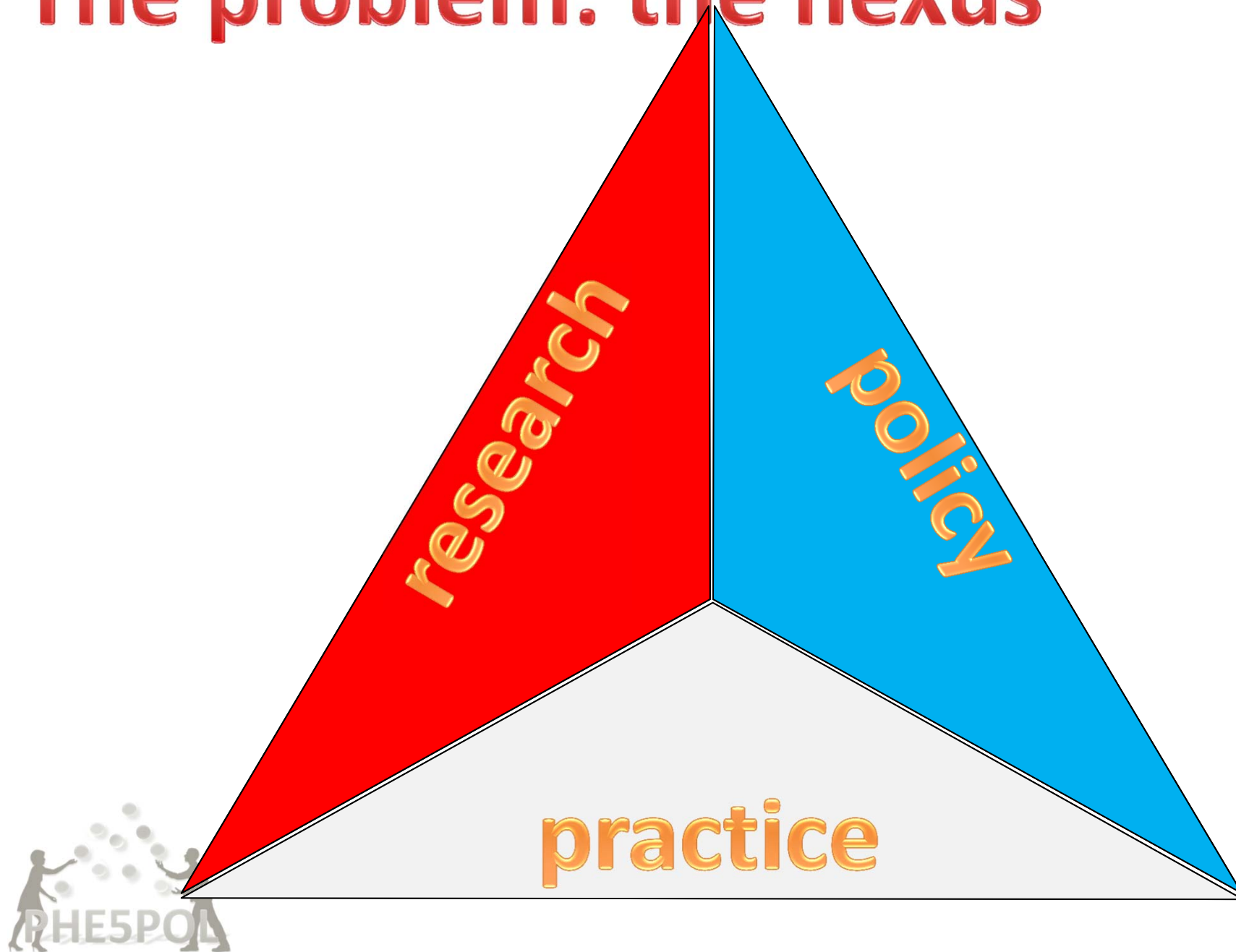
Romantic ideas about diffusion



The problem: gaps



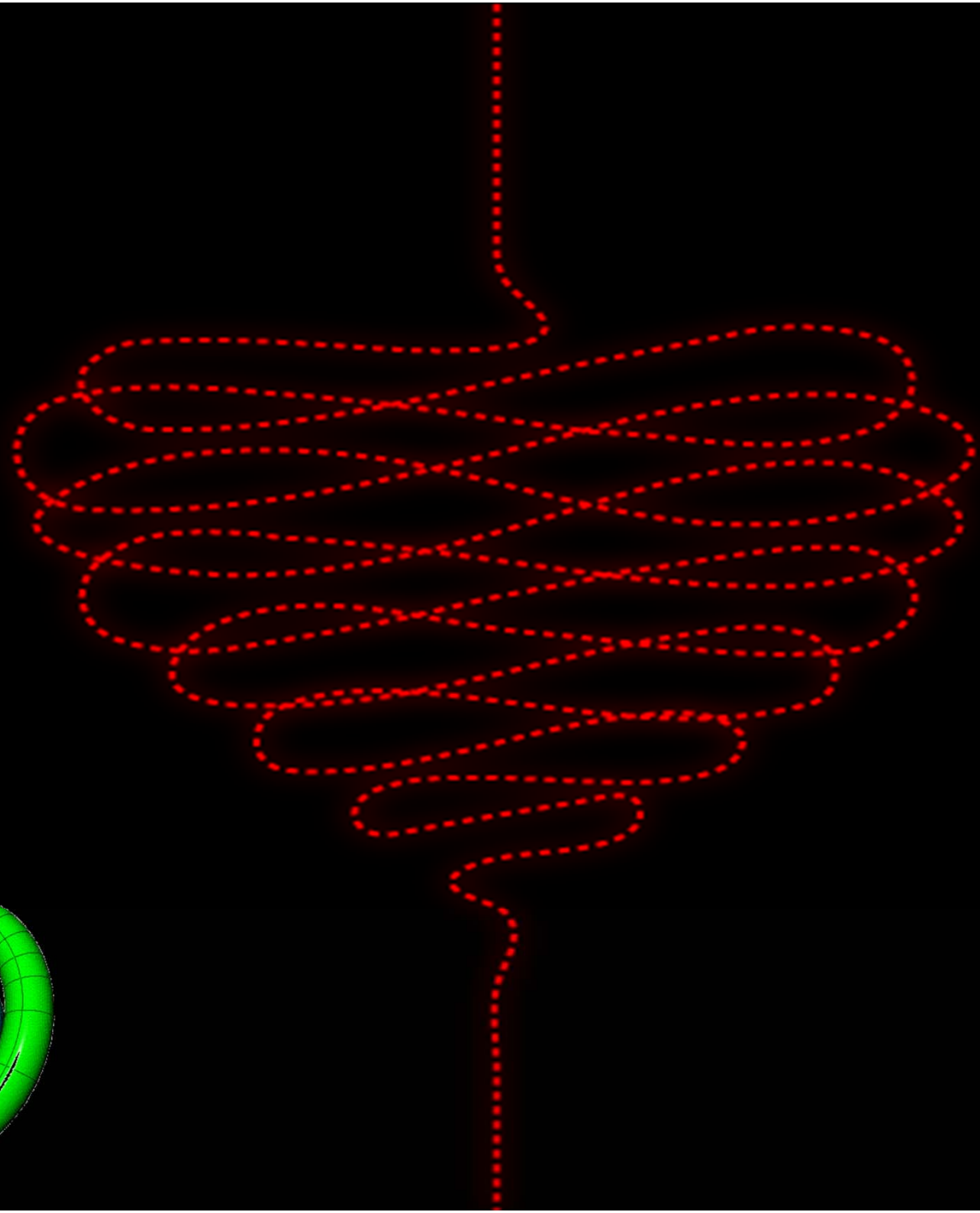
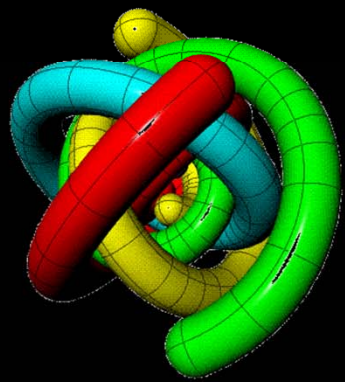
The problem: the nexus





**Evidence: watering the parched plains
of policy and practice?**

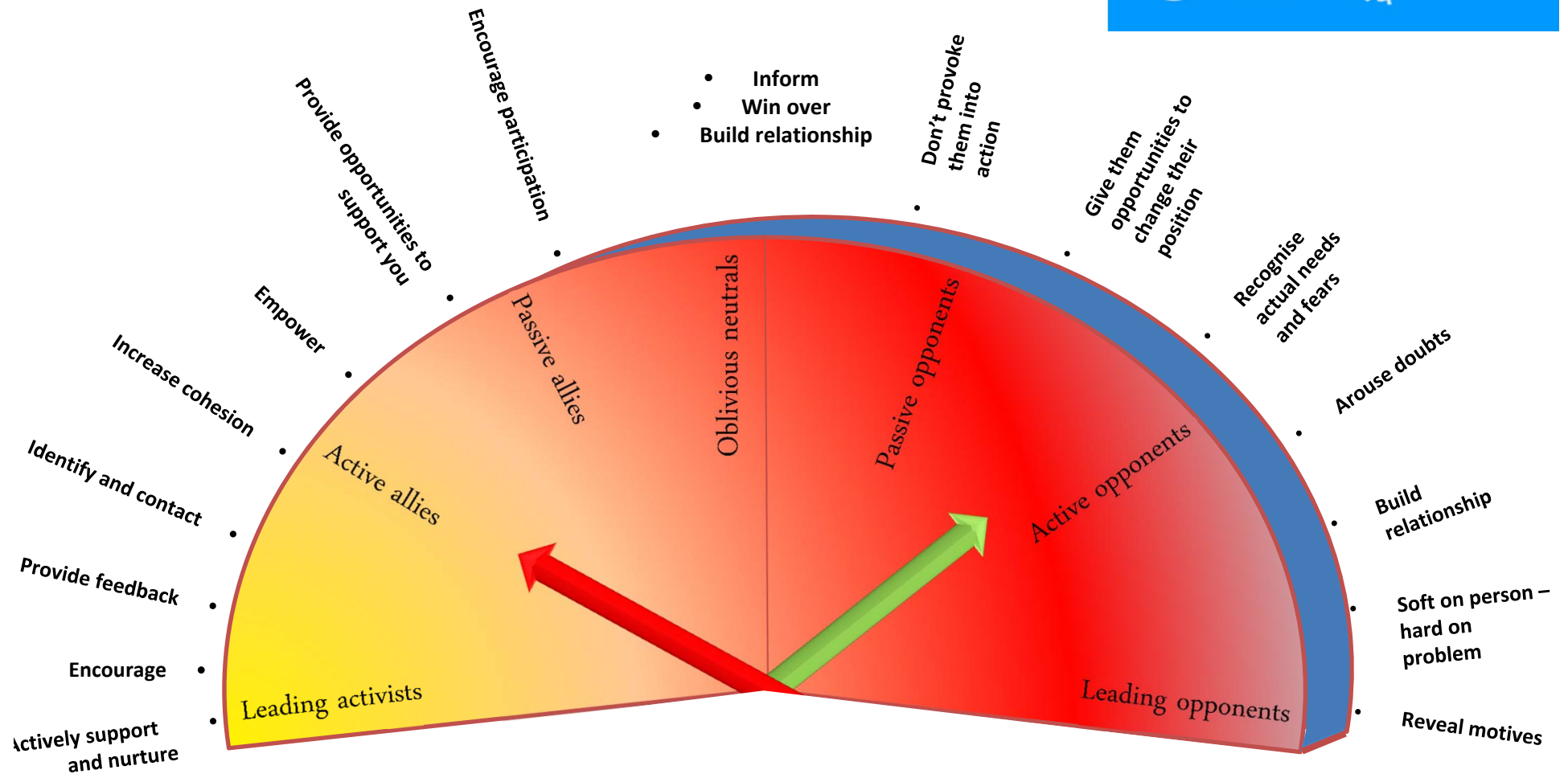




Oh - but what could I do?
I am just one small health
professional...



Allies & opposition



Evidence – judicial approach

Journal of Public Health Medicine

Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 133–139
Printed in Great Britain

For debate

Towards a secure evidence base for health promotion

Jackie Green and Keith Tones

Summary

The importance of a sound evidence base for health promotion is recognized. Criteria for establishing evidence have, in the past, been heavily influenced by the bio-medical agenda. The problems in using experimental and quasi-experimental approaches and their limited relevance for evaluating health promotion interventions are examined. The multifactorial nature of the health promotion enterprise in relation to both inputs and outputs is recognized and a range of direct, indirect and process indicators are identified. The relevance of combining quantitative and qualitative

moreover, propose a wider evaluative framework based on a 'judicial principle' for assessing evidence.

The search for reliable evidence

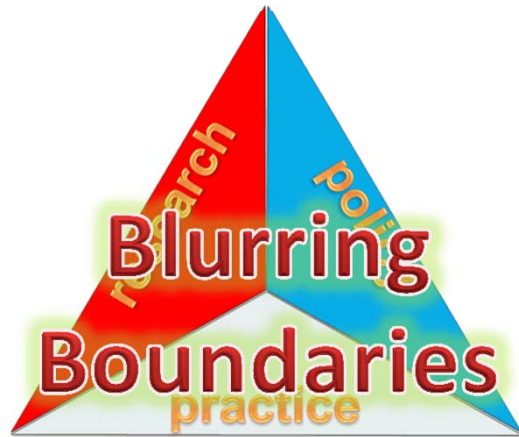
Although it is beyond the remit of this paper to discuss the current plethora of definitions (see Tones and Tilford²), health promotion ranges in scope from working with individuals and small groups to community wide and national

The term 'judicial review'³⁶ can be used to describe assembling sufficient evidence to lead to a confident decision about a course of action even though absolute proof is not available. Based on the principle of triangulation, a judgement is made following a thorough review of all the accumulated evidence. The level of rigour associated with making such judgements can either conform to the notion of 'the balance of probabilities' leading towards a particular view or the much tougher criterion of 'beyond reasonable doubt'

effectiveness are applicable to health promotion; it will, Jackie Green, Course Leader, Health Education and Health Promotion
Keith Tones, Professor of Health Education
Address correspondence to Dr J. Green.
© Faculty of Health, Behavior and Society, Metropolitan University.



The problem: the nexus

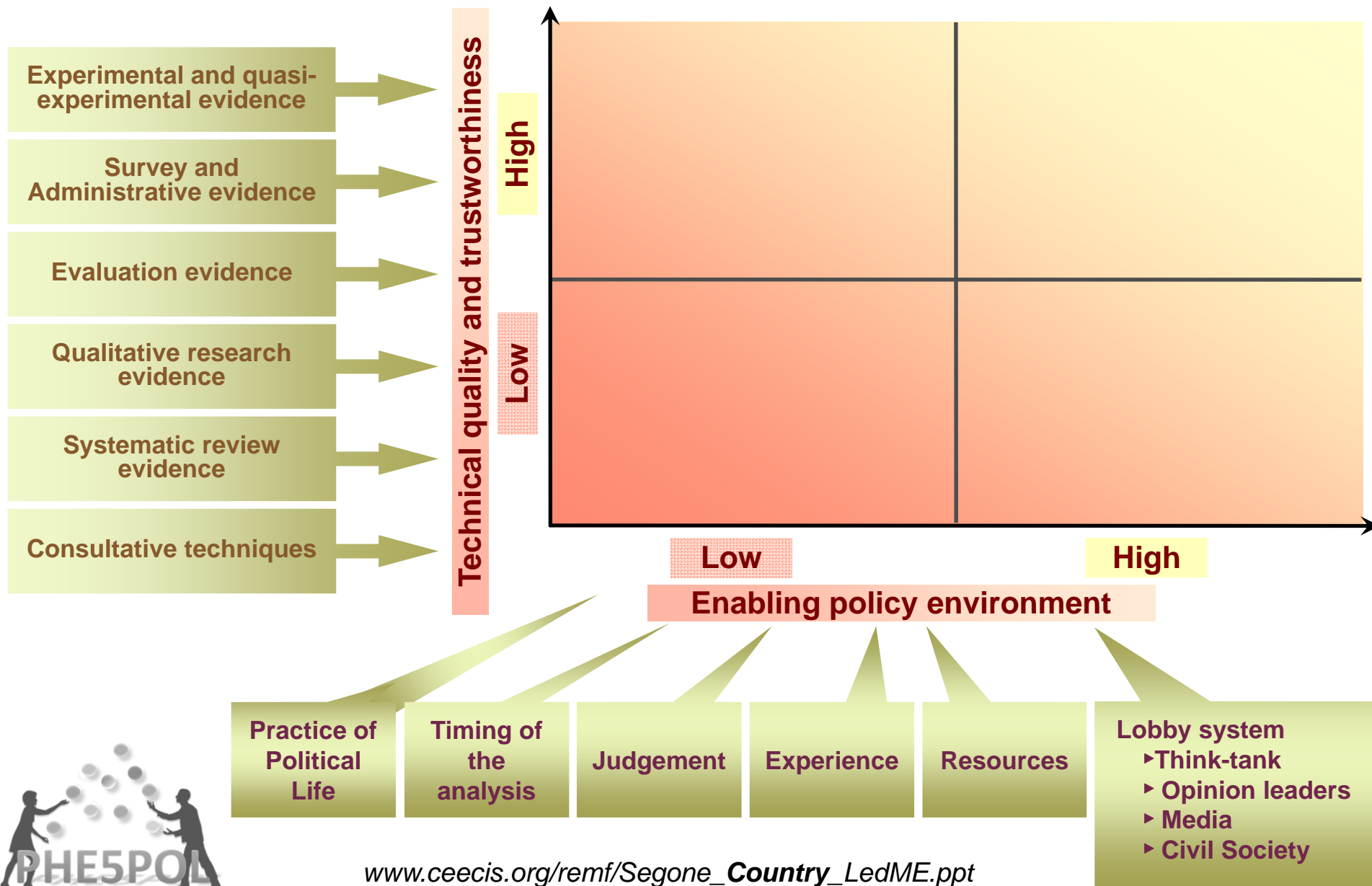


Sources of evidence

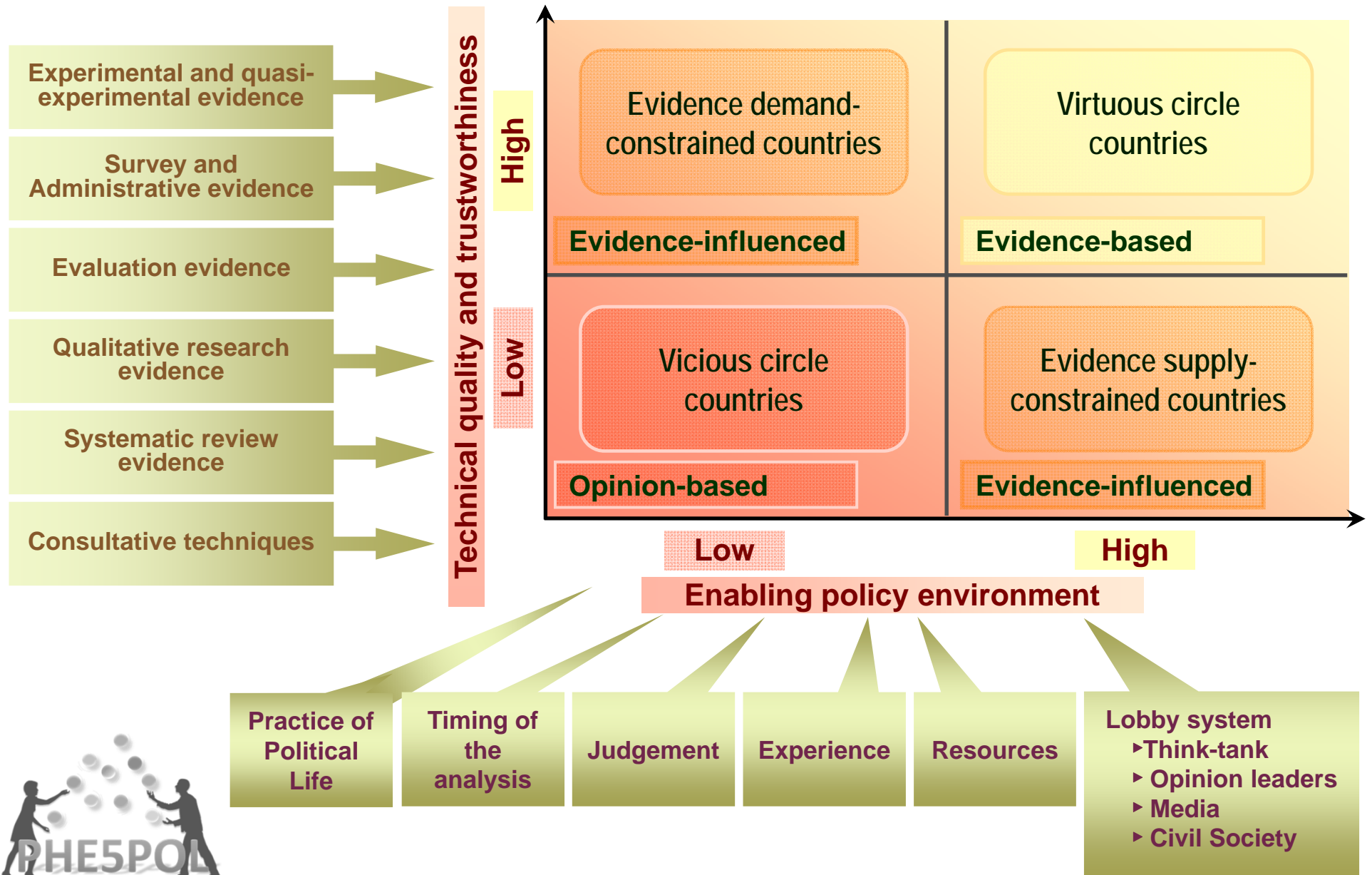
	FORMAL	INFORMAL
EXTERNAL	Commissions Inquiries Judicial reviews Commissioned research Formal consultations	Consultations Reports Informal advice
INTERNAL	Internal research/inquiry Internal think-tank reports Internal expert reports	Informal discussions Gossip Rumour Folklore Informal advisor



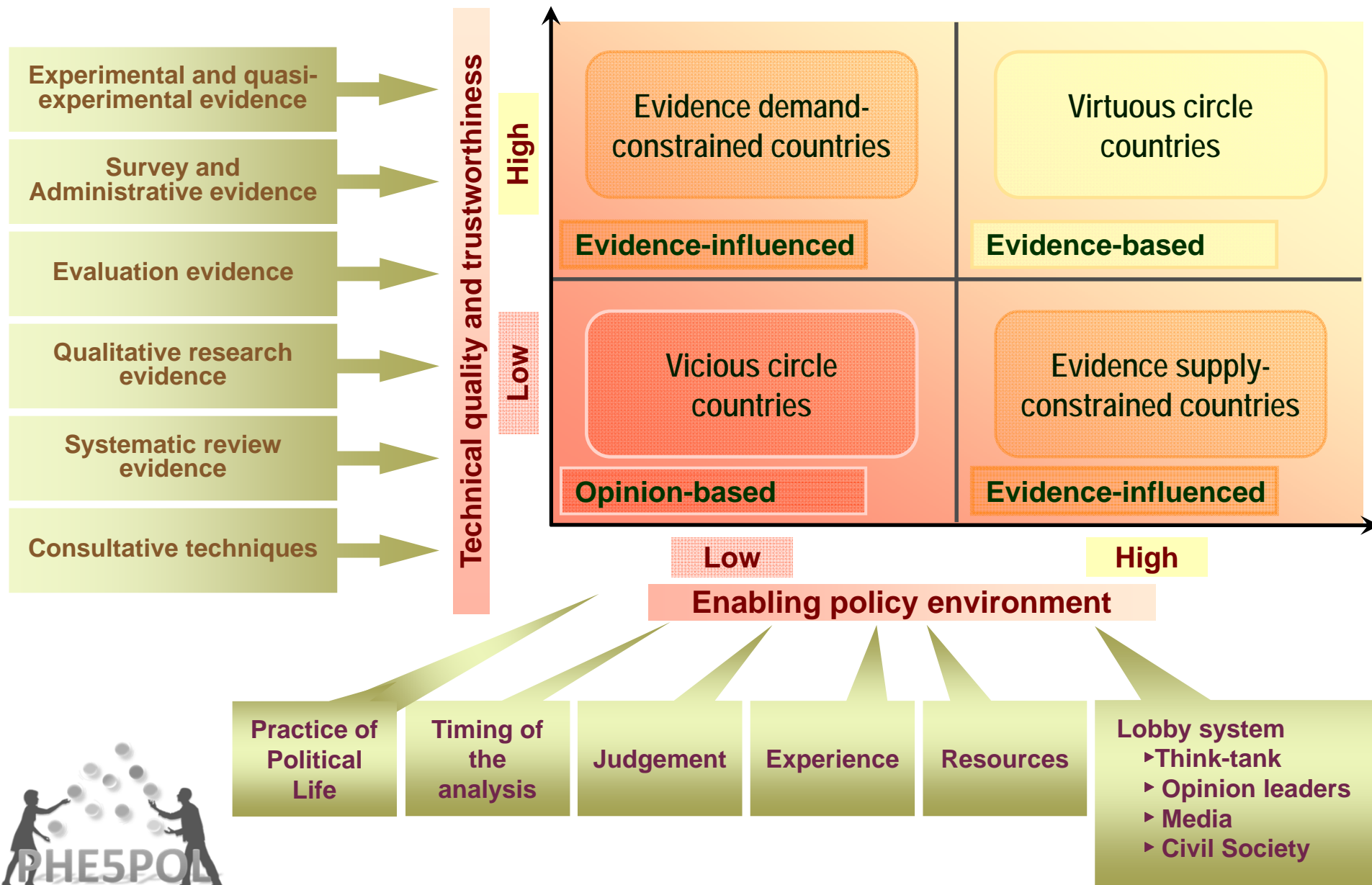
Evidence: Segone (UNICEF)?



Evidence: Segone (UNICEF)?



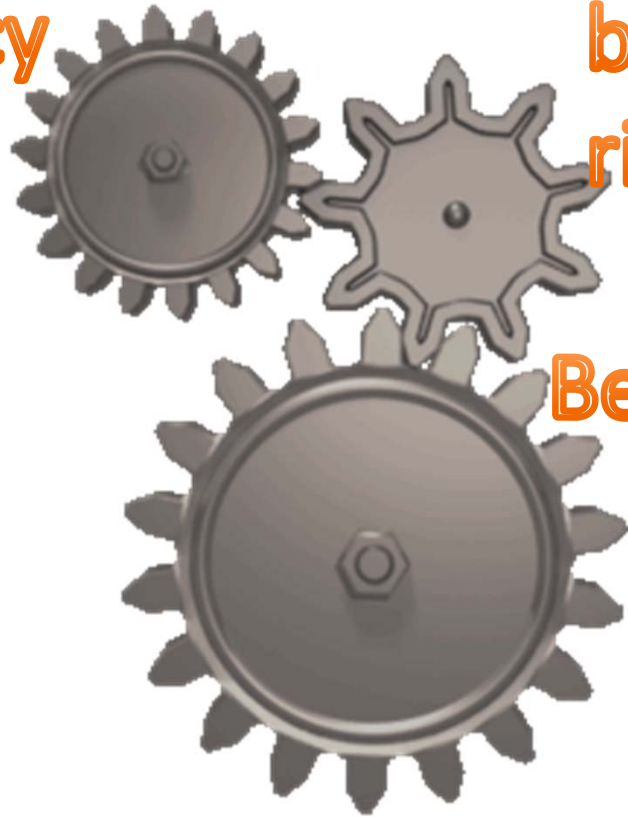
Evidence: Segone (UNICEF)?



Match technical rigour with politics

Technical rigour
but no policy
relevance

Policy relevance
but no technical
rigour



Better evidence -
technically
rigorous and
policy relevant

Better policy delivery & design

- A few clear and consistent priorities
- A widely shared and understood vision
- Policy design that takes account of implementation issues and knowledge of what works
- Intensive support and training for managers and front-line staff
- Sufficient freedom to innovate and adapt policy to local conditions
- Clear leadership, clear accountability lines
- Effective management of complex technologies

The case for pessimism...:

- Rhetoric is easy – when votes are at stake, evidence goes out the window
- Irrational assumptions – policies used to distract punters from the killer headlines
- What evidence – not a brilliant record in funding research; better record of suppressing findings
- What debate – rigorous public and professional debate lacking
- Whose evidence – indiscriminate use of ‘evidence’, used to invoke support for dubious causes
- Behind the times – tardiness in setting up structures and systems for integrating evidence into policy

And optimism?

- Continuous reform or search for new solutions
- Community expectations, increased policy literacy, and trust and legitimacy problems
- Mutual yearnings
- The challenge of implementation

Best: realism

- Scientific evidence most influential for discrete program choices
- Research and knowledge transfer are critical but not the whole story
- The role of scientific evidence is variable, depending on the stage of the policy-making process at which it is introduced

Best: realism

- Evidence for right audience, about right issues, through right methods
- Evidence about effectiveness and conditional nature of effectiveness
- Classical statistical tools as well as new mathematical tools
- Qualitative and participatory techniques

Understand culture & politics

- Community values and their distribution and evolution
- Community perception of health and policy
- Interest group behavior and dynamics
- Capacity of health system to absorb and implement change
- Organisational culture and political economy of intra-health service resource distribution

Taming policy problems

- Policy problems as “wicked problems” - difficult to identify both nature of problem and solutions
- Wicked problems need framing before they can be tamed
- Data and research evidence can contribute to framing and taming of wicked problems
- Data do not speak for themselves



Conclusion

- Policy - a process of continuous negotiation, as well as patterns of everyday practices
- Involves evidence and contingency (argument and politics)
- Evidence - meaning carried in argument and depends on stakeholders' contexts
- Policy decisions - reflects tension between choice (action) and structure (context)

What is evidence?

