Blind-spot analysis and Evidence-Based initiatives: shining a light on methodological innovations

Chris Roche
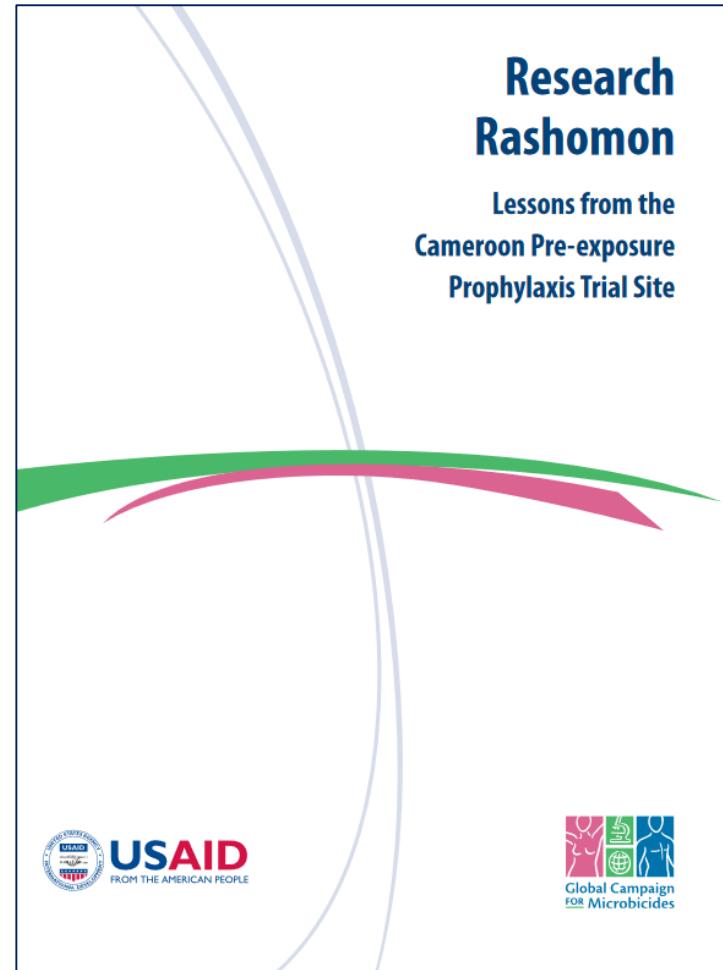## Institute for Human Security and Social Change
La Trobe University

GLOBAL EVIDENCE AND IMPLEMENTATION SUMMIT 2018

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

The Blind Spot of Politics

"In the laboratory perhaps, science can indulge its natural preferences for objectivity, political neutrality, and pristine research environments. But in the field of HIV ...research, with its numerous sensitivities, that expectation is naïve and can invite failure.

This means that ...researchers need to do more than nod to "social factors." They need to think about human, social, and political issues actively and strategically at every step of the conceptualization, design, conduct, and follow through.."

Research Rashomon

Lessons from the Cameroon Pre-exposure Prophylaxis Trial Site

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE
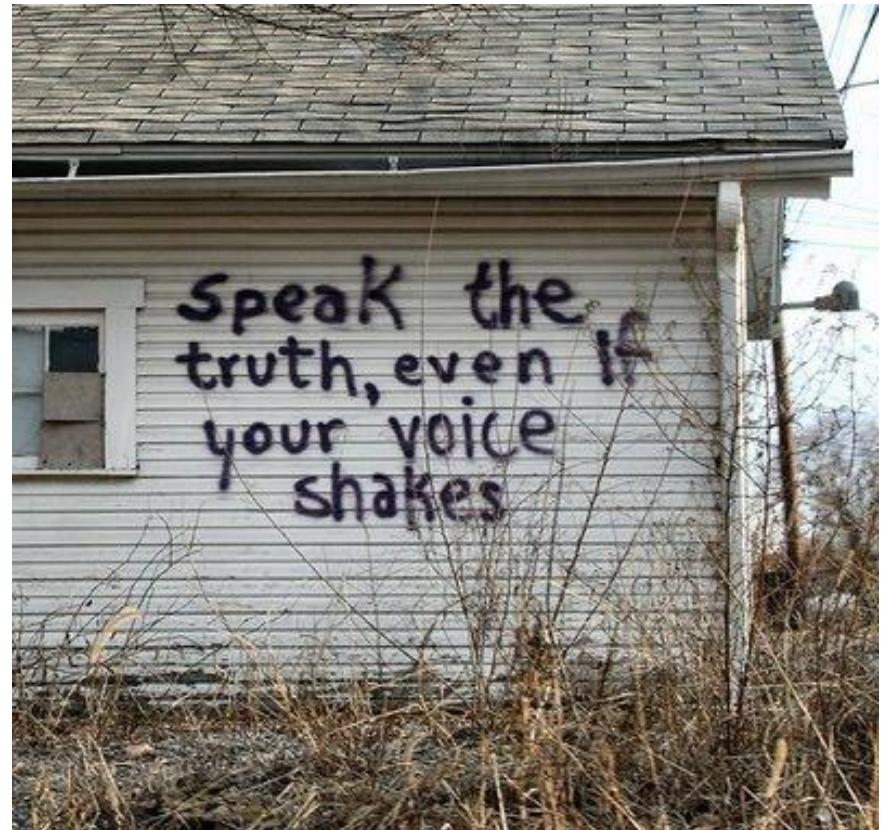
Global Campaign FOR Microbicides

The Blind Spot of Politics

1. *Evaluation is inherently political*

2. *Ignoring this, or wishing politics away is dangerous*

3. *There are tried and tested ways of embracing politics which could be explored*

1. Evaluation is inherently political cos:

- *It effects people's jobs, reputations and lives;*

- *Power relations between stakeholders involved are unequal;*

- *Evaluators or reviewers also have their own interests, reputations & next contract to worry about.*

- *Invariably it is funded by someone who also has interests to promote or protect.*

Cos evaluation is inherently political...

..this contributes to determining:

- *what gets researched and how,*

- *who pays for it,*

- *the type of evidence sought,*

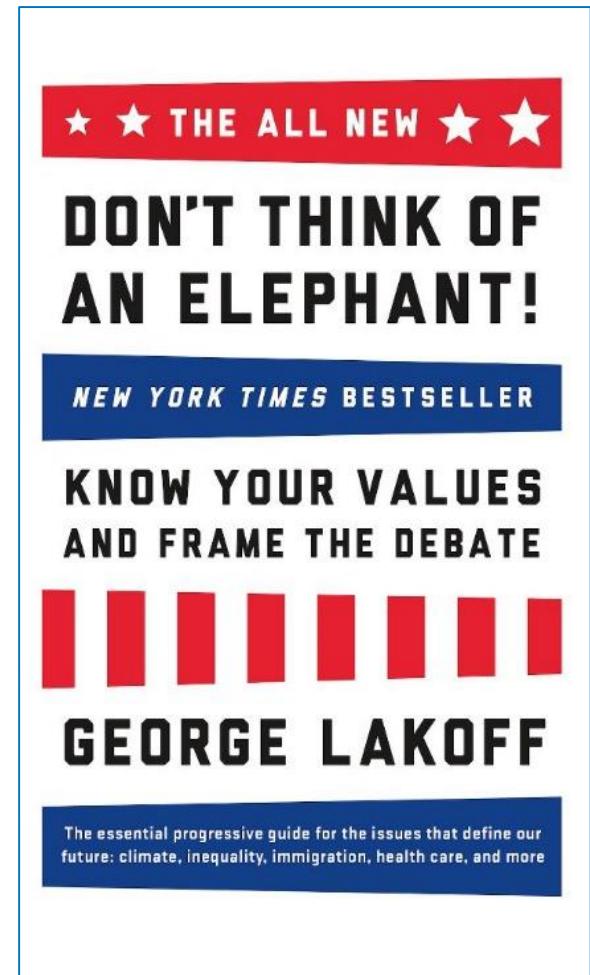- *as well as the likelihood of whether findings will or will not be accepted*

2. Ignoring this is dangerous:

- *Evidence and knowledge generated by evaluation is located within a political context which will determine if anyone listens/acts;*

- *Politics at its best is ultimately a battle of ideas about what society we want, how goods are distributed and how we treat each other.*

'You're fake news'

- *It is this process of negotiation, dialogue and contestation which leads to processes and institutions being seen to be legitimate in the eyes of the public;*

3. Implications for evaluative practice?

- *Develop a Theory of Change for evaluative processes which factor in politics & power;*

- *Think carefully about how to create safe spaces for negotiation and dialogue between stakeholders;*

- *Frame findings in politically salient ways;*

- *Make findings available in accessible formats so that others might 'draw them down' in ways that lead to further change*

- *Thinking much more seriously about the governance of evidence generation and outreach processes.*

Thanks!

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