

***'WE JUST HAVE TO FIGURE IT OUT':
ENGAGING MARGINALIZED YOUNG
WOMEN IN PUBLIC POLICY MAKING***

Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health

LOOKING BACK, THINKING AHEAD:

Using Research to Improve Policy and Practice in

Women's Health

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“The promise of youth civic engagement lies in enhanced wellness for participating youth, for their interpersonal connections, and for the community at large. The perils lie in accentuating the virtues of participation at the expense of changing structural inequalities and power differentials...” (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2005).

“Policies respond to [social toxins] by blaming youth themselves or simply by writing them off as a threat to civil society...[evoking] public policy that conceptualizes young people as the root causes of their own problems” (Ginwright & James, 2002, p. 29).

OUTLINE

- Who are 'Marginalized' 'Young' 'Women'?
- What is the Foundation of Civic Engagement with Marginalized Young Women?
- Framework: 'Democratized Research for Democratized Policy-Making' (DRDP)
- Poverty-Reduction in New Brunswick – The Early Experience
- Conclusion

PURPOSE

- To outline ‘democratized research for democratized policy-making’ (DRDP) as a framework for enabling the participation of marginalized young women in public policy-making processes
- To discuss the early experience of applying DRDP components to poverty-reduction in New Brunswick
- To suggest studying DRDP projects as population health interventions

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

...ABOUT THE DARK SIDE OF BEING A YOUNG WOMAN IN CANADA? YOUNG WOMEN:

- Are 30-50% of homeless youth
- Are disproportionately violated by sexual harassment and family violence
- Are made marginal by gender inequities
- Experience dual discourses of 'crisis' and 'power'
- Who are single-mothers are 3x as likely to live in poverty, and poverty is a cause of the causes of poor health

...ABOUT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND WELL-BEING? THERE ARE:

- Individual Benefits
 - Sense of identity
 - Adjustment
 - Improved learning
- Relational Benefits
 - Social capital and social support
- Collective Benefits
 - Community empowerment
 - More policy emphasis on health

WHO ARE 'MARGINALIZED' 'YOUNG' 'WOMEN'?

- Did not used to be considered citizens
- Are responsible for reproduction, production, and consumption
- Have political, cultural, generational, and social contexts
- Have agency
- Do not experience identity in the same way (intersectionality)
- Do not necessarily universalize 'man' and 'woman'

Framework of Democratized Research for Policy-Making and Conversation (CPRN, GNB)

Centering Identity and Gender
 Accounting for Intersectionality
 Honouring Voice and Creativity
 Exploring Representation
 Reflexivity and Critical Thinking
 Honouring Many Forms of Knowledge
 Legitimizing a Range of Perspectives

8. Media Analysis of Portrayal of Own Identity (Velez et al., 2008)

	Mobilizing Interest	Claims-Making	Knowledge-Acquisition	Spanning and Bridging	Convening and Deliberating	Community Capacity Building	Analysis and Synthesis	Transparency and Feedback	On-Going Iteration
1. Greeting, Rhetoric, and Storytelling (Lewis-Charp et al., 2003)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2. Dialogue and Conversation (CPRN, GNB)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
3. Hands-On Experiences and Exposure to History (Lewis-Charp et al., 2003)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
4. Popular Culture (Ginwright & James, 2002)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
5. Direct Community Engagement (Lewis-Charp et al., 2003)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
6. Learning about Dimensions of Power (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2002)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
7. Web 2.0 Technologies (Bennett, 2008)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
8. Media Analysis of Portrayal of Own Identity (Velez et al., 2008)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
9. Self-Assessment	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Dimensions of Democratized Research

Dimensions of Citizen Involvement in Policy-Making

7. Web 2.0 Technologies (Bennett, 2008)

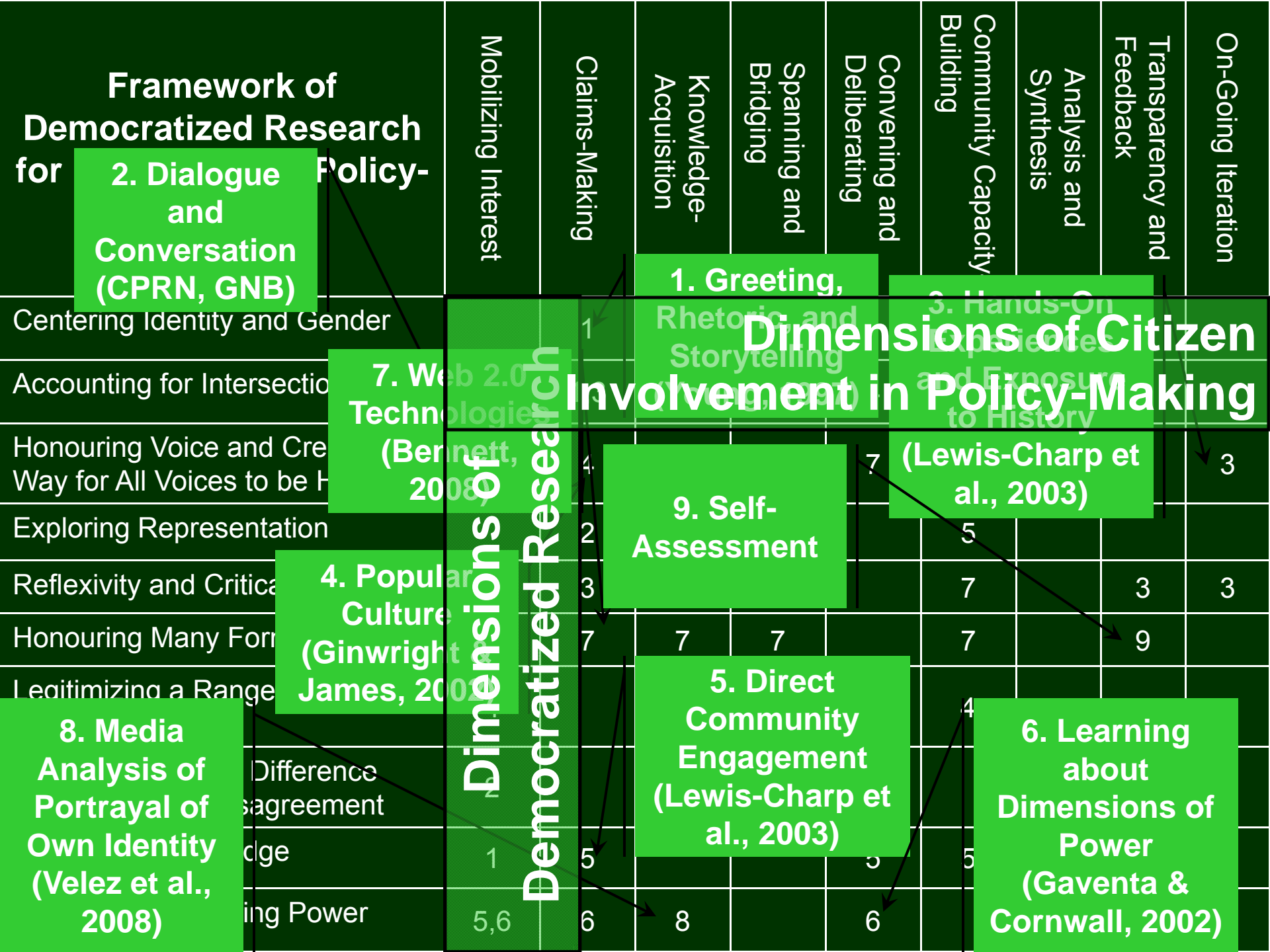
9. Self-Assessment

(Lewis-Charp et al., 2003)

4. Popular Culture (Ginwright & James, 2002)

5. Direct Community Engagement (Lewis-Charp et al., 2003)

6. Learning about Dimensions of Power (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2002)



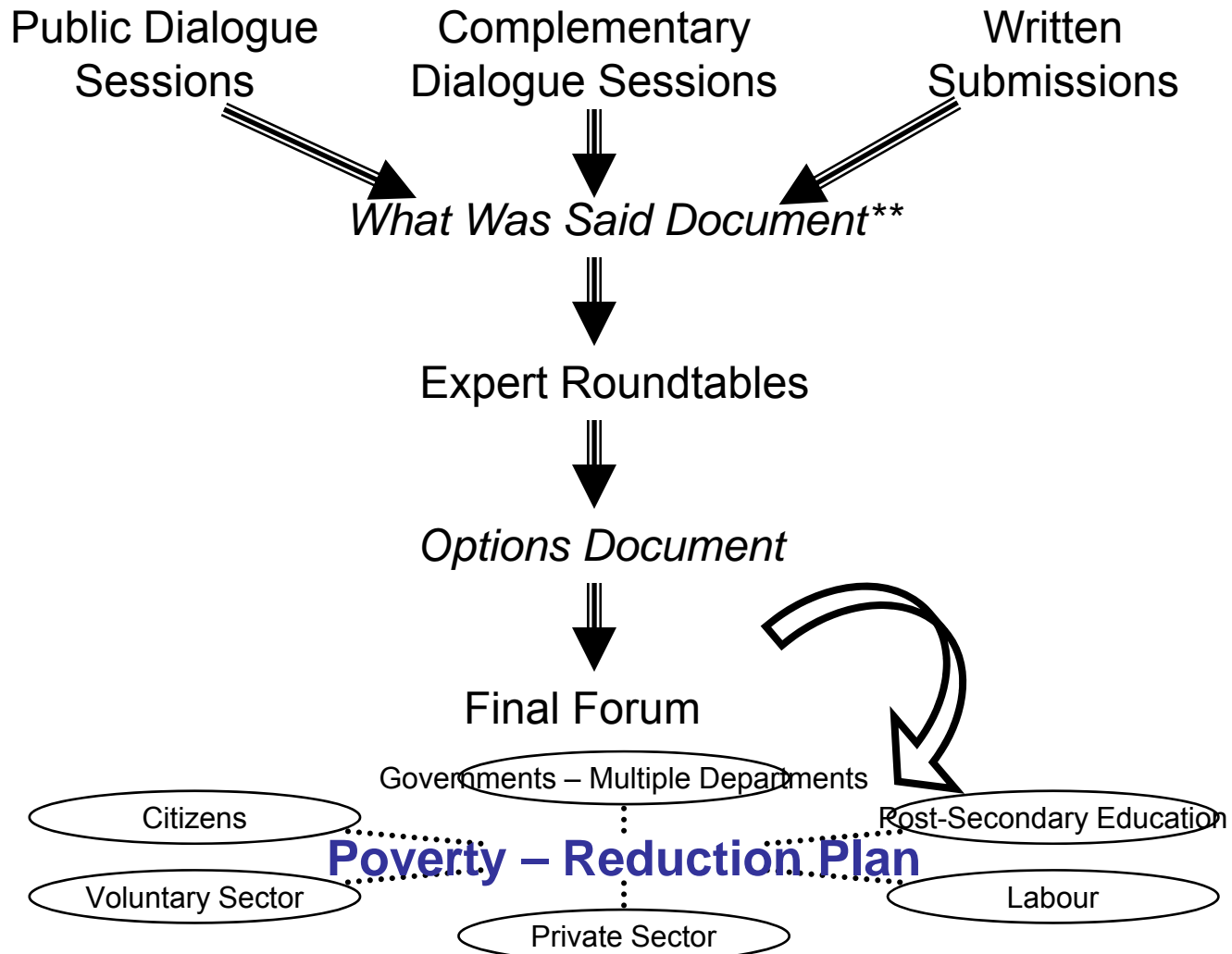
DESIRABLE ENDS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN POLICY-MAKING PROCESSES

- A. Collective Action
- B. Increased Influence of Marginalized People
- C. Strengthening Citizen Voice in Governance
- D. Accountability of Government to Differentiated and Unequal Public
- E. Substantive Parameters - Justice Outcomes Based on UN Conventions
- F. Systemic Social Change
- G. Personal, Relational, and Collective Well-Being
- H. Equity

WHY DEMOCRATIZED RESEARCH FOR DEMOCRATIZED POLICY-MAKING?

- To invite the voices of marginalized young women in policy
- To understand the mechanisms of civic engagement processes that are intentional about including marginalized young women
- To respond to the ‘opinion-research-politics’ challenge
- To offer a new attempt at complex social problem-solving (specifically, civic engagement as a population health intervention)

Premier's Announcement to Develop a Poverty-Reduction Plan for New Brunswick



Fall 2008

Winter 2009

Summer 2009

Early Fall 2009

Mid-Fall 2009

Late Fall 2009

**Based on Phase I Inputs

EARLY EXPERIENCES WITH APPLYING THE FRAMEWORK IN NEW BRUNSWICK

‘WINS’:

- Inclusion and training of facilitators (*honouring voice*)
- Unique complementary dialogues with marginalized young women (*exploring representation; legitimizing leadership*)
- Analysis between Phase I and Phase II (*honouring knowledge; explicit consideration of power*)

CHALLENGES:

- Unpredictable time required for relationship building
- Trust (‘hopeful skepticism’)
- Dialogue skills
- Temporal location in political cycle

COMPLEMENTARY DIALOGUE EXAMPLE

- Hosted by transition house for 16-19 year old women
- Facilitated primarily by an undergraduate student
- 6, 2-hour sessions
 - A representation of me
 - ‘My identities; My places’
 - Killing me softly 3
- Underlying focus on identity and gender
- Serves as relationship building component of future DRDP project

CONCLUSION

- There are links between civic engagement and well-being; these links are under-explored in the lives of marginalized young women
- Marginalized young women are insufficiently conceptualized in civic engagement and policy-making
- Civic engagement with marginalized young women is possible through 'democratized research for democratized policy-making' (DRDP) projects (possible ≠ probable)
- The early experience with New Brunswick's poverty-reduction planning initiative has been mixed
- Will to collaborate Inter-departmentally and inter-sectorally have been inspirational

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