IPDET

Module 14:
Guiding the Evaluator: Evaluation Ethics, Politics, Standards, and Guiding Principles

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Introduction

- Ethical Behavior
- Politics and Evaluation
- Evaluation Standards and Guiding Principles

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Ethics

- A set of values and beliefs that guide choices
- Ethics are complicated, no laws or standards can cover every possible situation
  - behavior can be legal, but unethical

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Evaluation Corruptibility

- Willingness to twist the truth and produce positive findings
- Intrusion of unsubstantiated opinions because of sloppy, capricious or unprofessional practices
- "Shaded" evaluation "findings" as a result of prejudices or notions
- Inducement to clients or participants
- Failure to honor commitments

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Evaluation Fallacies

- Clientism
- Contractism
- Methodologicalism
- Relativism
- Pluralism/Elitism

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Identifying Ethical Problems- AEA Survey

- client has already decided what "should be"
- client declares certain research questions off limits
- client deliberately modifies findings
- client pressures evaluator to alter the presentation of findings
- client suppresses or ignores findings
- client pressures the evaluator to violate confidentiality
- client makes unspecified misuse of findings

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Identifying Ethical Problems (cont.)

- legitimate stakeholders are omitted from the planning process
- evaluator discovers behavior that is illegal, unethical, or dangerous
- evaluator is unsure of his or her ability to be objective or fair in presenting findings
- findings are used as evidence to blame someone

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Ethics Issues

- To be useful, the evaluation must be honest, objective, and fair
- Difference between subtle influence and bribe
- "Do No Harm"
- Politics can undermine integrity of an evaluation

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Causes of Political Problems

- Too much room for subjectivity in these questions:
  - What is the purpose of the evaluation?
  - What will be considered a success or failure?
  - So what? How will the information be used in subsequent decision making?
  (continued on next slide)

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Causes of Politics (cont.)

- Technical weaknesses
  - difficult to agree on what to measure, difficult to focus
  - measuring one level but generalizing about another
- Human weaknesses
  - Look Good Avoid Blame (LGAB) mindset
  - Subjective Interpretation of Reality (SIR) phenomenon
  - trust factors

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Political Games by Evaluatees at the Beginning

- Denying the need for evaluation
- Claiming the evaluation will take too much time away from their normal workload
- Claiming the evaluation is a good thing, but introducing delaying tactics
- Seeking to form close personal relationships with the evaluator to convince the evaluator to trust him or her

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Political Games by Evaluatees during Data Collection

- Omitting or distorting the information they are asked to provide so they do not look bad
- Providing the evaluator with huge amounts of information so it is difficult to sort out what is relevant and what is not (snow job)
- Coming up with new data at the end

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Political Games by Evaluatees during Interpretation

- Denying the problem exists
- Downplaying the importance of the problem or attributing it to others or to forces beyond their control
- Arguing that the information is now irrelevant because things have changed

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Political Games of Stakeholders

- Similar to those of people being evaluated
- May try to get media to criticize the organization and tell how they should have done the evaluation differently
- Giving own conclusions to meet their agenda

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Political Games by Evaluators during Design

- Insisting evaluations be quantitative (statistics don't lie)
- Using the "experts know best" line (evaluators do not trust those being evaluated and want to have them "caught")

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Political Games of Evaluators during Data Collection

- Collecting information "off the record" then allowing that information to enter into the interpretation phase

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Political Games by Evaluators during Interpretation

- Not stating or shifting the measurement standards
- Applying unstated criteria to decision making
- Applying unstated values and ideological filers to the data interpretation
- Ignoring findings of evaluations

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Managing Politics in Evaluations

- Building trust
  - takes time and many encounters
  - keep all involved in the process, responding to and answering the important questions
- Building T of C models
  - all parties understand the underlying logic so there is little room for misunderstanding

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Balancing Stakeholders with Negotiation

- Recognize political nature
- Value multiple stakeholder contributions
- Assess stakeholder positions
- Assure evaluator is an active player within stakeholder community
- Develop negotiation skills
- Develop skills to manage conflict

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Negotiating Evaluation

- Initial stage
  - positions put on the table
- Middle stage
  - active negotiation
- Last stage
  - steps are taken to reach concensus

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Active Negotiation

- Empathy
  - ability to see the world through the eyes of the other
  - express empathy for the person (restate what you hear)
- Assertiveness
  - ability to express and advocate for one's own needs, interests, and positions
 - facilitator authority

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Standards and Guiding Principles: Two Prominent Codes

- Program Evaluation Standards
  - concerned with professional performance
- Guiding Principles for Evaluators
  - concerned with professional values

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Program Evaluation Standards Categories

- Utility
- Feasibility
- Propriety
- Accuracy

- Service orientation
- Formal agreements
- Rights of human subjects
- Human interactions
- Complete and fair assessment
- Disclosure of findings
- Conflict of interest
- Fiscal responsibility

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Guiding Principles for Evaluators

- Systematic inquiry
- Competence
- Integrity/honesty
- Respect for people
- Responsibilities for general and public welfare

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Other Standards and Guiding Principles

- African Evaluation Association
- Australian Evaluation Society
- Canadian Evaluation Society
- German Society for Evaluation
- Italian Evaluation Association
- Swiss Evaluation Society
- UK Evaluation Society

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UN Ethical Guidelines

- Intentionality
  - utility
  - necessity
- Evaluator obligations
  - independence
  - impartiality
  - credibility
  - conflicts of interest
  - honesty and integrity
  - accountability

- Obligations to participants
  - respect for dignity and diversity
  - rights
  - confidentiality
  - avoidance of harm
- Process and Product
  - accuracy, completeness, reliability
  - transparency
  - reporting
  - omissions and wrongdoing

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UN Standards for Ethics

- Evaluators:
  - must be sensitive to beliefs, manners, and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relationships with all stakeholders.
  - should ensure that their contacts with individuals are characterized by the same respect with which they would want to be respected.
  - should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants.
  - are responsible for their performance and their products.

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DAC Standards

- Draft evaluation quality standards
  - finalized in 2009-2010 after three-year test phase
  - Section 6 - Independence and working without interference
  - Section 7 - evaluation ethics

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Conflict of Interest

- Major issue potentially affecting the credibility of evaluators
- Evaluators should self-attest , for each evaluation, whether they are free from conflict of interest

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"Set high standards and few limitations for yourself."

--Anthony J. D'Angelo,
The College Blue Book

Questions?

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