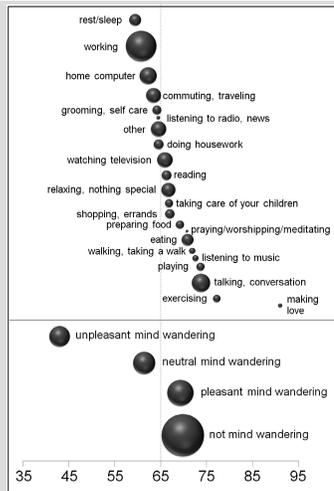


Evaluation Paradigms

Joseph J. Ferrare, Ph.D.
 Department of Educational Policy Studies & Evaluation
 Department of Sociology
 Martin School of Public Policy & Administration
 University of Kentucky
www.josephferrare.com



“A Wandering Mind is an Unhappy Mind”

- Killingsworth & Gilbert (2010)

Fig. 1. Mean happiness reported during each activity (**top**) and while mind wandering to unpleasant topics, neutral topics, pleasant topics or not mind wandering (**bottom**). Dashed line indicates mean of happiness across all samples. Bubble area indicates the frequency of occurrence. The largest bubble (“not mind wandering”) corresponds to 53.1% of the samples, and the smallest bubble (“praying/worshipping/meditating”) corresponds to 0.1% of the samples.

Project brainstorm

Find example evaluands based on your initial topical interest:

- Program
- Project
- Policy
- Product
- Idea

3

Last Meeting

Axiology: What is valued?

Ontology: What can we know?

Epistemology: How can we know?

Methodology: What are the best strategies for gathering information about something to be known?



Image taken from Wikimedia, Jules Maurice Gaspard



Image taken from Summit Lighthouse

- Every culture and society makes assumptions about these concepts – whether explicit or implicit
- The way one answers these questions in an evaluation context speaks to the **paradigm** through which they approach their evaluation work.

4

Positioning the Evaluator

Evaluators (and everyone, really) embody assumptions about axiology, ontology, epistemology, and so on, and also exist work in a community with conflicting norms about these concepts.

For example, the American Evaluation Association's Guiding Principles for Evaluators are as follows:

1. **Systematic inquiry:** data-based inquiries that are contextually bound
2. **Competence:** skilled services to stakeholders
3. **Integrity/honesty:** transparency in evaluation
4. **Respect for people:** honor dignity, well-being and self-worth of people
5. **Common good & equity:** Whose common good? Equity for whom?

5

Evaluation Paradigms

Paradigms are assumptions and expectations that we take for granted about how the world works and/or what we value

Scientific paradigms (see Kuhn, 1962) define a set of problems and acceptable solutions among a community of scientists/researchers

Evaluation paradigms define aspects of an evaluand in terms of metaphysics, ethics, validity, and methodology (see Mertens & Wilson, 2018)

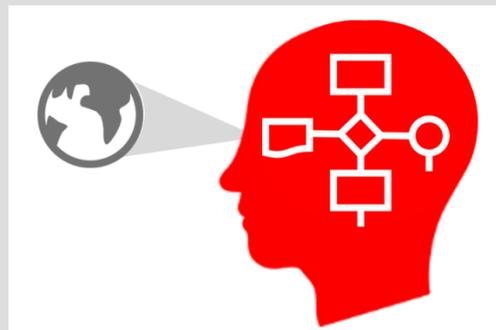


Image taken from Wikipedia

Think of them as complex forms of shared mental models (e.g., restaurant script)

6

Post-Positivism Evaluation

What is valued (axiology)?

Moral obligation, truth, and respect for those who bear the risk in research

What can we know (ontology)?

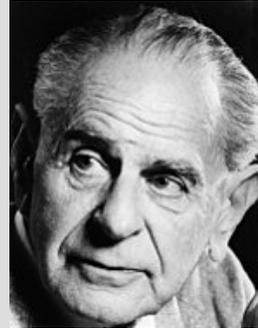
The social world is an objective reality that exists independently of the analyst, which can be known imperfectly (or probabilistically)

How can we create knowledge (epistemology)?

Objective and value-free techniques

What methods are needed?

Primarily quantitative models - especially probabilistic models that can be falsified through hypothesis testing



Karl Popper
Image taken from Wikipedia

7

Post-Positivism Evaluation: An Example

“Increasing the Quantity and Quality of School Leadership Candidates through Formation Experiences,” Busch, O’Brien, and Spangler (2005)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. What is the evaluand in this study? | 1. Southern Tier Leadership Academy |
| 2. What questions were the evaluators trying to answer? | 2. To what extent was the program effective at enhancing participants' leadership skills and motivation for becoming a school leader? |
| 3. What are some of the assumptions the evaluators made regarding what can be known about the evaluand? | 3. Participant satisfaction, skills, and skill transfer are aspects of leadership that have stable qualities across participants and are independent of the analyst |
| 4. What assumptions did they make regarding how such knowledge can be created? | 4. These qualities can be reliably operationalized and measured through a conceptual (i.e., Kirkpatrick's Model of Evaluation) and probabilistic models |
| 5. What methods did they use to test these assumptions? | 5. Surveys, learning assessments, open-ended questions |
| 6. What do you see as the strengths and limitations of their approach to address the primary questions guiding the evaluation? | 6. S: Uses an established framework that has been tested in prior work; multiple data collection strategies; clear operationalization of outcomes; L: Relies primarily on self-report; no random assignment; small cohort sizes |

Post-Positivism Evaluation: An Example

“Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ireland: Evaluation Study” Dolan et al., 2011

1. What is the evaluand in this study?
2. What questions were the evaluators trying to answer?
3. What are some of the assumptions the evaluators made regarding what can be known about the evaluand?
4. What assumptions did they make regarding how such knowledge can be created?
5. What methods did they use to test these assumptions?
6. What do you see as the strengths and limitations of their approach to address the primary questions guiding the evaluation?



9

Pragmatic Evaluation

What is valued (axiology)?

The value of an evaluation is primarily determined through how it is used to solve problems or guide decision-making toward such ends

What can we know (ontology)?

The social world is comprised of contextually bound experiences and these experiences should serve as the key unit of analysis

How can we create knowledge (epistemology)?

Knowledge is produced through practices as humans work to solve problems among one another and in the environment

What methods are needed?

Numerous – whatever is needed (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, historical) to understand the experiences in question (often mixed-methods designs)



William James
Image taken from Britannica.com



John Dewey
Image taken from Wikipedia.org

10

Pragmatic Evaluation: An Example

“A Participatory Evaluation of a Community-Based Rehabilitation Programme in North Central Vietnam,” Sharma & Deepak (2001)

1. What is the evaluand in this study?
2. What questions were the evaluators trying to answer?
3. What are some of the assumptions the evaluators made regarding what can be known about the evaluand?
4. What assumptions did they make regarding how such knowledge can be created?
5. What methods did they use to test these assumptions?
6. What do you see as the strengths and limitations of their approach to address the primary questions guiding the evaluation?

11

Constructivist Evaluation

What is valued (axiology)?

The value of an evaluation hinges on the ability of evaluators to illuminate the multiple lenses through which stakeholders – and the evaluator – make sense of an evaluand.

What can we know (ontology)?

The social world is comprised of multiple realities that are differentially constructed within communities of practice

How can we create knowledge (epistemology)?

Knowledge is constructed socially and is thus contingent on contexts concerning who, what, when, where, how, and why.

What methods are needed?

Emphasis on qualitative methods given the need to construct meaning in context



Jean Piaget
Image taken from Encyclopedia
Britannica

12

Transformative Evaluation

What is valued (axiology)?

The value of an evaluation is primarily determined by the extent to which it reciprocates power with marginalized groups and improves the conditions for flourishing with such groups.

What can we know (ontology)?

The social world is constituted by an objective reality but is experienced in vastly different ways depending on how a person is positioned in the world (economically, culturally, politically, and so on).

How can we create knowledge (epistemology)?

Knowledge is produced by engaging cultural and historical ways of understanding and confronting power relations between evaluators and stakeholders.

What methods are needed?

Participatory – whether quantitative or qualitative



Gloria Ladson-Billings
Image taken from Dept. of C&I,
UW-Madison



Center for Culturally Responsive
Evaluation & Assessment
Image taken from CREA

13

Jeff Duncan-Andrade's Epistemologies

- In what ways, if at all, do Duncan-Andrade's ideas about the ways schools evaluate students reflect a constructivist paradigm as discussed in ch. 5 of Mertens & Wilson?
- In what ways, if at all, do Duncan-Andrade's ideas about the ways schools evaluate students reflect a social justice paradigm as discussed in ch. 6 of Mertens & Wilson?
- Does Duncan-Andrade reinforce any of the assumptions of the post-positivist paradigm? How does he challenge post-positivist paradigms of educational evaluation?



Image taken from AllAmericanSpeakers.com

14

Hypothetical Evaluation

Dual-language immersion curriculum

Consider how the four different paradigms would approach the evaluation of this curriculum at Maxwell Elementary School in Lexington.

- Post-positivist (methods)
- Pragmatist (use)
- Constructivist (values)
- Transformative (social justice)



Image taken from fcps.net

E.g., How might the different paradigms conceptualize outcomes associated with the program?

15

Assignment 1: Evaluand Identification & Paradigmatic Approach

1. Identify the specific evaluand (i.e., program, policy, idea, product, project) for your evaluation design. Provide an overview of the evaluand and give some context (e.g., history, aims/purposes, sources of funding). ~ 2 pages
2. Summarize any prior studies of the evaluand, or, if no such studies exist, point to relevant prior evaluations or research that give some indication of what you might expect to find. ~ 1-2 pages
3. Describe the primary evaluation paradigm that best fits the set of assumptions and approaches of your design, including a discussion of why such a paradigm is appropriate to this case. ~ 1 page
4. Identify group members (if applicable)
5. Upload as a Word or PDF to Canvas (only one per group is needed)
6. 750 - 1,250 words (3 - 5 double-spaced pages if using 12-pt. Times New Roman font and standard 1-inch margins)

Note: Those working in groups will turn in a single assignment. However, at the end of the semester each group member will submit a summary of their contribution to each phase of the project, which will be circulated and signed off by each member of the group.

16