Program Evaluation for Social Justice

RACHEL VOTH SCHRAG, PHD LCSW
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON
RACHEL.VOTHSCHRAG@UTA.EDU
 Agenda

- Introduction(s)
  - Who Are We
  - Program evaluation: A <relatively> Quick Primer
- What is evaluation for social justice?
  - Why might it be good for my agency?
  - Impact On Our Terms
- Break
- How does evaluation for social justice work?
- Tools, Techniques, and Strategies
- Practice!
- A Final Caveat
- Resources
Introductions

Who am I?

Who are you?

- What evaluation challenges are you facing in your current context?
- What do you hope to get out of this workshop?
  - (What would make it worth having skipped some beach time?)
The CDC’s Evaluation Cycle

Standards:
- Utility
- Feasibility
- Propriety
- Accuracy

Engage Stakeholders
Share Lessons Learned
Draw & Justify Conclusions
Gather Credible Evidence
Describe the Program
Focus the Evaluation Design

Why do we evaluate?
Building Evidence of Effectiveness

- Identify and pilot implement a program design
  - Gather evidence that supports program design
  - Develop logic model
  - Pilot implementation

- Ensure effective full implementation
- Assess program's outcomes
- Obtain evidence of positive program outcomes
- Attain strong evidence of positive program outcomes

Performance Measures - Outcomes
- Process and/or Outcome Evaluation

Outcome Evaluation

Impact Evaluation
The Hierarchy of Evaluation

“If we know the social need is properly understood, the program theory for addressing it is reasonable and supported, the corresponding program activities and services are well implemented, then it may be meaningful to assess program outcomes.”
What is Program Logic?

**Inputs**
- The resources that go into a program
  - Program Investments
  - Money
  - Staffing
  - Resources

**Outputs**
- The activities that the program undertakes
  - Activities (what we do)
  - Participation (who we reach)
  - Direct Transfers Provided

**Outcomes**
- The changes or benefits that result
  - What Results:
    - Short Term
    - Medium Term
    - Long Term

Introduction
- What is evaluation for social justice?
- How does it work?
- Tools and Strategies
- Practice!
- A final caveat
Introduction

What is evaluation for social justice?

How does it work?

Tools and Strategies

Practice!

A final caveat

Program Action - Logic Model

Inputs
- What we invest
  - Staff
  - Volunteers
  - Time
  - Money
  - Research base
  - Materials
  - Equipment
  - Technology
  - Partners

Outputs
- What we do
  - Conduct workshops, meetings
  - Deliver services
  - Develop products, curriculum, resources
  - Train
  - Provide counseling
  - Assess
  - Facilitate
  - Partner
  - Work with media

Participation
- Who we reach
  - Participants
  - Agencies
  - Decision-makers
  - Customers

Outcomes - Impact
- What the short term results are
  - Learning
  - Awareness
  - Knowledge
  - Attitudes
  - Skills
  - Opinions
  - Aspirations
  - Motivations
- What the medium term results are
  - Action
  - Behavior
  - Practice
  - Decision-making
  - Policies
  - Social Action

Short Term
- Medium Term
- Long Term

Assumptions

External Factors

Evaluation

Focus - Collect Data - Analyze and Interpret - Report

Adapted from Shattuck, 2010
EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- What amount of $ and time were invested?
- How many sessions were held? How effectively? #, quality of support groups?
- Who/how many attended/did not attend? Did they attend all sessions? Supports groups? Were they satisfied – why/why not?
- To what extent did knowledge and skills increase? For whom? Why? What else happened?
- To what extent did behaviors change? For whom? Why? What else happened?
- To what extent are relations improved? To what extent are child outcomes improved?

INDICATORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># Staff</th>
<th>$ used</th>
<th># partners</th>
<th># Sessions held</th>
<th>Quality criteria</th>
<th>#.% attended per session</th>
<th>Certificate of completion</th>
<th>#.% demonstrating increased knowledge/skills</th>
<th>Additional outcomes</th>
<th>#.% demonstrating changes</th>
<th>Types of changes</th>
<th>#.% demonstrating improvements</th>
<th>Types of improvements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Adapted from Shattuck, 2010
AKA: So-That relationships

**Inputs**
- We invest time and money

**Outputs**
- We can provide hospital advocacy 24 hours a day for 3 hospitals for 1 year
- Survivors will have access to support, advocacy, and information

**Outcomes**
- They will receive timely medical services, be aware of their legal options, and be aware of the community resources available to them
- They will have a sense of empowerment and control over their situation, and access to physical, mental health, legal, and other services,
- Survivors will have better post-trauma outcomes and our community will hold offenders accountable

Adapted from Shattuck, 2010
Steps in Developing Research Questions:

Step 1: Develop and/or articulate a logic model to clarify program design and theory of change

Step 2: Define the evaluation’s purpose and scope

Step 3: Determine the type of evaluation design (needs/process/outcome)

Step 4: Draft and finalize evaluation research questions

What questions are you currently asking?
Basic principles for research question design:

Research questions for process-focused evaluations ask:
- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- How?

Research questions for outcome-focused evaluations ask about:
- Changes?
- Effects?
- Impacts?

**About:**
- Inputs/resources
- Program activities
- Outputs
- Stakeholder views

**In:**
- (Short-term) Knowledge
- (Medium-term) Behaviors
- (Long-term) Conditions

**Skills**
- Actions

**Attitudes**
- Opinions

Corporation for National & Community Service, 2015
## Improving Research Questions: Specific and Explicit!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>Specific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How is the program being implemented?</td>
<td>Are staff implementing the program within the same timeframe?</td>
<td>Are staff implementing the program with the same intended population?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What variations in implementation, if any, occur by site? Why are variations occurring? Are they likely to effect program outcomes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are there unique challenges to implementing the program by site?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>??</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do program clients describe their experiences?</td>
<td>What do program clients see as the benefits they receive?</td>
<td>Do program participants report experiencing unintended consequences of program participation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>??</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Justice Evaluation

WHAT IS IT?
Social Justice Values

- Resources should be distributed so that everyone can live a decent life.
- Human beings have equal human rights, and should be recognized in all of their diversity.
- All people should be represented and be able to advocate on their own behalf.
What is Social Justice Evaluation?

Social justice-oriented evaluation “seeks to increase understanding of the interdependency of individual, community, and society using a more judicious democratic process in generating knowledge about social problems and social interventions and using this knowledge to advance social progress.”

(Thomas & Madison, 2010)
Tenants of Social Justice Evaluation (Thomas & Merton, 2010)

- Social justice evaluation...
  - Rejects the possibility of neutrality,
  - Includes a critical understanding of the sociopolitical forces shaping the evaluation context, including the reasons for the evaluation decisions being made,
  - Aims to illuminate inequalities and injustices rather than mask them,
  - Attempts to facilitate open discussion (and recognizes the inherent limits of our capacity to do this),
  - Pays attention to all stakeholders,
  - Includes approaches that infuse the voice of service recipients at all points in the process
  - Focuses on developing and using knowledge for equity and change
Why Evaluation for Social Justice?

Evaluation provides:

An opportunity for groups to clarify and articulate for themselves how change happens
  ◦ For individual clients, for groups, and for communities or societies

A space for reflection as a basis for strategic action

A system for tracking, measuring, and accounting for progress

A process for gathering and analyzing the knowledge needed to inform planning

An opportunity to involve staff, clients, and other key stakeholders in a way that reflects social justice values
  ◦ An opportunity to center survivors in our understanding of what we do.

A Chance to document the efficacy of new models

An opportunity to make the case for movement building

(Borgman-Arboleda & Clark, 2010)
Where are social justice issues in evaluation?

- In program goals
- In interim outcomes
- In the theory of change
- In program policies
- In program impacts
- In program strategies
- In relationships and power
- In the development of a theory of change
- In how results are reported
- In how change is implemented
- In what change is recommended
- In how change occurs
Social justice evaluation as a learning tool

- Assessment for the purpose of learning and improving
- Focus on building knowledge that can improve survivors' lives
- Focus on contribution rather than attribution (how is the organization or program contributing together, rather than who should be attributed with the blame or praise)
- Opportunity to take control back and **make impact on our own terms**
IMPACT ON OUR TERMS

- How do you think a survivor coming to your agency defines your impact?
- How do you define your impact?
- How does your staff define your impact?
- How does your community define your impact?
- How do your funders define your impact?

Are These All The Same?
Which of these are being evaluated right now?
So what are our terms?

A quick look at what staff see as the outcomes of one area of sexual assault services.

83 RCCs in TX

Each agency is asked to identify at least one agency director and one counselor to participate.

At least 1 response was received from 60 agencies (agency response rate = 72%)

63 Agency Directors Responded

76 Agency Counselors Responded
Introduction

What is evaluation for social justice?

How does it work?

Tools and Strategies

Practice!

A final caveat

Provider Treatment Goals (n=69)

- Enhance Self-Esteem/Confidence: 99%
- Enhance Empowerment: 94%
- Enhance Relational Functioning: 93%
- Reduce General Trauma Symptoms: 91%
- Reduce Stigma/Shame: 90%
- Reduce Anxiety Symptoms: 90%
- Reduce Depression Symptoms: 87%
- Enhance General Functioning: 86%
- Reduce PTSD Symptoms: 86%
- Enhance Assertiveness: 81%
- Enhance Work/School Functioning: 77%
- Enhance Sexual Functioning: 57%
- Reduce Abuse of Drugs/Alcohol: 48%

(Voth Schrag & Edmond, 2018)
Introduction

What is evaluation for social justice?

How does it work?

Tools and Strategies

Practice!

A final caveat

Agency Evaluation Strategies (n=70)

- Client Satisfaction Survey: 84%
- Clinical Impressions: 41%
- Assessment before and after treatment with agency developed scales: 39%
- Assessment before and after treatment with standardized scales: 24%
- Client Focus Groups: 16%
- Collaboration with university researcher to evaluate program effectiveness: 9%
- Assessment only after treatment with standardized scales: 6%
- Assessment only after treatment with agency developed scales: 6%
- Assessment only before treatment with standardized scales: 4%
- Assessment only before Treatment with agency developed scales: 4%

(Voth Schrag & Edmond, 2018)
Challenges in Social Justice Evaluation

- Evaluation expectations imposed from the outside
- Inherent power imbalances
- Differences in goals or objectives for services
- Tight timelines and resource constraints
- Outcomes that are hard to measure
  - How do we measure social change in a way that matters?
How does it work?
How does social justice evaluation work?

• Inclusive approaches to evaluation:
  • Explicit attention to issues of diversity, cultural responsiveness, and multicultural validity
  • Broad and accessible dissemination of evaluation findings
  • Critical reflection of one’s own values, beliefs, and prejudices, and in relation to others
  • Trust building and attention to “interpersonal validity”
  • “Evaluator as agent of change”
Start with Evaluating your Evaluation Efforts

Are we being true to our vision?
How have systems contributed to this problem?
What patterns are emerging?
What’s being learned?
Now what?
What does it mean?
What principles are being followed?
What developments occur over time?
Who or what is being excluded, marginalized, or made a victim by the way in which this situation is being viewed or is operating?
Critical Perspectives:

**Survivor Self-determination** – survivors have a say in program direction, programs can help build evaluation capacity

**Democratic** approach, never conducted by a single person

Gives voice to those who often don’t have one

Build a **community of learners**

**Outside evaluator as a coach/critical friend**
- someone who believes in the program, but still asks the critical questions
- is a co-equal – not a superior, not a servant

Guided by principles of **truth and honesty** – understand an event from multiple perspectives and worldviews – try to see it in context
Culturally Responsive Evaluation

Emphasis on understanding a program as it functions in the context of culturally diverse groups

Explicit attention to oppression and privilege

Social responsibility to address unequal opportunities and resources

Attention to power differentials

Evaluator understands own cultural values

Culturally Responsive Evaluation

• Will a cultural insider be required to guide the evaluators in their interactions and understandings?

• How is power held, exercised, and shared (or used oppressively) in this context?

• Whose values are marginalized and whose values are privileged?
Questions for evaluating evaluation from a social justice lens

Does the object of evaluation reproduce unfair, unjust advantage or privilege?
  ∘ Does it promote a fair, just distribution of social resources and social opportunities?

Are people connected to the object of evaluation and most impacted by inequities defining the need for an evaluation and the presence and role of an evaluator?

What type of knowledge is privileged in the context of the evaluation and in the evaluation itself?

Who defines how evaluative judgements are made?

What social power exists to leverage results of an evaluation and who has it?

How can evaluation findings empower?
Key Questions in Social Justice Evaluation

“Whose voice is loudest in the evaluation?”

“How is power at play?”

“Who is missing?”
How do we make this work?

How do we make sure we are attending to context and power in evaluations?

- Expand the evaluation team
  - How are survivors represented?
  - How about direct service staff?

- Expand the evaluation scope

- Work with other key players (accrediting bodies, major funders) to streamline their expectations to free up resources for this work
How can we expand the team?

What are strategies for expanding the evaluation team?

- Advisory Boards
- Small Incentives
- Community level evaluations (partnering with other agencies and researchers)

**TIP:**

Don’t assume stakeholders (including survivors) find this work time consuming or burdensome.
# The People of Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survivors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/Local Officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School or Educational Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislators or Policy Makers/Shapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics/Program Evaluators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Developing a social justice evaluation plan

Outcome Statements:
- Concrete, measurable outcomes that you are trying to achieve, on the path to longer-term change goals. Determined by the whole team rather than driven by funding requirements. Focused on equity.

Strategies
- What are you doing to reach your outcomes?

Assumptions
- Why do you think your strategies will lead to your outcomes?

Indicators
- What you will actually observe to let you know you are making progress towards your outcomes

Data
- How will you observe your indicators?
Developing a Plan

1. Identify the intended use and users of the evaluation

My Evaluation Team:

Their Strengths:

Who else do we need?

The Stakeholders in this evaluation are:

With this evaluation we hope to:

We will use the findings to:
Instead of a “program logic model” try a “So That” chain.

- We Will...... [inputs & outputs]
- So That: Short Term Outcome
- So That: Short Term Outcome
- So That: Medium Term Outcome
- So That: Medium Term Outcome
- So That: Long Term Outcome

Try starting here and working backward.
Gathering Credible Evidence

SOCIAL JUSTICE DO’S

- Pay attention to disparities
- Be aware of your context
- Know who your measures are for
- Advocate with funders for streamlined processes
- Pay attention to needs & processes
- Limit staff burden

SOCIAL JUSTICE DON’TS

- Gather data that you don’t have an explicit need for
- Collect the same information over and over
- Only talk to program completers
- Only talk to program participants
- Focus only on outcomes
- Prioritize data over people
## Justifying conclusions

### HOW’S

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How will data be organized?</td>
<td>Findings will be used in this way:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will conclusions be drawn?</td>
<td>Findings will be shared in these formats:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will conclusions be shared?</td>
<td>These people will be responsible for sharing findings:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### WHO’S

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who will participate in analyses?</td>
<td>Findings will be developed by these people:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who will draw conclusions?</td>
<td>Findings will be used in this way:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who will have access to findings?</td>
<td>Findings will be shared in these formats:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PRACTICE!
We Will... [inputs & outputs] So That: Short Term Outcome So That: Short Term Outcome So That: Medium Term Outcome So That: Medium Term Outcome So That: Long Term Outcome
Introduction: What is evaluation for social justice?

Outcome Statements:

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

How does it work?

Indicator: __________

Assumption: __________

Indicator: __________

Assumption: __________

Indicator: __________

Assumption: __________

Tools and Strategies

Practice!

A final caveat

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

Practice!

A final caveat

What is evaluation for social justice?

How does it work?

Tools and Strategies

Practice!

A final caveat

Introduction: What is evaluation for social justice?

Outcome Statements:

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________

Strategy: __________
Assumption: __________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Statement</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Data Collection Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What will change?</td>
<td>How will we observe change?</td>
<td>Where is that information?</td>
<td>How will we get it?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Social Justice Do’s**
- Pay attention to disparities
- Be aware of your context
- Know who your measures are for
- Advocate with funders for streamlined processes
- Pay attention to needs & processes
- Limit staff burden

**Social Justice Don’ts**
- Gather data that you don’t have an explicit need for
- Collect the same information over and over
- Only talk to program completers
- Only talk to program participants
- Focus only on outcomes
- Prioritize data over people
Lessons Learned

Findings will be developed by these people:

Findings will be used in this way:

Findings will be shared in these formats:

These people will be responsible for sharing findings:
Resources & References

**Booklet:** Considering Evaluation: Thoughts for Social Change and Movement Building Groups by Catherine Borgman-Arboleda & Helene Clark
http://www.actknowledge.org/resources/documents/ACT_K_layout6909hr.pdf

**Web resource:** Evaluaction: Putting Evaluation to Work by the Centers for Disease Control VetoViolence Team: https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/evaluaction/


5 key factors for picking an assessment

**Conceptual link**: the extent to which there is a logical connection between the assessment, social work intervention, and outcome to be measured

**Potential for change**: extent to which the intervention is likely to create change in the outcome being assessed over the chosen time period with the indicators selected,

**Reliability and validity**: evidence for minimal measurement error and efficacy in detecting change

**Cultural competence**: extent to which the assessment is appropriate for the survivors served by the agency

**Practicality**: the extent to which the strategy is relatively simple, straightforward, and easy to implement.

Berkman & Maramaldi (2001)