

Evaluation Considerations.....

When you evaluate the values, beliefs, assumptions, perspectives, and prejudices the evaluator brings to the evaluation project it has an immediate influence and powerful impact upon the project staff, project participants, and the project itself. Consider how the evaluator determines many things before, during, & after the project, including the following list (this is not an exhaustive list either):

- who is heard
(and who is voiceless or silenced);
- what is focused on
(and what is not included);
- the design and method used
(or not used);
- the data identified and collected
(or missed and even ignored);
- who interprets and what gets interpreted
(or is excluded from the interpretation);
- how interpretations are made
(or are not made or are not ever checked for validity and accuracy with community members);
- whose interpretations are valued as scientific and educational knowledge
(or whose are not valued, not present, and/or are not even considered “real” data);
- what conclusions are drawn
(or are not drawn or are not member checked for accuracy);
- how the conclusions are presented or published
(or not presented in the literature or are presented without consent);
- who has access and control over the data once the study is done
(or who is powerless to the access, control, & own their community’s evaluation data);
- and based on evaluation data what policies, programs, & other initiatives continue to get funded
(or not funded, discontinued as programs, or who have policies that are ill informed).

All of these evaluation decisions have a profound and direct impact on the long-term struggles, challenges, and unsolved issues that communities and people face. Will you be part of the solution to solve these long-standing issues that communities face? Do you recognize that you are privileged and different in many ways than the communities you work with? How do you recognize that privilege and move beyond that to take concrete steps to empower those often disempowered? How might that make a difference in your life and in other’s lives? With culturally & contextually responsive strategies, you can build consideration into your evaluation. Are you ready?

*(Adapted by N. Bowman in 2007 from the Howard University Evaluation Training Institute, 2003)
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