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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a classification and critique of evaluator roles, and discusses the power relationships in which the evaluator engages and the power and influence strategies available to the evaluator within each type of role. The paper describes an evaluator role continuum, from "evaluator as technician" to "evaluator as change agent." At one pole of the continuum, the evaluator is portrayed as an "illuminator" fulfilling the technical functions of information gathering and reporting for the party commissioning the evaluation. As the evaluator role shifts from this pole, the evaluator fulfills the additional functions of interpreting information, describing the social-political context of the evaluation, and identifying and advocating alternative courses of action. At this opposite pole of the continuum, the evaluator is portrayed as a change agent, actively participating in the planned change process. This role continuum brings together under the unifying theme of power relationships these and other depictions of the evaluator role which have appeared in the evaluation literature. (Author)

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Evaluator as Technician Versus Evaluator as Change Agent:

A Continuum of Power Relationships

There is a growing consensus that the role of the evaluator in an organization is an important determinant of the integration of evaluative activities in organizational decision making and planning. Attkisson and associates (1978) identify the role of the evaluator as a central issue influencing the types and quality of evaluation activities conducted in an organization and the availability and utilization of evaluative information for decision making. Specifically, the degree of embeddedness of the evaluator's role in the organization's decision making process can determine the effective use of evaluation for both program operations and policy making. However, these authors note that the integration of program evaluation with organizational decision making will require changes in the typical role definitions of the evaluator and administrator.

The evaluator's organizational role can be described in terms of a continuum of specific role functions. (see Table 1). At one extreme point on the continuum, the evaluator's role function is that of data collector; at the opposite extreme, the organizational role function is that of planner.

Functioning as data collector, the evaluator performs the role tasks of collecting and compiling information and maintaining routine records on the organization's operations. As the organizational role shifts from this extreme point, the evaluator's role function becomes that of interpreter. In this role, the evaluator's tasks are expanded to include interpreting evaluative information in light of the organization's goals. Further along the continuum, the evaluator's role function becomes that of advisor. As advisor, the evaluator is responsible for identifying and presenting alternative courses of action, based upon the interpretation of evaluative information.

Table 1

A Continuum of the Evaluator's Organizational Role

	<u>Continuum of Organizational Role Functions</u>				
	<u>Technician</u> Data Collector	Interpreter	Advisor	Advocate	<u>Change Agent</u> Planner
Role Tasks	Data Collecting and Analysis; Reporting	→ And Data Interpreting	→ And Developing Alternative Courses of Action	→ And Judging the Efficacy of Alternatives	→ And Selecting and Coordinating the Implementation of Alternatives
Level of Role Integration with Decision Making	Low	—————→			High
Power Relationships with Decision Makers	Nonsymmetrical Dependent	—————→	Nonsymmetrical Interdependent	—————→	Symmetrical Interdependent

Role Functions, Attkisson et al.	Statistician	Evaluative Researcher	Evaluative Technician		Integrator, Coordinator, Decision Maker
Role Functions, Stufflebeam et al.	Technical		Interface, Administrative		

Integrative Modes, Attkisson et al.		Administrator-Evaluator			Evaluator-Administrator
Integrative Modes, Cronbach et al.			Educator	Integrator	
Integrative Modes, use				Power Equalizer	

At the next point on the continuum, the evaluator is depicted as having an advocacy role function. As an advocate, the evaluator makes judgments about the worth of alternative courses of action. Finally, at the opposite extreme of the continuum, the evaluator's role function is that of planner. In this role, the evaluator not only advocates, but selects from alternative courses of action, and oversees the implementation of this decision.

This depiction of the evaluator's organizational role continuum is consistent with evaluator role typologies found in the literature. For example, Attkisson and associates (1978) describe four evaluator role functions one extreme of their continuum, in the role of statistician, the evaluator's role tasks are clerical; the evaluator compiles information from natural data sources for funder-report purposes. At the next point along their continuum, the evaluator in the role of evaluative researcher investigates problems of applied research interest. Next, in the role of evaluative technician, the evaluator generates, compiles and reports information for administrative decision making. Finally, at the opposite extreme of their continuum in the role of integrator-coordinator-decision maker, the evaluator integrates evaluation activities with administrative decision making.

Similarly, Stufflebeam and associates (1971) depict the evaluator role in terms of three components. Functioning in the technical role, the evaluator performs data generation and analysis tasks. In the interface role, the evaluator identifies decision situations and their characteristics, identifies alternative problem solutions and criteria for selecting alternatives, defines acceptable information for decision making, and identifies audiences and their information needs for information dissemination. In the administrative role, the evaluator's tasks include making decisions about when to evaluate, planning and coordinating evaluation activities, and appraising the quality of evaluation activities.

Although these depictions of the evaluator role continuum focus on evaluator functions and tasks, they have direct implications for role relationships among the evaluator, decision maker and others in the decision making process. Two of these continua pertain to the level of role integration with decision making and the power relationships in which the evaluator engages.

As shown on Table 1, as the evaluator's organizational role approaches the extreme of the continuum labeled data collector, the level of role integration with decision making becomes lower. Consistent with Stufflebeam and associates' (1971) depiction of the evaluator's technical role and Attkisson and associates' (1978) depiction of the evaluator's statistician and evaluative researcher roles, the evaluator as data collector performs evaluative tasks essentially independent of the decision maker. Any interaction between the evaluator and decision maker is limited to formal reports, and the responsibility for integrating evaluative information with administrative decision making rests with the administrator.

As the evaluator's organizational role approaches the extreme of the continuum labeled planner, the level of integration of the evaluator's and administrator's decision making roles increases. Consistent with Stufflebeam and associates' (1971) depiction of the evaluator's interface role, the evaluator's role tasks increasingly require interactive communication with the decision maker and others involved in the decision making process. However, even at this mid-range of the continuum, the integration of the evaluator's and decision maker's role may exemplify what Attkisson and associates (1978) call "pseudolinkages", in which the administrator does not clearly define the relationship between administrative decision making needs and evaluative information needs.

At the extreme of the organizational role continuum labeled planner, a high level of integration exists between the evaluator and administrator's decision making roles. The evaluator in the role of planner most closely approximates Attkisson and associates' (1978) depiction of the evaluator as integrator-coordinator-decision maker, in which the evaluator has direct access to the decision maker and fulfills a role of participative advocacy in the decision making process. These functions represent what Attkisson and associates call organizational leadership.

In this schema, the factor which differentiates low integration, pseudo-linkage and high integration of the evaluator and decision maker's roles is the power relationship between the evaluator and administrator. As the continuum of evaluator roles indicates, the evaluator in the role of data collector has a nonsymmetrical, dependent power relationship with the administrative decision maker. This relationship is described as dependent in that the evaluator has little control over the initiation of evaluation activities. The scope of evaluation activities conducted in the organization is determined by the decision maker or is set by the demands of funder reports. The relationship is described as nonsymmetrical in that the evaluator's role does not permit the exercise of legitimate authority in the decision making process. The power strategies available to the evaluator are limited to appeals to technical expertise relevant to data collection, analyses, and compilation tasks.

At midpoint on this continuum, the evaluator is depicted as engaging in a nonsymmetrical, interdependent power relationship with the decision maker. The interdependence of the relationship arises from the evaluator's interactions with the decision maker to clarify the decision making context, identify decision alternatives, and evaluate the relevance of evaluative

information to decision making. However, the evaluator defers to the decision maker in making judgments about these aspects of the evaluation process, making exercise of authority nonsymmetrical. In Stufflebeam and associates' (1971) words, the evaluator is an "extension of the decision maker's mind" (p. 336). The evaluator's role definition does not delineate legitimate power strategies for influencing the decision making process. Instead, the evaluator's power strategies in the decision making process are limited to the exercise of personal persuasion. In Stufflebeam and associates' (1971) words, the evaluator role calls for an "extremely sensitive interpersonal relationship" between the evaluator and decision maker (p. 336).

At the opposite extreme of the continuum, the evaluator is depicted as engaging in a symmetrical, interdependent power relationship with the decision maker. As the evaluator's role approaches that of planner, the functional role distinctions between evaluator and decision maker become blurred. As a participant in the decision making process, the evaluator is ascribed legitimate authority to pursue a wide range of symmetrical power strategies, including bargaining, negotiation, partisan discussion, compensation and reciprocity (Lindblom, 1965).

It was said earlier that the embeddedness of the evaluator role in an organization influences the types, quality and use of evaluation in an organization. How can the evaluator and administrator's roles be redefined to achieve this integration?

Within the traditional definition of evaluation for decision making, Attkisson and associates (1978) describe three alternatives for integrating the evaluator and administrator roles. One alternative redefines the administrator role as administrator-evaluator, an administrator who has management responsibility for evaluation, and who has attained a working

knowledge of evaluation sufficient to translate information needs to an evaluative technician and to integrate the information compiled by the evaluative technician into the decision making process. The second alternative redefines the evaluator role as evaluator-administrator, an evaluator who directs and conducts the organization's evaluation activities and participates in administrative decision making. The evaluator-administrator's association with decision makers is not limited to the reporting of evaluative information. Rather, this role defines the evaluator as a member of a decision making team. The third alternative for integrating evaluation and decision making is through the creation of a change agent role, a role which is neither evaluator nor administrator but which serves as a linkage between the two.

In terms of power relationships, the noteworthy feature of these alternative models of integration is that only the evaluator-administrator role places the evaluator in a symmetrical, interdependent power relationship with decision makers. The administrator-evaluator role maintains the nonsymmetry of the role relationship between administrator and evaluative technician. The change agent role, according to Attkisson and associates (1978), may in fact be a potential barrier between the evaluator and administrator.

Two other modes of integrating evaluation and administration are found in Cronbach's (1980) depiction of the evaluator as educator and integrator, and House's (1980) conception of the evaluator's power-equalizing role. In Cronbach's view, the evaluator as educator attempts to provide a comprehensive interpretation of a problem area to members of a "policy-shaping community", persons who are stakeholders in some proposed action. By educating the members of the policy-shaping community about one another's perceptions and priorities, the evaluator facilitates the processes of negotiation and accommodation among the policy shaping community and thus fulfills an integrative role.

House (1980) describes the role of the evaluator in terms of the just redistribution of power. Like Cronbach (1980), he views the evaluator as facilitating the processes of negotiation and accommodation. Yet because, in House's view, power is unequally distributed, the various stakeholders in the evaluation process have unequal access to these power strategies. Therefore, by applying the standard of justice in the evaluation process, the evaluator intervenes in the existing power relationships among the stakeholders to ensure that the interests of the least powerful are emphasized.

In terms of power relationships, the noteworthy feature of these two conceptions of the evaluator role is that they expand the arena of power relationships beyond the organization. They depict the evaluator and stakeholders in the evaluation and planning process as actively pursuing power strategies.

There is consensus that the evaluator is, or should be, more than a technician or a recorder of events (Cronbach, 1980). In addition, recent literature (Cronbach, 1980; House, 1980) emphasizes that the evaluator has a political influence in the evaluation and planning process, regardless of the way in which the evaluator's role is defined. This emphasis can be noted by the lack of entries toward the data collector end of the continuum for both of these authors. This emphasis on advisor, advocate and planner roles for the evaluator also coincides with the systems perspective of Borich and Jemelka (1982) which emphasizes the evaluator's responsibility for assessing values and for using values to explicate the criteria with which decisions about the program are to be made. According to these authors the evaluator's role is integrated with and participatory to the decision making process by virtue of this expanded view of tasks in the evaluation process.

By examining the implications of evaluator role definitions on role relationships and power relationships within and outside the organization, it may be possible to get a clearer picture of how best to integrate evaluation with planned change.

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