

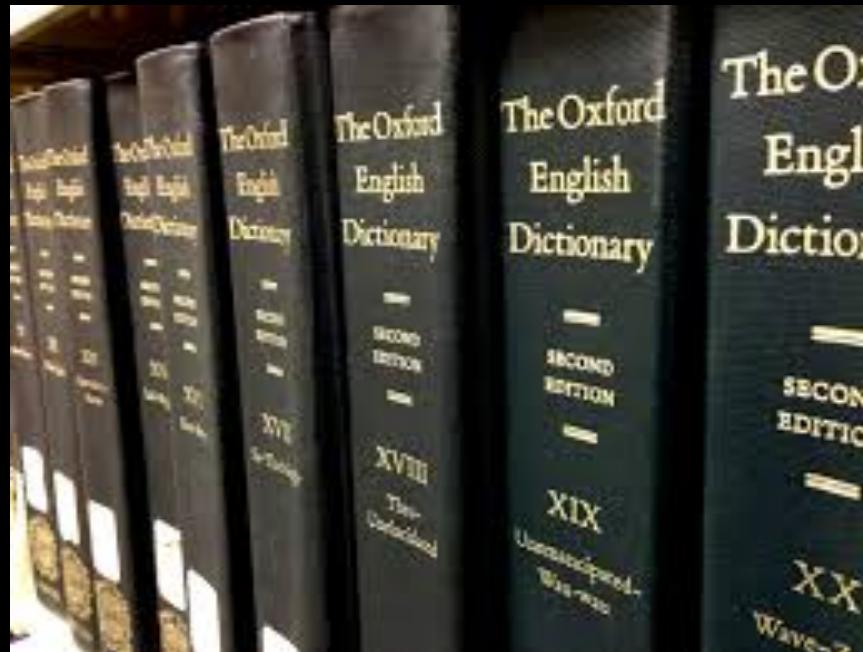
Goal-Free Evaluation

In Theory & Practice



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Goal-Free Evaluation Definition



GFE is any evaluation in which the evaluator conducts the evaluation without knowledge of or reference to predetermined goals and objectives

GFE

In Theory

The idea behind GFE is...

“Finding out what the program is actually *doing* without being cued as to what it is *trying* to do. If the program is achieving its stated goals and objectives, then these achievements should show up; if not, it is argued, they are irrelevant.”

-Scriven



As you can learn from any baseball pitcher who has set out in the first inning to pitch a shutout, the game's final score is the thing that counts, not good intentions.

—Popham

The Benefits of Evaluating without Referencing Goals:

1. Reduce social biases
2. Uncover unanticipated side-effects
3. Avoid goal rhetoric
4. Adapt to contextual changes
5. Align goals with actual program
6. Supplement goal-based strategies



GFE Principles

1. Identify relevant effects to examine without referencing goals and objectives.
2. Identify what occurred without the prompting of goals and objectives.
3. Determine if what occurred can logically be attributed to the program or intervention.
4. Determine the degree to which the effects are positive, negative, or neutral.

Goal-Blinding



The Screener ...

- Conducts initial meetings
- Edits materials, documents, & communiqués
- Serves as a liaison to the project staff

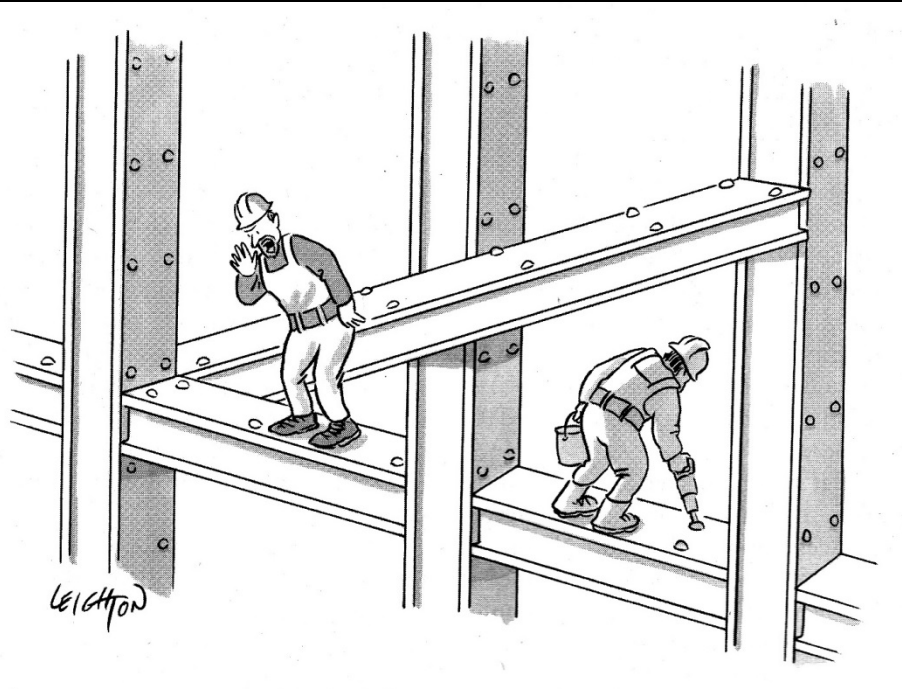
GFE

In Practice

GF Evaluators in the Literature

- 1 Belanger (2006)
- 2 Berkshire, Kouame, & Richardson (2009)
- 3 Evers (1980)
- 4 Gustufson (2006)
- 5 House & Hogben (in Evers, 1980)
- 6 James & Roffe (2000)
- 7 Manfredi (2003)
- 8 Matsunaga & Enos (1997)
- 9 Scriven (in Salasin, 1974)
- 10 Stufflebeam (2001)
- 11 Thiagarajan (1975)
- 12 Welch (1976, 1978)
- 13 Youker (2005)

Goal-Free Evaluators



Kathleen Belanger (2006)

Stephen F. Austin State University

Stacy Berkshire (2009)

Perrigo Company

Ernest House (1974)

University of Colorado

Patricia Manfredi (2003)

U of Massachusetts & U of Connecticut

Sankar Rajakumar

Erasmus University Rotterdam

Kristin Richardson (2009)

Grand Canyon U & Arizona State U

Michael Scriven (1973)

Claremont Graduate University

Daniel Stufflebeam (1997)

Western Michigan University

Sivasailam Thiagarajan (1975)

Indiana University

Wayne Welch (1978)

University of Minnesota

Goal-Dismissive GFE

Most Significant Change

(MSC)

Dart & Davies (2003)

Outcome Harvesting

(OH)

Wilson-Grau (2013)

Participatory Assessment of Development

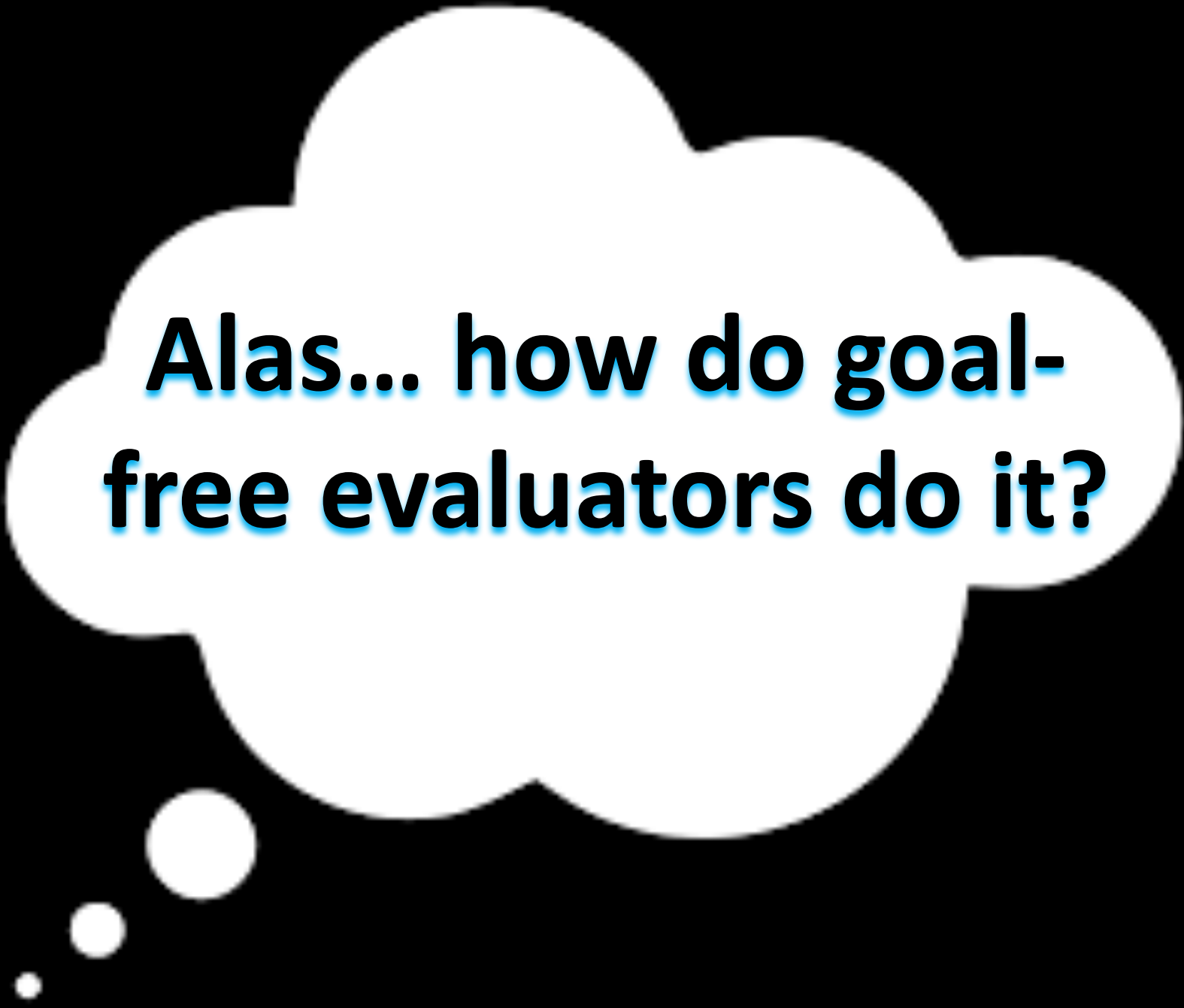
(PADev)

Dietz, van der Geest, & Obeng (2013)

Qualitative Impact Protocol

(QUIP)

Coperstake (2014)



Alas... how do goal-free evaluators do it?

GFEs have been used...

- As **external, ex-post facto, participatory, outcome** evaluations
- For **formative, summative, & metaevaluation** purposes
- To investigate a **broad** range of **outcomes**
- To determine outcome **attribution**
- To **supplement GBE**

GF Evaluators Data Collection Tools

- **Key informant interviews**
- **Direct observation**
- **Document/archival analysis**
- **Survey questionnaires**
- **Case study**
- **Checklist approach**

Conclusion

Referring to the lack of GFE use, Scriven said:

“It’s long past the point where it’s a sign of [evaluator] incompetence not to use it. It’s strictly comparable to not using statistics.”



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One of the great mistakes is to judge policies and programs by their intentions rather than their results.

- Milton Friedman

Brandon W. Youker's GFE Publications

Youker, B. W. (in press). Goal-free evaluation. In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Measurement and Evaluation*. (Vol. xx, pp. XXX-XXX). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Youker, B. W., Zielinski, A., Hunter, O. C. & Bayer, N. (2016). Who needs goals? A case study of goal-free evaluation. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Evaluation*, (12)27, 27-43.

Youker, B. W., Ingraham, A., & Bayer, N. (2014). An assessment of goal-free evaluation: Case studies of four goal-free evaluations. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 46, 10-16.

Youker, B. W. & Ingraham, A. (2013). Goal-free evaluation: An orientation for foundations' evaluations. *The Foundation Review*, 5(4), 53-63.

Youker, B. W. (2013). Goal-free evaluation: A potential model for the evaluation of social work programs. *Social Work Research*, 37(4), 432-438.

Youker, B. W. (2005). Ethnography and evaluation: Their relationship and three anthropological models of evaluation. *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation*, (2)3, 113-132.