Reflections on the American Evaluation Association (AEA) conference

Washington, DC
14-19 October 2013

Ian Patrick and Amy Gullickson
Focus

• Overview

• Organisation of the Conference – including implications for Melbourne

• Reflections on key presentations
Overview
Evaluation Practice
in the Early 21\textsuperscript{st} Century

Economies of Scale:
- US$ 195 conference
- US$75 half day workshop

AEA: Commenced 1986
Nearly 8000 members, USA & 60 Other Countries

3000 conference delegates
3 levels of function space
Ballroom: up to 4000 audience
President’s Address: 
The Breadth of Evaluation Practice Today: Jody Fitzpatrick

• Who are the evaluators, and what are they doing?

• Evaluation in an empirical age
Context of EVALUATION TODAY

Public interest in numbers facts & truth accountability impact

Source: Jody Fitzpatrick
What Is HAPPENING in Evaluation Today?

NOT as much as we think

37% of federal managers report an evaluation

90% of nonprofits report a basic evaluation
Consulting Professions LIKE OURS

Organization Development Network
Advancing the Practice and Theory of OD

International Association of Facilitators

Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology

American Accounting Association
Thought Leaders in Accounting
Evaluators need to partner with other disciplines to continue to learn how evaluation can be of use and spread knowledge about evaluation.
WHAT Do We Share & Learn?

evaluators
- theories
- methodologies
- findings

other social sciences

consulting professions
- practice
- use
- working with people
HOW Do We Learn & Share?
An explanation...
Organisation of the Conference
Navigation
Timetable!
Selection of Program
- AEA Conference Team
- Topical Interest Groups
- Presidential Strand
- Local Affiliates
Pre-Conference Workshops
Topical Interest Groups
49 Topical Interests Groups

Large Range

• Qualitative Methods
• Quantitative Methods
• Mixed Methods
• Independent Consulting
• Health Evaluation
• Evaluation Use
• Collaborative, Participatory & Empowerment
• International and Cross Cultural Evaluation
• Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues
• Educational Evaluation
Forms of Presentation

Plenary
Multipaper
Panel
Think Tank (presenters and discussants)
Expert Lecture
Skill-building Workshop
Roundtable
Demonstration
Mixers

• First time attendee orientation
• Meet the authors
• Silent auction
• TIG Business meetings
• Birds of a feather gathering tables
• Culture and diversity / international nooks
• Workshops
Exhibitors
• Participants
• Participants and Marketing/Promotion
Evaluators Visit Capitol Hill Initiative

27th Annual Conference of the American Evaluation Association

Washington Hilton | Washington, DC, USA
Conference: October 16-19, 2013
Professional Development Workshops: October 14-16 & 20, 2013
More on the Conference
The State of Qualitative Methods in the Early 21st Century: Top Ten Developments

Michael Quinn Patton
Latest revision currently underway and Will appear in 2014
1. Powerful qualitative software

2. Social media as data
   facebook, twitter, linkedin, google, youtube
3. Ethical challenges, IRB constraints
4. Mixed methods
5. Data visualisation
6. Driven by evaluation practice and users’ demands

7. Qualitative evaluation as an intervention

- Participatory evaluation
- Feminist evaluation
- Empowerment evaluation
- Collaborative evaluation
- Transformative evaluation
- Developmental evaluation
8. Valuing deep contextual understanding

- **Realist Evaluation**

- **Contextual Intelligence: A Critical Competency**

  *Matthew R. Kutz & Anita Bamford-Wade*
9. Qualitative Evaluator as the Instrument
- Experience, expertise, cultural competence

“Old age and treachery always overcomes youth and skill”
Waylon Jennings
10. Increased purposeful sampling options

The way ahead:
- Building qualitative inquiry practice
- Interest and resources to do serious, triangulated, in depth qualitative evaluations
- Commitment to enquire seriously into unintended consequences and emergence
Themes from case studies of evaluators’ lives
David Williams, Brigham Young University

- Evaluators should study how people evaluate
- Connection between evaluation formally and informally in daily life
- Build on these practices
Reflection on the lives of:
Robert Stake
Eleanor Chelimsky
Ernest House
Marv Alkin
Michael Patton
Daniel Stufflebeam
Michael Scriven
Michael Patton

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal Evaluation Situation</th>
<th>Lessons Learned about Evaluation</th>
<th>Influence on Formal Evaluation Approach</th>
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<td>Transitioned from being a youth leader of a high school evangelical group to studying humanistic values in college and shifting his own values.</td>
<td>Wanting to complete his church mission in spite of losing his faith. So he searched for ways to help others sort through their values without emphasising his own shifted values.</td>
<td>Developmental evaluation - about helping clients identify guiding ethical principles and listening to others rather than creating and testing best practices generated by fallible scientific methods.</td>
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### Ernest House

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<td>He learned to be skeptical of all evaluations through several experiences as a child/youth in which adults’ evaluations proved inadequate</td>
<td>At an early age, he responded by looking suspiciously beneath the surface of people and events. This eventually evolved into an intellectual style that worked well for him</td>
<td>Over time, this style became useful in formal evaluation. Often, he found he could see what others did not see, and would say what others would not say. He pushed willful ignorance back, particularly in high-profile evaluations,</td>
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Conclusion

Dubito, ergo cogito, ergo sum

I doubt, therefore I think, therefore I am
To access AEA’s public resources and explore the conference program, go to:

http://www.eval.org