What to Do When Impacts Shift but Evaluation Design Requires Stability?

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Jonathan A. Morell, Ph.D.
Director of Evaluation, Fulcrum Corporation
Editor, Evaluation and Program Planning
jmorell@fulcrum-corp.com 734 646-8622
Website: www.jamorell.com
Blog: www.evaluationuncertainty.com
I am Advocating for an Additional Consideration When Designing Evaluation

- Funding
- Deadlines
- Logic models
- Measurement
- Program theory
- Research design
- Information use plans
- Defining role of evaluator
- Logistics of implementation
- Planning to anticipate and respond to surprise
What Does Complexity Tell Us About Predictability?

Many of the programs we evaluate live here.
This is where we have a problem:

- The integrity of design must be preserved over time, but

- What the program does may change.
### Some Examples

#### Assist refugees to adjust to new living circumstances

**Program theory:** 1) distress, 2) language acquisition, 3) job seeking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design #1</th>
<th>Design #2</th>
<th>Unexpected</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>interviews when first resettled, 12 months post</td>
<td>validated surveys 6, 12, 18 months post</td>
<td>Community structure formation</td>
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#### Improve R&D in a company by using Wiki technology to foster collaboration

**Program theory:** 1) collaboration networks, 2) viable new ideas, 3) idea creativity

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<tr>
<td>2 year tracking</td>
<td>design 1 + “no treatment” divisions</td>
<td>corporate strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>expert judgment, creativity</td>
<td>interviews of congregants</td>
<td>HR hiring priorities</td>
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#### Church program to promote health behavior

**Program theory:** 1) eating behavior 2) exercise behavior, 3) doctor visits

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<td>activity logs</td>
<td>interviews of congregants</td>
<td>family relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>weight, BP</td>
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<td>“spread”</td>
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Workshops and Webinars

- Logic Models As Simple Pictures - and So Much More
- Strong evaluation designs for programs with unexpected consequences
- Workshop based on Evaluation in the Face of Uncertainty: Webinar, Slide deck
- Logic Models - Beyond the Traditional View: Metrics, Methods, Expected and Unexpected Change
- Integrating Agent-based modeling and traditional evaluation Demo available upon request. Presentation/Webinar
- Conducting Program Evaluation by Combining “Traditional” Knowledge and Complex Adaptive System Understanding of how the World Works
- Integrating Evaluation into Planning for Impact: Using Computer Simulation to Aid Program Implementation and Evaluation part 1 part 2, part 3

Published Work


Blog Posts

- Complexity is about stability and predictability
- How to evaluate complex health interventions?
- Matching management systems to system behavior
- What is the relationship between path dependence and system stability? With explanation of why I care.
- Using an evolutionary biology view to connect the intellectual development of evaluation and the development of the evaluation community