What is program evaluation?

A beginners guide

What is evaluation

This is the third in a set of handouts on the key questions about program evaluation.

This handout is about: What methods to use.

There are many methods, each with their own uses, advantages and difficulties.

Evaluations could use any, not necessarily all, of the various methods, depending on the question and goal of the evaluation.

This handout lists various methods, each of which are described in more detail in the following handouts.

| QUALITATIVE<-------------------------|QUANTITATIVE |
| Participant Observation | Surveys |
| Interviews (open) | Observation (with score check list) |
| Focus Groups | Document Review |
| Interviews Semi-structured | |
| Document Review | |

This table and the next one are developed from:
Program Evaluation: Background and Methods
Evaluation Methodology
http://ed.fnal.gov/trc_new/program_docs/eval_meth.html

Produced by

Gene Shackman, Ph.D.
The Global Social Change Research Project
http://gsociology.icaap.org/
Free Resources for Methods in Program Evaluation
http://gsociology.icaap.org/methods
### What is evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Qualitative</strong></th>
<th><strong>Quantitative</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Tells how, why</td>
<td>• Tells what and how much</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Open-ended</td>
<td>• Closed format</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Researcher as instrument</td>
<td>• Instrumentation protocols, formats</td>
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#### Benefits ("rich data"):  
- Descriptions, narration  
- Understandings  
- Perceptions/perspectives

#### Benefits (numerical, measurement):  
- Information from a large sample size  
- Information cheaper to collect  
- More objective

#### Drawbacks:  
- Information from a small sample size  
- Information expensive to collect - labor intensive  
- More subjective

#### Drawbacks:  
- May miss important data - such as perceptions, values and unintended outcomes

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**Additional Resource**  
Overview of Data Collection Techniques  
Designing and Conducting Health Systems Research Projects  
International Development Research Center  

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This handout is only for education purposes. It does not represent any guidelines, recommendations or requirements about how to do program evaluation. The only purpose is to provide the general public, consumers, students, and evaluators with information about things that may go into evaluations, so that evaluation may be better understood, and evaluators and clients might work better together to get more out of their evaluation.

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I also benefited greatly from feedback from folks on various email lists, and I thank them all!

The most recent version of this handout is always at  
http://gsociology.icaap.org/methods/