

PA 871—PUBLIC PROGRAM EVALUATION

La Follette School of Public Affairs

Fall 2007

Tuesday 3:30-5:25; 54 Bascom

Professor

Karen C. Holden

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Office Hours: W 9-10:00 or by appointment (best to check).

Prerequisites: Grad status & Pub Affairs 818 or equivalent and some background in public policy.

Students with disabilities who foresee the need for accommodation or those with known conflicts with any course session should see me during the first two weeks of classes.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course studies strategies for evaluating the efficacy of public programs. Classical study of statistics generally takes the data as given and focuses on inferences that can be made from a given data set. In contrast, this course will spend a substantial amount of time studying *how* to effectively design program evaluations, including the collection of statistics, and how to interpret quantitative results. Major issues examined are:

- reasons for and uses of public program evaluation activities.
- relationship between program theory and evaluation design.
- statistical techniques, including importance of statistical power and effect size, in evaluation research.
- relative advantages of experimental and quasi-experimental designs.
- understanding limits to causal inference.

There are many good books on program evaluation in general and for specific fields. There is a large literature scattered in specific evaluation as well as “field” journals. Look for the literature relevant to your interests. A lot of program evaluations are available as program reports from policy shops such as MDRC, Urban Institute, Abt Associates.

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Textbooks:

Required:

Langbein and Felbinger (2006). Public Program Evaluation: A Statistical Guide. M.E. Sharpe (henceforth *LF*)

Shadish, Cook and Campbell (2002). Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference. Houghton Mifflin. (henceforth *SCC*)

There is some overlap between the two, but both are independently useful. LF is more systematic and a good reference, but has almost no case studies. SCC has excellent case studies and is closer to a textbook..

Depending on interest in development issues, readings may be assigned from the following.

Judy L. Baker, (2000) Evaluating the Impact of Development Projects on Poverty: Handbook for Practitioners, World Bank. (<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTISPMA/Resources/handbook.pdf> ; or www.worldbank.org/poverty/library/impact.pdf)

Nearly all of the other required readings are available on line. They may be downloaded and printed. But since that is not allowed on La Follette Student Lounge printers, at the first class meeting we will discuss if there are preferred alternatives (an individual CD, course packet?).

Highly recommended for those who will be working on or with evaluations:

Mark Lipsey (1990). Design Sensitivity: Statistical Power for Experimental Research. Sage.

Richard Berk and Peter H. Rossi. (latest edition) Thinking About Program Evaluation. Sage Publication.

Sage University Papers: Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences. (Very useful series to look at for methods)

Evaluation associations:

American Evaluation Association is “an international professional association of evaluators devoted to the application and exploration of program evaluation, personnel evaluation, technology, and many other forms of evaluation.” <http://www.eval.org/> It sponsors two publications:

New Directions for Evaluation. A quarterly sourcebook series which publishes empirical, methodological, and theoretical works on all aspects of evaluation. Each issue of the journal is devoted to a single topic. See series titles at: <http://www.josseybass.com/WileyCDA/Section/id-155510.html>

American Journal of Evaluation, is the official refereed journal of the American Evaluation Association and publishes papers about the methods, theory, practice, and findings of evaluation. Published four times a year. <http://aje.sagepub.com/>

The International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation is “a loose alliance of regional and national evaluation organizations from around the world that collaborate to: build evaluation leadership and capacity in developing countries, foster the cross-fertilisation of evaluation theory and practice around the world, address international challenges in evaluation, and assist the evaluation profession to take a more global approach to contributing to the identification and solution of world problems. (<http://ioce.net/index.shtml>)

Course Requirements and Grading:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Reading questions and discussion | 10% |
| 2. Group project : | |
| a. Incremental paper parts (4 at 5% each) | 20% |
| b. Presentation | 10% |
| c. Final paper | 15% |
| 3. Homework assignments (3 at 15% each) | 45% |

Class Participation (including item 1)

Class participation is important to the student’s own learning experience as well as that of other students. Thus, class participation is encouraged, required, and rewarded. Your attendance is expected as is your participation in class discussions. In addition each student will have responsibility for constructing a reading guide to an assigned readings. Questions should be sent to the class no later than noon the Monday prior to class (earlier if possible). These can be sent to the class email list (which includes me) at: pubaffr871-1-f07@lists.wisc.edu

The guide is designed both to assist readers in identifying key design issues and decision and to pose questions about aspects of the evaluation that are difficult to understand, either conceptually (e.g., “why is this important?”) or technically (e.g., “I don’t understand what defines....or how this process resolvesissue.”). See below for more information on this assignment.

Readings have been selected from a large but varied evaluation literature. If there are particular areas or articles you would like to have the class read and discuss, I am open to suggested substitutions or searches for specific program articles. Readings have been selected to illustrate methodological issues and application evaluation to particular areas. In the first class we will discuss whether students would like to explore the literature in additional areas.

Group Evaluation project (Item 2)

The presumption is that students in this course are interested in thinking about and applying their analytical skills to an actual program evaluation. A large part of the course requires your applying program evaluation principles to a project. Students are urged to work in pairs on this part of the course. Projects will be chosen during the first three weeks of class. The project may be one that has one or several completed evaluations, a program that some agency would like evaluated, and/or an area in which you are curious about an evaluation. The project is partly design, partly critique of the ability to conduct an evaluation using alternative designs. The paper will be constructed out of several assignments (item 1a) handed in during the semester, critiqued, and revised as they are put together for a final product (item 1c). That means your paper will touch on most areas discussed in this course: program goals and theory, expected effect size, pros and cons of random assignment and one or more specific quasi-experimental designs.

By September 25 everyone must have handed in a short “memo” describing briefly the program evaluation area they would like to pursue with at least 5 references they have looked at for information on the problem and its evaluations. The paper will progress through the “Group Evaluation Project Assignments.” These are short (no more than 5 pages) addressing a particular design or analysis issue. .

Homework assignments (Item 3)

You will be given an article or evaluation report to critique, using the concepts you have learned up to that point in the course. Questions will include ones on design, analysis and conclusions. The final assignment will serve as a “final,” aiming to you’re your overall understanding of program evaluation. You may discuss the assignment with others in the class. Unless I announce otherwise, however, the write-ups must be your own work. The final critique must, nevertheless, be your own work.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS (subject to change, except for work due dates).

1. September 4 –Introduction: Course overview, program evaluation introduction, organizations
 - a. Guiding Principles for Evaluators at <http://www.eval.org/Publications/GuidingPrinciples.asp>
2. September 11- Evaluation Design: when to start and stop an evaluation
 - a. SCC, Chapter 1 (pp 1-26); LF Chapter 1 and 2
 - b. “Risks and Benefits of Estrogen Plus Progestin in Healthy Postmenopausal Women Principal Results From the Women's Health Initiative Randomized Controlled Trial,” by Writing Group for the Women's Health Initiative Investigator Journals of the American Medical Association, Vol. 288, No. 3, July 17, 2002, p. 321-333. Found at: <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/288/3/321>
 - c. *Richard King et al. Final Report on a Formative Evaluation of the First Year of a Project from for Neighborhood Aftercare: A School-Based After Care Program. <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/cerm/Neighborhood.pdf>
 - d. Karen Holden and Arthur Reynolds. “Process evaluation for state welfare reforms” FOCUS, Vol. 18:3, Spring 1997. <http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc183.pdf#page=48>

DUE: email information on background (e.g., degree program, year), relevant experience, areas of program interests, project interest.

3. September 18: Causal Inference
Validity: correlation versus causation, causality and the “missing counterfactual”, treatment effects, types of program evaluations, performance evaluation and measurement
READINGS: LF Chapters 3-4; SCC, Chapter 2 & 3;
Mark Lipsey. (1996) “Key Issues in Intervention Research.” American Journal of Industrial Medicine 29:298-302 http://www.vanderbilt.edu/VIPPS/ER&M/Key_Issues.pdf
4. September 25– Impact Assessment: Experimental Design

When randomized assignment is feasible, types of randomized experimental designs, basic statistical methodology, threats to validity and solutions, attrition

- a. SSC. Chapters 8, 10 (pp. 323-340); LF Chapter 5
- b. *Robert A. Moffitt 2003. "The Role of Randomized Field Trials in Social Science Research: A Perspective from Evaluations of Reforms of Social Welfare Programs" Institute for Research on Poverty DP 1264-03 (<http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/dps/pdfs/dp126403.pdf>).
- c. *Lisa A. Gennetian 2003 The Long-Term Effects of the Minnesota Family Investment Program on Marriage and Divorce Among Two-Parent Families MDRC
<http://www.mdrc.org/publications/357/full.pdf>
- d. *Esther Duflo, et al. 2005. Saving Incentives for Low and Middle-Income Families: Evidence from a Field Experiment with H&R Block. NBER Working Paper 11680 <http://www.nber.org/papers/w11680>
- e. *Gregory Mills et al. 2005. Effects of Individual Development Accounts on Household Saving behavior: Evidence from a Controlled Experiment.
http://emlab.berkeley.edu/users/webfac/auerbach/e231_sp05/gale.pdf#search='abt%20associates%20AD%20evaluation'

DUE: September 25: Send selection of project and group participants to me at: holden@lafollette.wisc.edu

5. October 2: Randomized Experimental Designs: Practical and Ethical Issues

Institutional review boards, ethical standards for experimentation on human subjects,
READINGS: SCC Chapter 9 and TBA

- a. Protection of Human Subjects in Research: Institutional Review Boards
<http://info.gradsch.wisc.edu/research/compliance/humansubjects/hsc.html>
- b. Medical Privacy - National Standards to Protect the Privacy of Personal Health Information Summary of the HIPAA Privacy Rules. <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacysummary.pdf>
- c. There is a short summary of the IRB-relevance of HIPAA at
<http://www.wisc.edu/hipaa/ResearchGuide/overview.html>
- d. Reread: Guiding Principles for Evaluators at <http://www.eval.org/EvaluationDocuments/aeaprin6.html>
- e. *Gary King et al. (2007). A "Politically Robust" Experimental Design for Public Policy Evaluation, with Application to the Mexican Universal Health Insurance Program." Journal of Policy Analysis and Management 26(3):479-506. (to be sent to you)
- f. *Christopher D. Maxwell, Joel H. Garner, and Jeffrey A. Fagan 2001 "The Effects of Arrest on Intimate Partner Violence: New Evidence From the Spouse Assault Replication Program." National Institutes of Justice, Research In Brief URL: <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/188199.pdf>

6. October 9 and 16: – Quasi-Experimental Designs for Causal Inference

A cookbook of designs: time-series and cross-section designs, designs with and without pretest observations, threats to validity and solutions

- a. SSC Chapter 4 (103-134); chapter 5 (135-170); chapter 6; LF Chapter 6
- b. *Howard Bloom. Building a Convincing Test of a Public Housing Employment Program Using Non-experimental Methods: Planning for the Jobs-Plus Demonstration. MDRC working paper.
<http://www.mdrc.org/publications/78/workpaper.html>
- c. Gene V Glass. 1997. Interrupted Time Series Quasi-Experiments (sent to you)
- d. Ferdinando Regalia (1999). Poverty & Inequality Technical Notes, "Impact Evaluation Methods for Social Programs." Inter-American Development Bank, Technical Note 2
<http://www.iadb.org/sds/doc/TechNote2.pdf>

DUE OCTOBER 9: Group Project Assignment #1

7. October 23: Non-Experimental Designs

Basic regression model: assumptions and inference, implementing useful controls, regression discontinuity designs, interpreting non-experimental results

- a. READINGS: SCC Chapter 7; LF Chapter 7

- b. *Ted Joyce and Cristina Yunzal (2007). “Does Greater Exposure to WIC Affect Maternal Behavior and Improve Infant Health? Evidence from the Pregnancy Nutrition Surveillance System.” Institute for Research on Poverty Discussion Paper no. 1323-07. accessible at:
<http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/dps/pdfs/dp132307.pdf>

DUE: Group Project Assignment #2

8. October 30: Strategies for increasing Power
 - a. Lipsey, Chapter 1& 2
 - b. Lipsey, Mark W. 1998. Design Sensitivity: Statistical Power for Applied Experimental Research. Pp. 39-68 in Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods, L. Bickman and D.J. Rog, eds. Thousand Oaks: Sage. (http://www.vanderbilt.edu/cerm/Design_Sens.pdf)

DUE: Individual Assignment: #1.

9. November 6 – More on construct validity: Developing measures, survey design, and data protection
Measuring outcomes, threats to construct validity, designing survey questions, maximizing response rates
READINGS: LF Chapter 8; SCC pp. 64-82; additional readings TBA
Possible visitor to class: Kenneth Walsh, chief White House correspondent for US News and World report.
I’ve asked if he could talk about translating research (evaluation) through to media for policy makers.

DUE: Group Project Assignment #3

10. November 13– More Impact Assessment with Quasi-experimental designs: comparison groups, differences in differences
 - a. SSC chapters 6 & 7
 - b. *Elizabeth Ty Wilde & Robinson Hollister (2002) “How Close Is Close Enough? Testing Nonexperimental Estimates of Impact against Experimental Estimates of Impact with Education Test Scores as Outcomes” (DP 1242-02)
<http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/dps/pdfs/dp124202.pdf>
 - c. *Rachel E. Dunifon and Lori Kowaleski-Jones (2004). “Exploring the Influence of the National School Lunch Program on Children.” Institute for Research on Poverty Discussion Paper
<http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/dps/pdfs/dp127704.pdf>
 - d. *Shaohua Chen and Martin Ravallion (2003). “Hidden Impact? Ex-Post Evaluation of an Anti-Poverty Program.” Washington D.C.: Development Research Group, World Bank.
http://wdsbeta.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2003/06/06/000094946_03052804040641/Rendered/PDF/multi0page.pdf
http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=417160
http://poverty.worldbank.org/files/14038_hidden_impact.pdf
 - e. *J. Lawrence Aber, Joshua L. Brown, Christopher C. Henrich. “Teaching Conflict Resolution: An Effective School-Based Approach to Violence Prevention.” New York: National Center for Children in Poverty. <http://www.nccp.org/media/tcr99-text.pdf>

DUE: Group Project Assignment #4

11. November 20—Meta-analysis
 - a. READINGS: SCC Chapters 12 and 13; LF Chapter 9
 - b. Mark W. Lipsey. 1997. “What Can You Build with Thousands of Bricks? Musings on the Cumulation of Knowledge in Program Evaluation.” *New Directions for Evaluation*, 1997, 76, 7-24. http://www.vanderbilt.edu/cerm/Thousand_bricks.pdf

- c. *Sandra Jo Wilson, Mark W. Lipsey & James H. Derzon. The effects of school-based intervention programs on aggressive and disruptive behavior: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology*, 2003, 71(1), 136 – 149. http://www.vanderbilt.edu/cerm/School_Based_Interventions.pdf
- d. Mark W. Lipsey. Re: Unsolved problems and unfinished business. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 2001, 22(3), 325-328. http://www.vanderbilt.edu/cerm/AJE_Future.pdf
- e. *Borman, G.D., & D'Agostino, J.V. (1996). Title I and student achievement: A meta-analysis of federal evaluation results. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 18, 309-326.
- f. *David Greenberg, Andreas Cebulla, & Stacey Bouche, 2006. Report on a Meta-Analysis of Welfare-to-Work Programs Institute for Research on Poverty Discussion Paper no. 1312-05 Accessed at: <http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/dps/pdfs/dp131205.pdf>
- g. Check out the Campbell Collaborative at <http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/MG/index.asp>

12. November 27: Catching up or project reports.

DUE: Homework: Evaluation Critique #2

13. December 4 and 11: Project reports:

14. **December 14** -- Evaluation Critique #3 due. Final Paper Due

SUMMARY OF CLASSES DATES

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DUE: email information on background (e.g., degree program, year), relevant experience, areas of program interests, project interest.
3. September 18: Causal Inference
4. September 25– Impact Assessment: Experimental Design
DUE: September 25: Send selection of project and group participants to me at: holden@lafollette.wisc.edu
5. October 2: Randomized Experimental Designs: Practical and Ethical Issues
6. October 9 and 16: – Quasi-Experimental Designs for Causal Inference
DUE OCTOBER 9: Group Project Assignment #1
7. October 23: Non-Experimental Designs
DUE: Group Project Assignment #2
8. October 30: Strategies for increasing Power
DUE: Individual Assignment: #1.
9. November 6 – More on construct validity: Developing measures, survey design, and data protection
DUE: Group Project Assignment #3
10. November 13– More Impact Assessment with Quasi-experimental designs: comparison groups, differences in differences
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