

Culturally Responsive Evaluation

History, Strategy &
Case Study

Key Terms

Culture is the integrated pattern of thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions associated, wholly or partially, with racial, ethnic, or linguistic groups, as well as with religious, spiritual, biological, geographical, or sociological characteristics.” *Office of Minority Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

Responsive means to attend substantively and politically to issues of culture and race in evaluation practice. Responsiveness is continuous action, competence is some sort of benchmark that can be achieved and plateaued *Hood, 2001*

Evaluation is the systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using data to examine the effectiveness and efficiency of programs and, as importantly, to contribute to continuous program improvement. *CDC, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

Key Terms

Culturally Responsive Evaluation (CRE) is a theoretical, conceptual and inherently political position that includes the centrality of and attunement to culture in the theory and practice of evaluation. That is, CRE recognizes that demographic, sociopolitical, and contextual dimensions, locations, perspectives, and characteristics of culture matter fundamentally in evaluation. *Stafford Hood, Rodney K. Hopson, Karen E. Kirkhart, 2015*

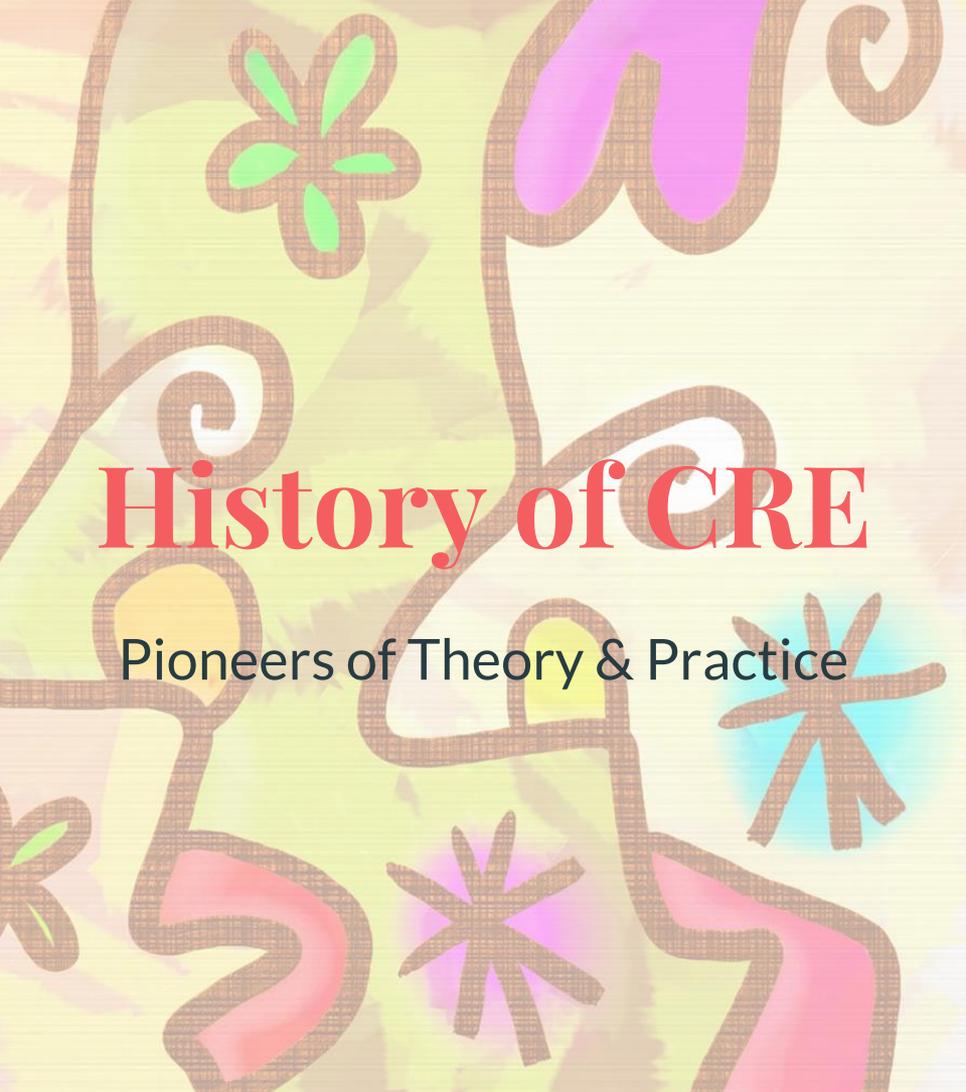
Culturally Responsive Evaluation is a program evaluation approach committed to community inclusion, empowerment and social justice. It uses evaluation as a tool for greater outcomes and social change. *Eastern Evaluation Research Society*

Structural Racism is the silent opportunity killer.

It is the blind interaction between institutions, policies, and practices that inevitably perpetuates barriers to opportunities and racial disparities. Conscious and unconscious racism continue to exist in our society. But structural racism feeds on the unconscious. Public and private institutions and individuals each build a wall. They do not necessarily build the wall to hurt people of color, but one wall is joined by another until they construct a labyrinth from which few can escape.

“Structural Racism Arts & Social Justice Workshop,” GIA Reader 20, no. 1 (Spring 2009)

Every Evaluation is Political



History of CRE

Pioneers of Theory & Practice

Roots

- Began in departments of education assessment in early 1990's.
 - “Democratic Evaluation” to address race & culture -Stafford Hood
 - Karen Kirkhart introduces multicultural validity
 - First mention of CRE in 1998 by Hood at a conference
 - 2001 Development of RACE and AEA Building Diversity Initiative
 - Hood publishes *Nobody Knows My Name* (2001)
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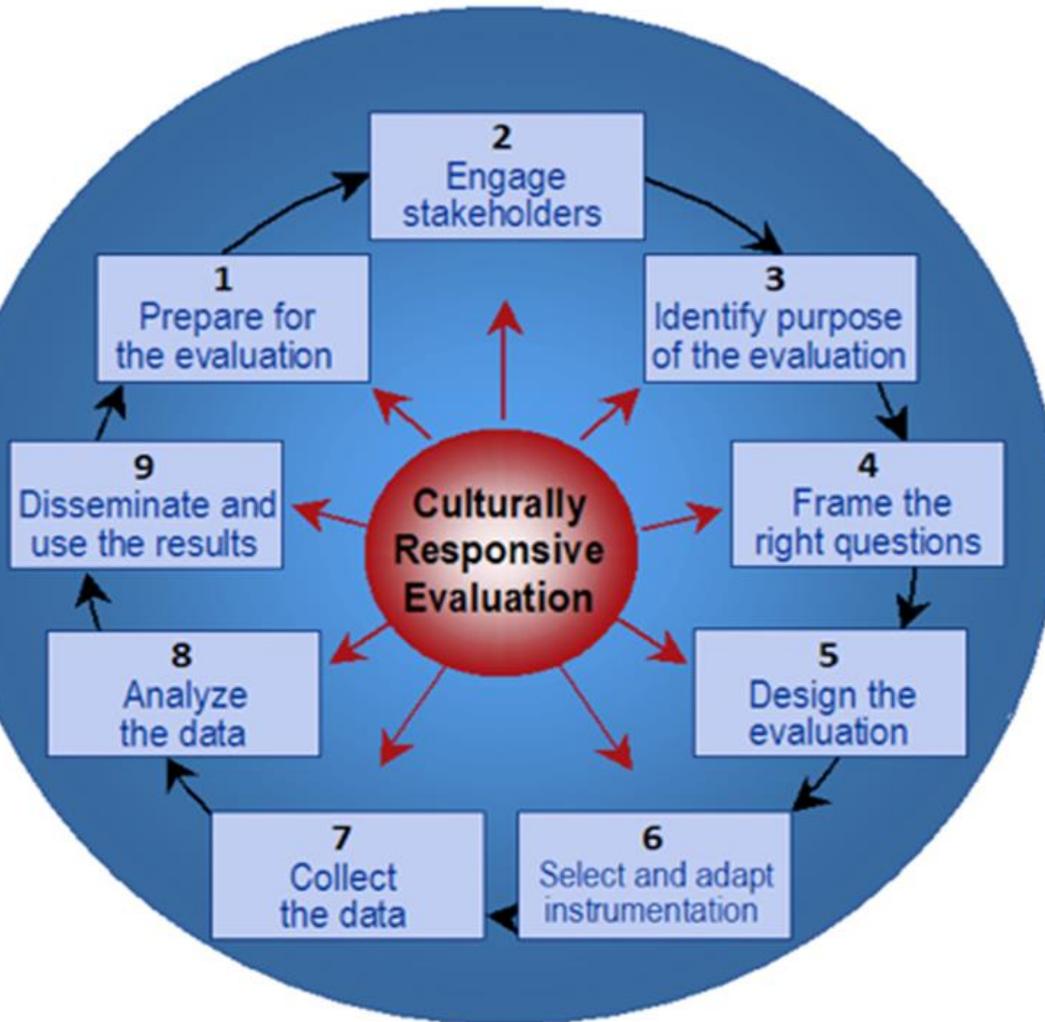
Core Competencies of Culturally Responsive Evaluation

- Importance of shared lived experience between observers & observed
- Recognizes the early work of African American scholars
- Considers culture of the project or program as well as culture of participants
- Attention to power differentials among people and systems
- Explicitly names white privilege
- Challenges knowledge claims that delegitimize the lives, values and abilities of people of color
- Positions CRE as a holistic framework, guiding the manner in which an evaluation is planned and executed
- Evaluator self-reflection and reflective adaptation
- Careful attention to assembling the evaluation team

Core Competencies of Culturally Responsive Evaluation

- Bidirectional exchange of cultural content and knowledge between evaluator and stakeholder
- Provides a culturally specific example of CRE for work with and benefit of African American communities, taking an Afrocentric perspective
- Differentiates culture from race
- Warns against perceiving one's own culture as the only one of value (cultural egoism)
- Underscores importance of history (of oppression and resilience)
- Need to establish competence and credibility of evaluation team in communities of color
- Protect or prevent the exploitation of cultural minority and economically disadvantaged stakeholders
- Intentionally creates space & obtains permission to bring up and respond to issues of race, power and privilege

Culturally Responsive Evaluation Framework



When we conduct an evaluation, everything we do reflects our own cultural values and perspectives—from the evaluation purpose, the questions we develop, and the methodologies we select to our interpretation of the findings and the recommendations we make based on those findings.

“Practical Strategies for Culturally Competent Evaluation” - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Preparation

First Steps

- Assess cultural self awareness
- Engage stakeholders that reflect the diversity of the community
- Recognize individuality within communities
- Lay ground rules to establish equity

Questions to Ask

What are the stories of this community and its people, and who is telling them?

How does one respectfully enter this community?

What dimensions of diversity are most salient within this community and how is power distributed, both formally and informally?

What relationships are valued or privileged and what relationships are discouraged or forbidden?

Exhibit 7.—Identifying key stakeholders

List the audiences for your evaluation	Identify persons/spokespersons for each audience	Describe the particular values, interests, expectations, etc., that may play a key role as criteria in the analysis and interpretation stage of your evaluation

Power Analysis in Evaluation

Funder

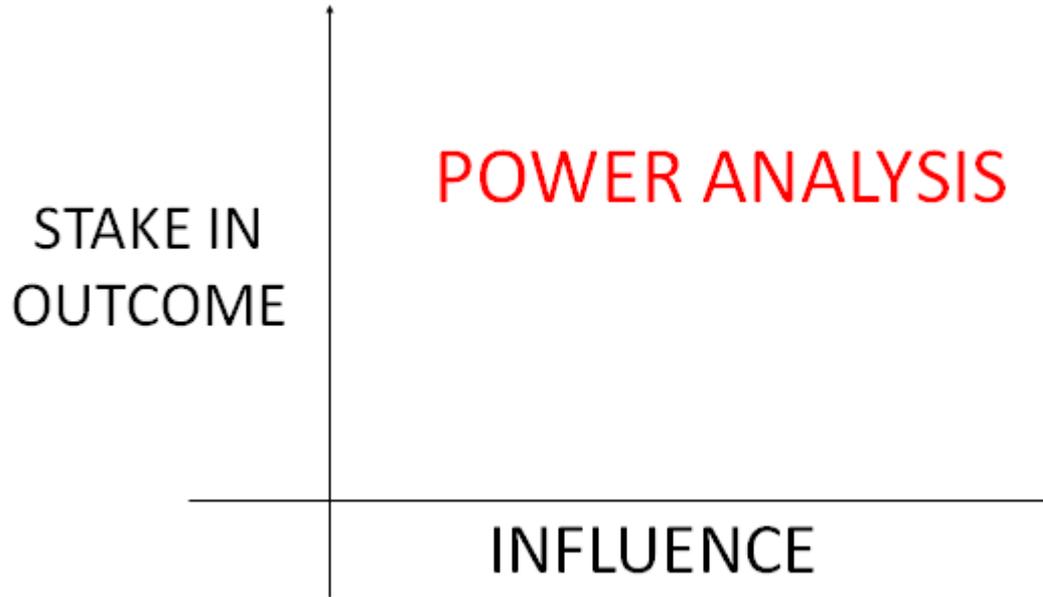
Community that
is hosting the
evaluation,
funder and
evaluator

People running
an intervention

Evaluator

People being
served by
an intervention

Engaging Stakeholders

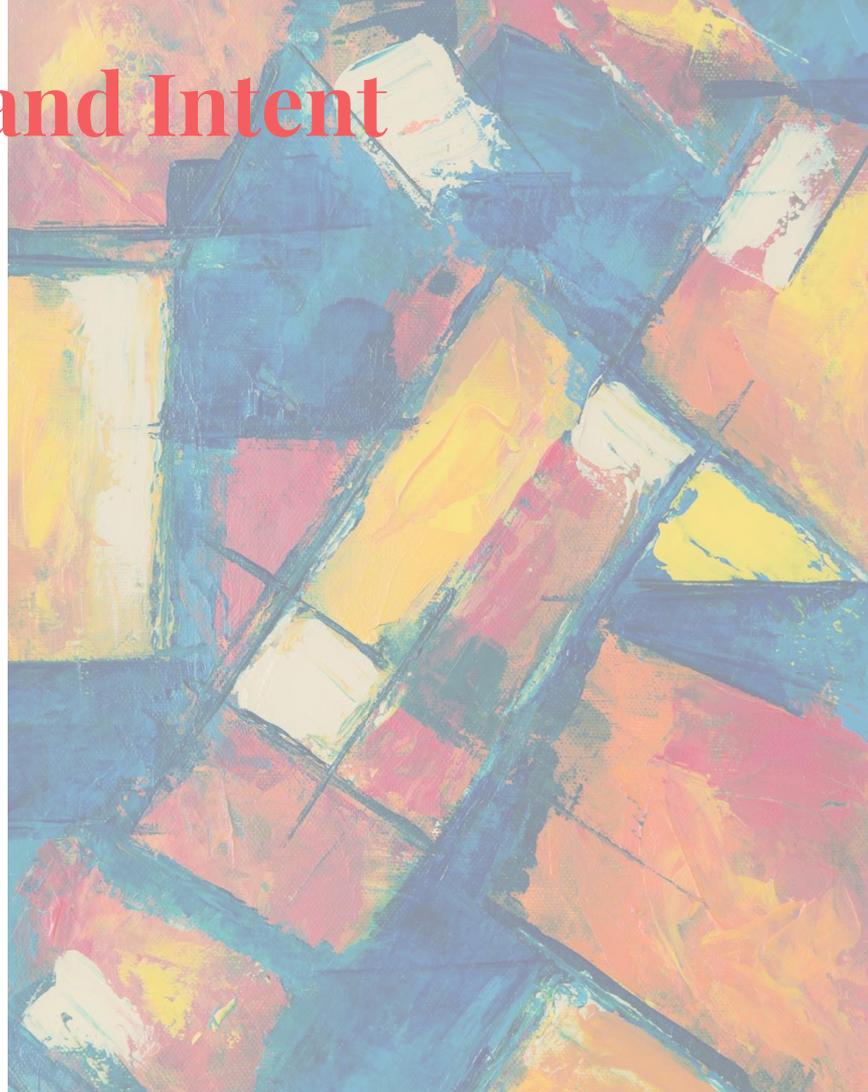


There are no
culture-free
evaluators,
educational tests,
or societal laws.

Identifying the Purpose and Intent of the Evaluation

- Is this evaluation required by funders to demonstrate accountability?
- Is it called for by a local community group?
- Is it part of routine oversight or is it intended to clarify and troubleshoot an apparent problem?
- Is continuation, expansion, or reduction of program funding contingent upon conducting this evaluation or upon the content of the results?
- Is it intended to stimulate change and promote social justice?

CRE evaluators in particular must be attuned to how the avowed purposes of the evaluation maintain or challenge current (im)balances of power and how social justice is served by the envisioned evaluation.





Framing the Right Questions

- What do the stakeholders want to learn about the program or community?
- Will the evaluation focus on community needs and strengths, on the daily operation of the program? On appropriate and equitable use of resources? On progress toward intended outcomes? Or on overall effectiveness?
- Is the program operating in ways that respect local culture? How well is the program connecting with the values, lifestyles, and worldviews of its intended consumers? How are the burdens and benefits of the program distributed?

Designing the Evaluation

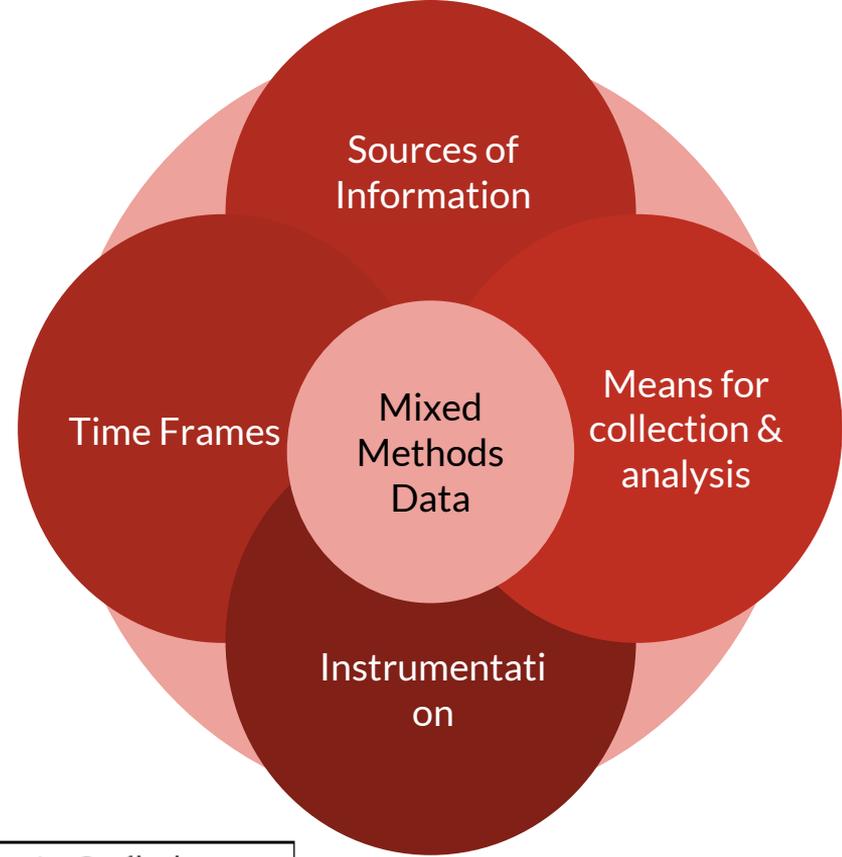
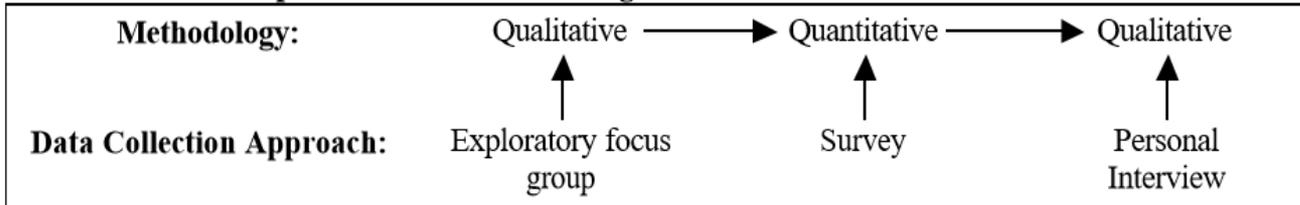


Exhibit 12.—Example of mixed-methods design



Selecting and Adapting Instrumentation

Previous use does not guarantee cultural responsiveness.

“much of the conduct of psychological assessment is culturally invalid and therefore an ethical problem”

When selecting instruments for use in CRE, existing tools must be closely scrutinized for cultural bias in both language and content.

Norms based on other populations and locations may be of little value in interpreting local scores.

Instruments must be validated for use in culturally-specific contexts.

When translation is used, it should follow best practices, addressing both semantic and content equivalence.

When appropriate existing instruments are not available or they cannot be satisfactorily adapted, original instruments must be developed specifically for CRE.

Collecting & Analyzing the Data

Justifying conclusions involves *analyzing the collected data, interpreting what the data mean, making judgments based on the data, and making recommendations for using the findings.*

Engage stakeholders representing different cultures in each of these processes to ensure that the conclusions reflect the community's cultural values and perspectives of the program's quality and effectiveness.

Disseminating and Using the Results

Invite community review and comment on findings before wider dissemination.

Community review requires that the communication mechanisms themselves are culturally appropriate and respectful of cultural values and protocols.

Knowledge gained from the evaluation must be effectively communicated to a wide range of diverse stakeholders; therefore, multiple, sometimes audience-specific, communication formats and procedures will be needed.

This stage promotes use consistent with the purposes of CRE, emphasizing community benefit, positive change, and social justice.

The Culture Checklist

TABLE 12.3. A CULTURE CHECKLIST (ADAPTED FROM KIRKHART, 2013b, PP. 151–152).

Element	Content Description	Questions Raised
History	History of place, people, program (or other evaluand), and evaluation's role. Knowledge of cultural heritages and traditions, including their evolution over time.	What is the story of this community? What is the story of how this program came to be in this place? How has what is here today been shaped by what came before it? What is the history of evaluation in this community or with this program?
Location	Cultural contexts and affiliations of evaluators and evaluand, including theories, values, meaning-making, and worldviews. Recognizes multiple cultural intersections at individual, organizational, and systems levels. Geographic anchors of culture in place.	What are the cultural identifications of persons in this community and how do these compare to those of the program staff and of the evaluators? What is valued here? How do people understand their lives? What is the geography of this place? How do people relate to the land?
Power	Understanding how privilege is attached to some cultural signifiers; prejudice to others. Attention to address equity and social justice, avoid perpetuating condensation, discrimination or disparity.	Who holds power in various ways, and what are the impacts of how power is exercised? What are the formal, legal, political, social and economic sources of power? What are the informal sources of power?
Connection	Connections among the evaluation, evaluand and community. Relating evaluation to place, time and Universe. Maintaining accountability to community with respect and responsibility. Establishing trust in interpersonal relationships.	How do members of the community relate to one another, to the program and its personnel, and to the evaluators? How do the evaluators relate to persons in the program and in the community? How does the evaluation relate to the core values of the cultures, community and context?

(Continued)

TABLE 12.3. A CULTURE CHECKLIST (ADAPTED FROM KIRKHART, 2013b, PP. 151–152). (Continued)

Element	Content Description	Questions Raised
Voice	Addresses whose perspectives are magnified and whose are silenced. Maps inclusion and exclusion or marginalization. Includes use of language, jargon, and communicative strategies.	Who participates in the planning, design, and implementation of the evaluation? Whose messages are heard and heeded? Whose methods of communication are reflected in the languages and expressions that are used to discuss the evaluation process, raise questions, interpret findings, and communicate results?
Time	Calls attention to rhythm, pace and scheduling and to the wide vision of past and future. Encourages evaluation to consider longer impacts and implications—positive or negative.	How does the rhythm of this evaluation fit the context? Is it moving too fast? Too slowly? Has it considered important outcomes at various points in time? Will it have the patience to watch carefully for small changes? For long-term consequences?
Return	Supports reciprocity by focusing attention on how the evaluation and/or the persons who conduct it return benefit to the evaluand and the surrounding community. Addresses returns both during and after the evaluation process. Positions the evaluation as non-exploitive.	How does evaluation advance the goals of this community or serve the needs of its people? Has the benefit returned to community compensated them fairly for their time and attention and for any disruption created by this evaluation? In what ways are persons better off? Have any been harmed or disadvantaged?
Plasticity	The ability to be molded, to receive new information, reorganize and change in response to new experiences, and evolve new ideas and forms. Applies both to the persons who do evaluation and to their designs, process and products. Because culture is fluid, not static, evaluation must be responsive.	How is this evaluation changing in response to local context? Are we evaluators staying open to new ideas or are we overly committed to following a fixed plan or timeline? What has surprised us here that changes how we think about evaluation? What have we learned here that is new and/or changes our understanding of good evaluation?

(Continued)

TABLE 12.3. A CULTURE CHECKLIST (ADAPTED FROM KIRKHART, 2013b, PP. 151–152). (Continued)

Element	Content Description	Questions Raised
Reflexivity	Applies the principles of evaluation to one's own person and work, from self-scrutiny to metaevaluation. Supports reflective practice. Underscores the importance of metaevaluation.	What do I think I know in this context and why? What do I know that I don't understand? What areas of new learning must I watch for and reflect upon? What do I need to let go of or relearn, and how can I work on that? What are the strengths and limitations of this evaluation and how it has addressed culture? How strong are the arguments supporting validity? What counterarguments challenge validity?

CREA: Culturally Responsive Evaluation and Assessment Center & Conference

<https://twitter.com/syllabicsamurai/status/1111711436529717255>





Case Study: An indigenous framework for evaluation

The Case

The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), comprising 34 American Indian tribally controlled colleges and universities, has undertaken a comprehensive effort to develop an “Indigenous Framework for Evaluation” that synthesizes Indigenous ways of knowing and Western evaluation practice.



The Goal

The goal of this project is to develop evaluation processes that are robust enough to accommodate and value different “ways of knowing” within Indigenous epistemologies, build ownership and a sense of community within groups of Indian educators and evaluators, and effectively contribute to the development of high quality and sustainable science and mathematics education programs.

The Current State

Evaluators—and their close relatives, researchers—are not popular in Indian Country. The field of evaluation draws heavily on research methodologies that can be considered invasive when imposed by outside funding agencies.

“we have been researched to death”



We, as tribal people, want research and scholarship that preserves, maintains, and restores our traditions and cultural practices. We want to restore our homelands; revitalize our traditional religious practices; regain our health; and cultivate our economic, social, and governing systems. Our research can help us maintain our sovereignty and preserve our nationhood.

Cheryl Crazy Bull (1997)

The Evaluation Process

In the initial planning year of the project, AIHEC recognized that the knowledge they were seeking to guide their thinking on evaluation was grounded within the tribal communities.

The project convened a group of American Indian scientists, educators, evaluators, and cultural experts to advise the AIHEC staff throughout the project.

Four focus group forums were conducted to gain the perspectives of tribal college representatives, other Indian educators, and tribal cultural traditionalists on what American Indian and Alaska Native traditions, terms, practices, values and concepts, and protocols might be appropriately used to “frame” an Indigenous Peoples’ concept of evaluation, particularly as related to education.

Cultural Responsiveness

In designing and implementing the focus groups, tribal practices were honored.

At each focus group, the meeting room was prepared by “smudging” with sweet grass to purify and clear the air spiritually.

All of the focus group participants were given an offering of tobacco to honour them for sharing their wisdom.

At the end of each meeting the facilitators gave gifts of food from their respective home cultures to focus group participants.

The conversation flowed as participants shared ideas and explored traditional values, described these values in their tribal languages, reflected on the cultural contexts of education, and discussed their views regarding evaluation.



An emerging theme: Ownership

A strong theme throughout the discussions was taking ownership for defining success and “telling the story” from the perspective of the community’s values and aspirations.

From an Indigenous perspective, for evaluation to be true and useful the evaluator must have an understanding of the self-determination that fuels the goals and aspirations of Indian communities to preserve, restore, and protect their cultures and ways of doing things.

It was noted that while the term “evaluation” may not translate literally into specific Native words. Conceptually there are terms, processes, or metaphors that relate to the sense of knowledge creation and/or problem solving within an Indigenous community.

How do we define evaluation?

When asked to consider how evaluation is approached in an Indigenous fashion, some participants described specific communal or tribal processes of decision-making and reflection.

Their stories illustrated the importance of deep deliberation within a community that goes beyond discussion of the agenda or substance of the meeting, reinforcing the concept that actions have consequences beyond the immediate and that deliberations must thus explore these consequences that may span generations.

How do we define evaluation?

The deliberation processes described in the focus groups reinforced the importance of community as a central value in Indigenous thinking.

Their stories stressed the importance of moral development related to cultural values, not just achievement of material success. These stories suggest that Indigenous evaluation needs to incorporate a broad range of standards when assessing what is of value for a community or program.

How do we define evaluation?

“I would think that if we were to develop an Indigenous evaluation process that we would somehow have to assure that we are including [elders], the people who actually possess that knowledge. Sometimes we don’t ask them for the information that they have. And when we do ask, we’re amazed at what they tell us.”

The Western concepts of efficiency or expeditiousness were seen as unimportant compared to the task of taking time to assess students’ growth in both depth and breadth of knowledge.

More than a few participants noted that Indians, especially elders, “take things seriously,” and, thus, need sufficient time for deep consideration and deliberation in order to understand what is being asked of them in an evaluation process.

Values

There was much discussion of the concept of historical trauma as a result of cultural repression, the need to heal and work toward individual and community wellness. Within this context, evaluation is valued when it reflects community values and contributes to learning related to cultural renewal and revitalization.

Despite wrenching histories detailing the loss of much of our homelands and even displacement from them, we still have strong connections to the natural world within and around these places – the lands, mountains, oceans, rivers, lakes, and other features that make up our homeland. Our sense of place provides roots to our communities and defines our nationhood.

Values

The conviction that life is a process of slow and careful self-fulfillment and self realization. That process of maturation continues until death, and so no one ever becomes all that they can become. The duty of all people, therefore, is to assist others on their paths, and to be patient when their acts or words demonstrate that there are things still to be learned. The corollary duty is to avoid discouraging people by belittling them in any fashion and so reducing their respect for and faith in themselves.

Rupert Ross (1992)

Types of Knowledge

Traditional Knowledge: handed down through the generations—creation stories, origins of clans, encounters between ancestors and the spirit world. This knowledge can also be based on the history and experiences of the people.

Empirical Knowledge: gained through careful observation from multiple vantage points over extended time

Revealed Knowledge: acquired through dreams, visions, and spiritual protocol.

We cannot “misexperience” anything; we can only misinterpret what we experience.

Therefore, in some instances we can experience something entirely new, and so we must be alert and try not to classify things too quickly.



Indigenous Core Values & Evaluation Practice

Table 1
Core Values and Evaluation Practice

Core Values	Indigenous Evaluation Practice
Indigenous knowledge creation context is critical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Evaluation itself becomes part of the context; it is not an “external” function○ Evaluators need to attend to the relationships between the program and community○ If specific variables are to be analyzed, care must be taken to do so without ignoring the contextual situation
People of a place	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Honour the place-based nature of many of our programs○ Situate the program by describing its relationship to the community, including its history, current situation, and the individuals affected○ Respect that what occurs in one place may not be easily transferred to other situations or places
Recognizing our gifts— personal sovereignty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Consider the whole person when assessing merit○ Allow for creativity and self-expression○ Use multiple ways to measure accomplishment○ Make connections to accomplishment and responsibility
Centrality of community and family	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Engage the community, not only the program, when planning and implementing an evaluation○ Use participatory practices that engage stakeholders○ Make evaluation processes transparent○ Understand that programs may focus not only on individual achievement, but also on restoring community health and well-being
Tribal sovereignty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Ensure tribal ownership and control of data○ Follow tribal Institutional Review Board processes○ Build capacity in the community○ Secure proper permission if future publishing is expected○ Report in ways meaningful to tribal audiences as well as to funders

The community is the place where the forming of the heart and face of the individual as one of the people is most fully expressed. It is the context in which the person comes to know relationship, responsibility, and participation in the life of one's people.