Evaluation in Service of the Public Good: The Views of one US American Evaluator

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Abstract

What are the proper roles of evaluation in our societies? What purposes and whose interests should evaluation serve? What contributions should evaluation make to the civic structures and social fabric of our communities? In this paper, I argue that the social practice of evaluation can not only provide credible data on the import and impact of social, educational and health programs, which is often understood as its primary role. But, in addition, evaluation itself can contribute to social betterment, to the well being of those our programs are designed to serve, and to the public good. An evaluation practice that is situated in service to the public good is an evaluation practice that is not just technically proficient, but is also politically and socially responsible.

Keywords: Evaluation Purposes, Social Betterment, Public Good, Democratic Evaluation