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**Clark University
International Development, Community and
Environment (IDCE)**

Master's Papers

**Evaluating between the lines: Problematizing voice, power, and politics in goal based and
goal free evaluation methods**

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A Master's Paper

**Submitted to the faculty of Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts, in partial
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Abstract

Evaluating between the lines: Problematizing voice, power, and politics in goal based and goal free evaluation methods

Buba Sulle Dicko

Voice, power, organizational politics, and evaluators' worldview are in constant flux in social program evaluation. Every social program rolls out based on assumptions on a theory of change (TOC) while every evaluation is also guided by request for evaluation proposal (RFP) operationalized through an evaluation scope of work (SOW). The TOC and evaluation RFPs are likely to carry strong undercurrents of power and politics likely to limit the choice of evaluation methods, tools, and processes due to the prescriptive and compliance-inducing tone. Social program evaluator is in constant dilemma of negotiating rigor amidst pressure of compliance and evaluator subjective worldviews. The questions of what is evaluated, who is interviewed and who wields the power to allow or deny voice in evaluation reports is an iterative of power interplay process. This paper problematizes the tacit mutation of organizational power and politics in social program evaluation as it narrows and lockout evaluator choices. Through the lens of goal-free and goal-based evaluation methods, we contemplate a decolonizing of social program evaluation.

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Dedication

I wish to dedicate this work to my dear parents and most specifically to my beloved mother Ramatu who slept unto glory midway into my master's degree studies. I will forever remember her as an irreplaceable cornerstone to my success in my entire life. Special thanks to my wife- Aisatu Adamu and my kids for braving all odds to take care of themselves as IDPs during a crisis in my country while I pursue my studies abroad. And special appreciations to my brother- Adamu Sule and my co-sponsor- Jacob Moore who provided me with moral and financial support throughout my studies in the United States of America.

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Evaluating between the lines: Problematizing voice, power, and politics in goal based and goal free evaluation methods

Introduction

Voice, power, and organizational politics can be interlocked with evaluators own biases or worldviews to influence, and shape social program evaluations. Preconceived assumptions lying deep in organizational theories of change (TOC) spillover into evaluation requests for proposals (RFPs) to condition both choice of evaluation method for the evaluator faced with their own worldviews. In every evaluation process, three voices seem to compete for authority: organizational voice hidden deep in TOC; the voice speaking through the evaluation RFP; and the voice embedded in the evaluator's own worldview or biases. It is important to explore how these voices play out in social program evaluations. Evaluation RFPs refer to formal requests made by organizations on a planned evaluation from evaluators. Organizations use the RFPs to select the final evaluator for the planned evaluation. Theories of change (TOC) attempt to explain how change occurs within an organization which informs organizational programming. TOCs have progressively evolved as organizational dynamics such as power, politics, and leadership styles have changed. However, it is critical to understand the prescriptive elements inherent in TOCs and how this informs evaluation RFPs as a power premise. This means, TOCs and RFPs are laden with a prescriptive voice and power that induces strict compliance on evaluators. But this is not the only dilemma program evaluators face; they need to guard and push back on personal worldviews that are likely to undermine evaluation rigor in the evaluation process. Would evaluation rigor be the antidote against the tripartite layers of voices mentioned above which are concomitantly speaking to the evaluation process? How would Goal-Free Evaluation (GFE) and Goal-Based Evaluation (GBE) fit into the tripartite frame in the evaluation of social program outcomes. What can these evaluation methods offer evaluators to deal with the tripartite forces at constant struggle for authority amidst a call for evaluation rigor in social program evaluations?

This paper will explore how goal-free and goal-based evaluations conceptualize organizational voice, power, and politics inherent in organizational and program TOC and evaluation RFPs. By exploring this against the backdrop of goal-free and goal-based evaluation methods, the paper digs deeper into, how

other voices can be locked in or downplayed in social program evaluations. It problematizes the organizational voice, power and politics that run through program TOCs and evaluation RFPs in social program evaluation and how this intersects with evaluator choices. At the end, this paper X-ray the two evaluation approaches in the light of the rigor they both afford the evaluator to overcome the pernicious influence of organizational voice, power, and politics in social programs evaluation. In effect, we problematize how colonial tendencies mutate in social program evaluation.

The first likely hindrance to using evaluation rigor to capture diverse voices in social programs evaluation is TOCs due its presumptive and prescriptive tendencies. Background research on TOCs shows their prescriptive elements on evaluators through their conceptual frameworks and view of organizational change processes. Organizational change theories consist of two diametrically opposing perspectives, prescriptive and the emergent view of social change. The prescriptive view suggests that change occurs in linear patterns when movements happen from one level to another. This view feeds on the assumption that it is possible to delineate different stages in the evolution of the phenomenon. Therefore, the prescriptive and presumptive approach adopts a rational cause-effect paradigm that considers social programs as rational agents whose actions and behaviors could be understood by assessing formal elements such as the goals, objectives, and associated outcomes. The prescriptive view further suggests that social change occurs based on planned and predictable behavior while the emergent view adopts the opposite stand (Liu, 2009). Researchers such as Kurt Lewin have championed the prescriptive organizational social change perspective through the development of models that insist on planned changes by following a series of steps (Hussain et al., 2018; Burnes, 2004).

While the planned change theories have improved organizational outcomes in the past, the current organizational environment in which hierarchical leadership has changed in favor of shared, transformative, and charismatic leadership approaches demand an emergent view of organizational and social change. For example, Hock and Kozlowski (2014) found that communication among team members in virtual teams was less hierarchical and less formal, which is similar to how most organizations in the current operating environment function. Liu (2009) suggests that an organization's learning ability can help it institute incremental and continuous change in its various initiatives to improve the performance of their programs.

Such an approach can allow organizations to deal with a turbulent and dynamic environment (Liu, 2009). On the other hand, organizational voices embedded in RFPs can stifle essential beneficiary voices during program evaluation, thereby undermining organizational learning by impeding the evaluator's use of evaluation rigor to evaluate accurately the success or lack thereof of social programs. Therefore, RFPs have characteristics similar to planned or prescriptive organizational change theories in that they attempt to limit the scope of operations of evaluators by prescribing formal evaluation measures.

RFPs are a major embodiment of the organizational voice, power, and politics that shape program evaluations. A major element of RFPs that could stifle beneficiary voices is the "epistemological ethnocentrism" that characterizes social program evaluations (Hopson, 2003, p. 2). The voice in social program evaluations can adopt a Eurocentric or western-centric dominant worldview that upsets power balance and suppress beneficiary voices along the west and the rest binary. In addition, program evaluators can have their worldviews or biases that they need to holdback using evaluation rigor during social program evaluations. Other researchers have recognized the voice and power inherent in RFPs that could lead to organizational bias and the intrusion of limited perspectives in social program evaluations. For example, Henry and Mark (2003) recommend using an evidence-based approach to evaluation theory, which is similar to using evaluation rigor that guards against evaluator and organizations' voices, power and politics from diluting the evaluation process. This recommendation is pertinent since RFPs comprise the initial stages of the evaluation processes. The researchers add that organizations can use the evidence-based evaluation theory approaches in designing their RFPs, thereby ensuring that they allow sufficient space for voices from other stakeholders relevant to particular social programs. Furthermore, Henry and Mark (2003) recommend that evaluators should "propose such add-ons, where reasonable when they respond to requests for proposals or otherwise negotiate evaluation contracts" (p. 70). These add-ons could include diversification of evaluation methods, processes, sample choice and sizes, data collection tools etc. Also, the researchers recommend that evaluators should encourage funders to develop judgment criteria for add-on research during RFPs to promote the accuracy and effectiveness of program evaluations (Henry & Mark, 2003). Therefore, research evidence shows that a gap in the organizational recognition on how the TOCs

and RFPs can constrain the effectiveness of evaluation rigor by delineating the activities of the evaluators based on the voice and power inherent in the aforementioned two elements.

Organizational power that manifest through its work politics is another essential element that could undermine the effectiveness of social program evaluations. According to Weiss (1993), research on evaluation is a rational enterprise whose goals include acquiring “careful and unbiased data on the consequences of programs” to improve decision-making (p. 94). On the other hand, Weiss (1993) states that program evaluations occur within a political context, which can influence outcomes by intruding on the evaluation process. Evaluators that fail to consider the influence of politics in program evaluations might end up frustrated and shocked. For example, the programs and policies in social programs are born out of political decision-making processes. Because political processes influence the funding of social programs, the voice of politics remains a pernicious influence on program evaluations capable to pressuring evaluators on the course of the evaluation process. The voices of politics can be hostile or supportive to program evaluators and the evaluation process, necessitating the development of ways to include beneficiary voices that the political environment might not necessarily support. This makes a lot about the evaluation process inherently political. Evaluators make a political stance when they raise issues on a program’s problematic nature, its legitimacy, perceived inability to challenge some aspects of the programs, the role of the social scientist in the development of programs and policies, and how useful incremental reform strategies are in improving program outcomes (Weiss, 1993). Greene (1994) echoes Weiss’ (1993) research on the political and non-rational nature of social program evaluations when he states that while early program evaluators avoided the political dimension, it has become increasingly clear that the politics of higher policymaking and program survival can significantly influence program evaluations.

Review of the Literature

The research found that biased or prescriptive perspectives in program and TOCs evaluation RFPs could negatively influence social program evaluation. Connell and Kubisch (1998) report on the pervasive problem of finding evaluation methodologies and strategies in comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) that align with the design and goals of the programs themselves since the 1980s and 1990s. Some of the

options that have been historically available to CCIs in program evaluation include putting off evaluation until the programs are mature enough and estimating impacts of programs by force-fitting the programs into accepted and existing evaluation approaches (Connell & Kubisch, 1998). The second option for estimating program impacts based on accepted and existing evaluation methods is an approach that increases the voice and power of the organization at the expense of program evaluators. It is an option that creates opportunities for organizations to influence program evaluation outcomes and stifles the voice of emergent beneficiary voices from stakeholders who might want to change the organizational status quo. Finally, Connell and Kubisch (1998) state that CCIs have resorted to greatly reducing the expectations of various stakeholders on the credibility of the evidence provided on program impacts by retreating into bureaucratic process documentation when they cannot find effective evaluation methodologies and strategies. The void in efficient evaluation methodologies incline organizations to lock out beneficiary voices in evaluation of programs such as CCIs.

A pilot study in India by the UK Department for International Development (2016) on the utility of beneficiary voices in improving development programs shows the importance of including other voices apart from the organizations in programs evaluation. Including other beneficiaries' voices could help deal with the unavailability of program evaluations that are invulnerable to the voice, power, and political influences that reduce the accuracy and efficiency of evaluation measures. The pilot study found that flexibility during program evaluation was essential, which negates the approaches organizations have historically used as reported in the Connell and Kubisch (1998) research. The UK Department for International Development's (2016) study found that context analysis and "willingness to adapt mechanisms during implementation" were some of the major elements that promoted the establishment of feedback mechanisms between the beneficiaries and the intervention program (p. 1). Therefore, considering the local context by eliciting beneficiary feedback should be part of program evaluations, especially because of insufficient program evaluation methodologies and strategies that are rational and objectively acquire a true estimation of program outcomes. However, in international program evaluations, a western-centric orientation program evaluation could raise similar problems such as exposure to biases and limited worldviews on impacts and outcomes.

Epistemological ethnocentrism can pervade evaluation RFPs, thereby excluding the voices from other cultures in international social programs that could prove beneficial to the process. Hopson (2003) suggest that evaluators need to challenge the “tendency to make one’s own community the center of the universe and the conceptual frame that constrains all thought” (p. 2). The researcher notes that the recognition of the epistemological ethnocentrism has led researchers to recommend evaluation strategies and approaches that are culturally and multiculturally competent, especially in the development of evaluation RFPs. He calls for program evaluators to challenge the norms and assumptions behind program evaluations in organizations to avoid evaluator bias and to include other beneficial voices that might not necessarily subscribe to the dominant view adopted in the evaluation of social programs in diverse communities (Hopson, 2003). To deal with epistemological ethnocentrism that could be limiting the accuracy of program evaluations, adopting diverse methodologies in evaluations could provide a potential solution to the issue of bias and prejudice.

Methodological diversity and contextual sensitivity are important in program evaluations to ensure that evaluators have a variety of approaches and methods that do not necessarily have to depend on pertinent organizational voices, power dynamics, and political influences. According to Greene (1994), current standards aim at promoting various attributes of program evaluations, including accuracy, propriety, feasibility, and utility. In a 1981 Joint Committee to develop evaluation standards that could ensure that evaluations meet the aforementioned attributes, the committee did not recommend a specific methodology but rather gave freedom to program evaluators to implement a variety of methodologies. Consequently, methodological diversity would increase the knowledge available on how to improve program evaluations, especially in the international environment in which contextual differences could influence social program outcomes (Greene, 1994). Considering the contextual landscape in which program evaluations occur requires cultural sensitivity, including the inclusion of beneficiary voices from the local context to promote evaluation outcomes. Hopson (2003) emphasizes that in situations in which implementation of social programs occurs across cultural lines, evaluators need to avoid the knowledge disconnection that can occur between those using and doing the evaluation and those who are being evaluated. The researcher adds that the communities being evaluated should have a word in the means and goals of the evaluation process to

increase its effectiveness (Hopson, 2003). Therefore, including beneficiary voices should be a pertinent issue in evaluation processes to improve outcomes.

Companies such as Google exemplify the postmodern organization because of its focus on the human element in change and management processes. Girard (2009) points out that after World War I, General Motors and Ford became pioneers of a new way of doing business and managing organizational outcomes, including formal assessments, assembly lines, mass production, statistical and financial controls to ensure performance. During the 1980s, Toyota became a pioneer in a new approach that combined continuous refinement and quality management. In the current business environment, Google is revolutionizing change and employee management and organizational control because of its informal approach referred to as the Google Way. The Google Way is a departure from formal business approaches taught in business schools. Some of the influences behind Google's business model is increasing technological influences on business processes such as eCommerce that were not significant factors in the pre-technology era in which formal business processes and a hierarchical leadership style were in vogue (Girard, 2009). Google's counterintuitive approach to business process management is consistent with the emergent view of organizational change processes. The planned change focusing on formal approaches is inconsistent with the current organizational environment characterized by technological deployment to aid business processes and a dynamic and constantly evolving operating landscape. Therefore, prescriptive change theories could limit the sphere of operations of organizational dynamics in influencing constant change and improvement in outcomes in social programs.

Various weaknesses are apparent in the prescriptive approach to understanding organizational change. The first major weakness is that in a turbulent and dynamic operating environment such as the current one, using planned change models that emphasize movement from one delineated state to another can be impossible. Also, when engaging in long-term investment, goals, and objectives or learning new methods, it might be unclear whether an organization has moved from one state to another, such as from the frozen to a new state in Lewin's three-step change model (Cummings, Bridgman & Brown, 2016; Liu, 2009). Therefore, evaluation of social programs that emphasize a formal rational perspective of organizational outcomes might be insufficient in long-term oriented organizations. It can be difficult to

assess change in such an organization when considering change as moving from one discrete step to another rather than as an emergent phenomenon that occurs organically because of an interaction of the multiple structural and sub-structural elements that comprise an organization. Liu (2009) adds that organizational politics can make it difficult to clearly understand the prevailing state of the organization if they are in a constant state of flux under the planned organizational change or prescriptive paradigm. Finally, prescriptive or planned organizational change imposes change on the employees, which requires a maladaptive extremely hierarchical leadership style in which top management could leave out relevant voices down the organizational hierarchy. On the other hand, “Emergent change consists of ongoing accommodations, adaptations, and alternations that produce fundamental change without a priori intention to do so” (Liu, 2009, p. 234). According to Liu (2009), the emergent view of organizational change suggests that change occurs when people take advantage of opportunities during their daily breakdowns, contingencies, and routines in their daily work. There are not formal rules defining emergent organizational change compared to the prescriptive view of organizational change. Some of the areas emergent theories of change consider in their frameworks include politics, power, managerial behavior, organizational learning, culture, and structures (Liu, 2009). Therefore, compared to prescriptive approaches to social change, emergent organizational theories are consistent with the systems view in that they consider the dynamic, informal, and organic elements that influence organizational outcomes. A system view of social change can help in analyzing the voice, power, and politics that influence social program evaluation.

Methodology

The research methodology adopted for this analysis is qualitative secondary document research. The analysis uses data collected from secondary resources, including case study reports of different organizations to assess the voice, power, and political dynamics that influence social program evaluations. The data analysis process adopts Snyder’s (2019) recommendation on how to use literature reviews as a methodology for establishing secondary data. The researcher argues that systematic, semi-systematic, and integrative literature reviews differ from traditional literature reviews in that they provide opportunities to researchers to critique and synthesize secondary research on a particular issue. The integrative literature

review is relevant for the current research since it is as nuanced as the structural and sub-structural elements that constitute an organization.

This methodology will provide an understanding of the subjective human influences on social program outcomes and evaluations. Rahman (2016) points out that a qualitative study design can provide insights into how organizations construct meaning as demonstrated in the issues, practices, and subsystems that comprise the organization. Consequently, the methodology adopted will address the informal human elements that program evaluators should consider in avoiding the pitfalls of a prescriptive approach to evaluation and understanding organizational change. Organizational voice, power and politics in social programs are as complex as finding the right evaluation method to guard against downplaying them. Adopting an integrative literature review is relevant as it allows for cross analysis of the concepts at more granular levels.

Comparing Goal-Free and Goal-Based Evaluations

The gaps in evaluation strategies and methodologies that avoid biases and preconceived voice, power, and political notions about social program evaluations requires an examination of goal-free and goal-based evaluations. Comparing the two evaluation approaches could provide insights into the problem identified on the evaluator's capacity to use rigor in program evaluations. The most pervasively used of the two approaches is goal-based evaluation with most of the evaluation practices adopting it as evaluation approach conveniently. However, Youker (2011) reports that it has little merit in the empirical literature. The goal-based evaluation refers to evaluation approaches that emphasize an organization's goals and objectives in the evaluation process. The approach became common practice in the 1940s when Ralph Tyler developed his objectives-based approach to evaluations. The goal-based evaluation measures an organization's success in program implementation by approximating whether it has reached its goals (Youker, 2011). An essential element of goal-based evaluations is that they comprise the conceptual background behind the RFPs organizations send out to evaluators. During the 1970s, goal-free evaluation emerged side by side to goal-based evaluation. At the time, it was a radical concept since it emphasized avoiding an overt focus on an organization's goals and objectives during evaluations. Similar to goal-based

evaluations, the goal-free evaluation suffers from the lack of sufficient empirical studies on its effectiveness in improving evaluation outcomes. Youker (2011) points out that goal-free evaluation has remained theoretical and conceptually abstract since its conception with little empirical or practitioner evidence to back its claims. Therefore, from an empirical standpoint, both evaluation approaches suffer from the same limitation of lack of sufficient and rigorous analysis of their underlying concepts and assumptions. From an ideological and theoretical standpoint, the two approaches differ significantly.

Goal-free evaluations could help remove the limitations of a prescriptive approach to program evaluation, thereby allowing organizations to change their preconceptions that could be impeding the success of evaluation efforts. The two methodological requirements in the goal-free evaluation are the use of an independent evaluator who comes from outside the organization and the inclusion of a screener. The screener's role is to ensure that the goals and objectives inherent in organizational communications do not reach the evaluator. Hence, the screener should be someone that understands the goals and objectives and can identify them in communications. Some of the options available when selecting the screener include the evaluation client, a third party, or an administrative assistant who is not directly connected to the program outcomes the evaluator is evaluating (Youker & Ingraham, 2014). In comparison, goal-based evaluations can be too infused with the preconceived organizational goals and objectives that exclude the voices lower in the organizational hierarchy and the backend of social program implementation. Consequently, organizations could be caught in a trap of redundancy in which a prescriptive evaluation process limits the success of change processes. Also, goal-based evaluations could lead to subjective bias, thereby losing the objectivity required to make accurate assessments about social programs instituted by the organization. The goal-based evaluation approach is susceptible to the negative influences of false assumptions and inconsistencies that develop over time and embed themselves in the underlying goals and objectives. Furthermore, goals can change over time, making it difficult to understand the true organizational characteristics behind the power dynamics that determine whose voice is heard during evaluations and change processes. Therefore, the goal-based evaluation approach could lead to erroneous conclusions or misperceptions about the change processes in an organization and the success of its social

programs (Johnson, 2015; Youker & Ingraham, 2014; Youker, 2011; Youker, 2014). There are multiple advantages of using goal-free evaluation for social programs.

The goal-free evaluation has the potential to improve evaluation outcomes because it ascertains context-specific information during evaluation processes. In addition, it could unearth unintended negative and positive side effects of social program implementation that might not be possible with goal-based evaluations. All of the aforementioned potentials of goal-free evaluation emanate from the possibility of considering the contextual elements that could influence program outcomes (Youker, 2005). Therefore, goal-free evaluation is versatile enough for implementation in international social program interventions because it can be context-specific. Consequently, goal-free evaluation allows for the inclusion of beneficiary voices that are part of a particular context. Goal-free evaluation incorporates the call for methodological diversity and cultural sensitivity cited in research by Greene (1994) and Hopson (2003). Another benefit of goal-free evaluation is the triangulation of data sources and data collection methods, thereby supplementing traditional evaluation approaches. In addition, goal-free evaluation avoids the limitations in traditional evaluation procedures involving the evaluation of outcomes, identifying the true original goals and objectives, and the current goals of social programs, which can be difficult to ascertain because of political, voice, and power influences. Other benefits of goal-free evaluation include cost-effectiveness, less intrusion into the social programs, low potential for cognitive, perceptive, and social biases since it involves a lower level of interactions with program staff, and its versatility in implementation (Youker, 2005). The versatility emanates from the fact that evaluators can reverse the goal-free evaluation process as the evaluation progresses by shifting to goal-based evaluations once they have obtained the preliminary data using the former approach. In other words, evaluators can begin the evaluation process using goal-free approaches and use goal-based approaches to benefit from the strengths of both methods.

The lack of knowledge about the predetermined goals and objectives of a social program is a defining and crucial element of the goal-free evaluation (Youker, Zelinski, Hunter & Bayer, 2016; Youker & Ingraham, 2014). Therefore, the approach distinguishes between the aspirations and actual outcomes of a social program, thereby creating conditions for improvements. On the other hand, there is the question of what the social program's prospects are in terms of constant improvement of program effectiveness. The

organization conducting the program has to develop new goals and objectives, which future evaluators using the goal-free evaluations will ignore as part of the process. Consequently, using goal-free evaluations alone might create the unintended consequence of failing to measure the outcomes against the background of the goals and objectives the organizations set as part of their strategy. Therefore, while goal free evaluations remove the limitations of using goals and objectives during the evaluation process, it does not necessarily mean that they are not useful to the organization carrying out the social program. Youker, Zelinski, Hunter, and Bayer (2016) state that by sidestepping the evaluation goals and objectives, the early evaluators using goal-free evaluations were able to identify the side effects or additional issues that could be facing the social program and the potential for increasing the effectiveness of interventions. Suggestively, the goals and objectives were still important but they did not fall into the trap of strictly being constrained by them in the issues and side effects they could identify in the evaluation process.

The schism between goal-based and goal-free evaluations examined in the research literature could emanate from strict adherence to one or the other evaluation approaches rather than as complements to each other. Youker and Ingraham (2014) highlight the multiple challenges that the implementation and acceptance of the goal-free evaluation in social programs face. Goal-based evaluations appear to be intuitively the best approach for social programs, making social programs to prefer it as the best approach. Social programs view goal-free evaluations as a rhetorical tool that does not have a specific and valid methodology because it ignores the goals and objectives. On the other hand, goal-free evaluations do not necessarily ignore the goals and objectives but rather avoids their power and influence on the evaluation process that could lead to biases and an incomplete assessment of program effectiveness. Youker and Ingraham (2014) add that since Michael Scriven introduced goal-free evaluation in 1972, organizations have used the approach as the default one or by design for four decades. According to Youker and Ingraham (2014), some social programs require goal-free evaluation by default. For instance, in social programs instigated by an anonymous philanthropist, no predefined goals and objectives exist that the evaluator can use during evaluation. Subsequently, the only approach that evaluators can use in such instances is the goal-free evaluation to understand whether the investment into the social program has gone towards social improvements depending on the targeted community issue. Therefore, the reluctance of organizations

carrying out social programs to use goal-free evaluation because it is simply rhetorical without significant utility is unfounded. Experience shows that is highly useful in evaluation processes and is highly versatile for different types of organizations. For example, consumer organizations have been using the goal-free approach for a long time with significant effectiveness. They do not have to necessarily understand or seek the goals and objectives of the companies evaluated but rather conduct an objective assessment of the product without the power and influence of the organization evaluated (Youker & Ingraham, 2014). In addition, by focusing solely on the outcomes of a product in the marketplace, evaluators in consumer organizations can sidestep their worldview or biases that could impede an accurate evaluation process. Youker, Zelinski, Hunter, and Bayer (2016) mention that proponents of goal-free evaluation, including Scriven, Stake, and Chronbach, have historically argued that goal-free evaluations do not want to remove the organization's goals and objectives from the evaluation process but rather to reduce the limitations of goal-based evaluations. The current research argues that an eclectic use of goal-free and goal-based evaluations might be a better approach that draws on the strengths of the two.

The issues in the implementation and acceptance of goal-free approaches in social program evaluations could stem from the lack of attention, training, and development on the evaluator's use of it, its benefits, and utility. Youker and Ingraham (2014) suggest that the idea that it is a purely rhetorical approach to evaluation has its roots in the lack of knowledge on how to use it in evaluation practice. Therefore, the researchers argue that the lack of knowledge of its use perpetuates the idea that it has little practical utility. It can be difficult to convince evaluators about the approach's efficacy in program evaluation without appropriate training and development (Youker & Ingraham, 2014). Another major element of improving evaluator knowledge on goal-free evaluation is to help in removing the subjective bias characteristics of attitudes towards the appropriate evaluation processes. The subjective attitudes and worldviews are part of the voices that might bias the evaluation process, necessitating approaches that remove these limitations, and their negative influences on social program evaluation. Youker, Zelinski, Hunter, and Bayer (2016) observe the same limitation in the utilization of goal-free evaluations in social programs. They cite the lack of instruction manuals, handbooks, and guidebooks on using goal-free evaluation in practice that makes implementation and acceptance difficult. Furthermore, the available research only focuses on the

examination of secondary sources and foregoes the direct experiences of the evaluators themselves on the benefits of using the approach in their evaluation work (Youker, Zelinski, Hunter & Bayer, 2016). Other challenges of widespread acceptance and implementation of the approach include the lack of intuitiveness compared to goal-based evaluations (Youker, Zelinski, Hunter & Bayer, 2016). Since social programs assume that goal-based evaluations are the rational and obvious approach to evaluation, there is little potential to convince them of its utility without first informing them of the evidence of its utility in social program settings without training and development.

The research established a summary of the benefits of goal-free evaluations provided by professionals that have directly experienced the approach in social program settings. The programs vary in their specific area of community intervention, including staff training, childhood development, innovation enhancement, housing projects for the homeless, improving issues facing access to education in different educational settings among other similar social programs. Figure 1 provides various instances in which evaluators have used the approach after learning about its effectiveness in social program evaluations. Some of the various benefits helped to avoid the voice, power, and politics inherent in the development of goals and objectives in social organizations. For example, the major benefit of the approach in a social program targeting media education was avoiding the rhetorical and difficult processes associated with setting goals and objectives (Youker & Igraham, 2016). The rhetorical processes that underlie the formulation of goals and objectives can be highly infused with organizational politics, voices, and powers that influence organizational strategic development. A goal-free evaluation approach is suited to dealing with the obfuscating organizational elements that could lead to missing pieces in evaluations. An important benefit highlighted in the research is the utility of goal-free evaluation as a meta-evaluation approach (Youker & Igraham, 2016). Meta-evaluation refers to the evaluation of evaluation approaches, which means that goal-free evaluation is useful in understanding whether other approaches such as goal-based ones are effective within a particular organizational context. Meta-evaluation could be even more effective in improving program evaluation outcomes when considered from the view of the organization as a system of interacting parts that all contribute to influencing organizational outcomes.

Figure 1: Goal-Free Program Evaluations and Highlighted Benefits

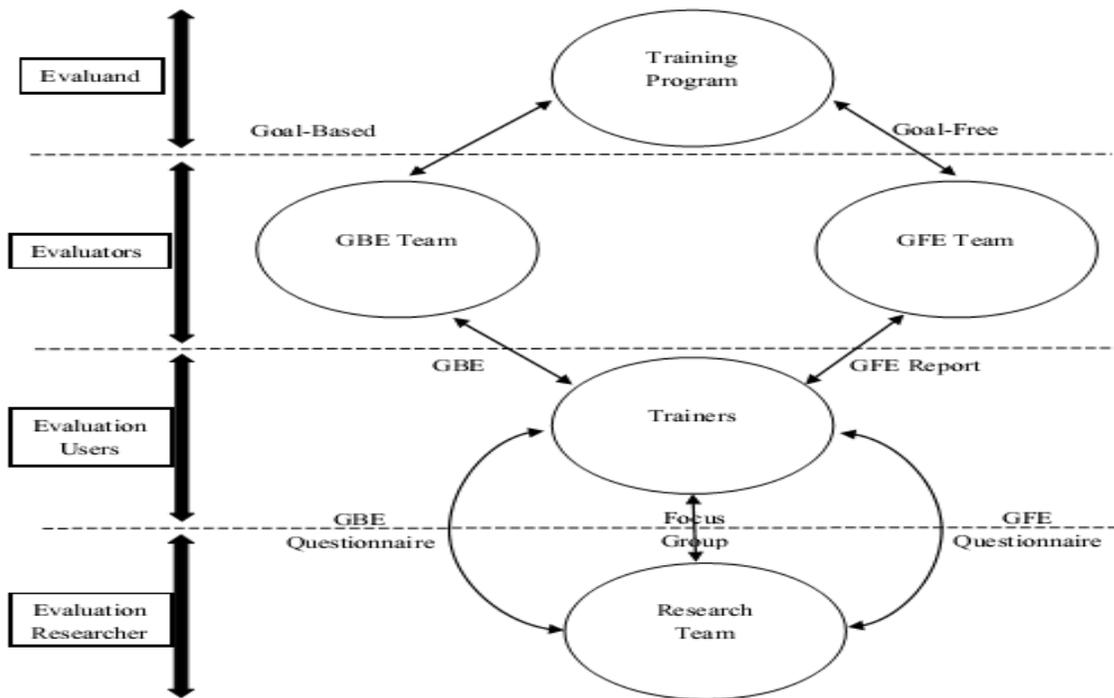
Authors/ Evaluators	Year of Publication	Type of Program Evaluated	Benefit of Using GFE
Berkshire, Kouame, & Richardson	2009	Reduction of chronic unemployment and homelessness	GFE triangulated evaluation models via a separate and simultaneous GBE; GFE served as a consumer-needs assessment.
Belanger	2006	Disaster-relief response	GFE offered flexibility after a disaster led to disagreement about goals between national relief organizations and local systems.
Gustafson	2008 ¹	Training for staff at nursing home dementia unit	GFE served as a tool for developing the program's initial goals.
Youker	2005(s)	Middle school summer-school program	GFE triangulated evaluation models via a separate and simultaneous GBE; GFE uncovered several important positive effects that were not related to any stated goal.
Manfredi	2003	Consortium for new farmers	GFE identified a significant effect that was not stated as a goal, but that justified continuing the program.
Stufflebeam	2001	Early-childhood education program	GFE was used as metaevaluation approach.
James & Raffle	2000	Innovation training	GFE was used because goals were unclear and to avoid argument over what metrics should be used; GFE also uncovered serendipitous effects.
Matsunaga & Enos	1997	Self-help housing project	GFE identified "ripple effects;" GFE followed up on an earlier GBE.
Evers	1980	Four-year college cost maintenance/ reduction	GFE triangulated evaluation models via a separate and simultaneous GBE; GFE in examined a broad scope of program activities and emphasized the effects from the consumers' perspective.
Weich	1976, 1978	College textbook	GFE served as a supplement to a GBE.
Scriven (in Salsin, 1974)	1975	Elementary school curriculum	GFE served as a supplement to an earlier GBE; the evaluation started off goal-free and later became goal-based.
Thiagarajan	1975	Media education	GFE avoided the difficult and rhetorical process of setting goals and objectives.
House & Hogben (in Evers, 1980)	1972	Biology curriculum for teens with learning disabilities	Evaluators interviewed program staff at the end of the evaluation to cross-check the goals with their observations prior to drafting the GFE final report.

(Source: Youker & Igraham, 2016)

The systems view is consistent with the framework utilized in the evaluation of the relevance of evaluation approaches relevant for particular programs. Youker, Zelinski, Hunter, and Bayer (2016) provide a diagrammatic representation of the relationships between various parties involved in evaluations. The diagram demonstrates that the relationship between the evaluands, evaluators, evaluation users, and evaluation researchers is interdependent. The outcome of the

evaluation process is dependent on each of the elements in the diagram. The diagram shows a framework that is similar to the systems view of the organization, suggesting that evaluation and organizational frameworks could be equally significant in understanding how power, voice, and politics influence organizational frameworks. In particular, it could help in understanding how goals and objectives emerge out of the interaction of multiple interdependent elements of an organization under the influence of politics, voice, and power.

Figure 2: Relationships among different Actors in Evaluation Processes and Frameworks

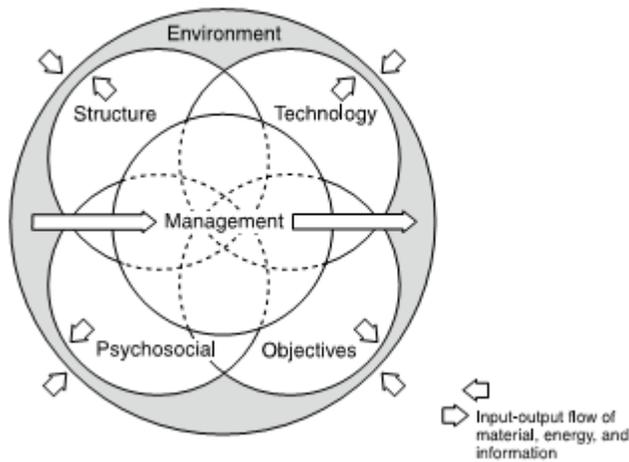


(Source: Youker, Zelinski, Hunter & Bayer, 2016)

The research on the systems view of the organization shows that various interacting systems and subsystems constitute the organization. According to Luciano (1979), the systems view is an organizational change theory that can help eventually understand how change affects an organization and provide a more accurate view of the organizational outcomes in processes such as social program evaluations investigated in the current research. From a system's view, the organization is "an integrated whole made up of interacting parts" (Luciano, 1979, p. 21). Figure

3 provides a system's view framework of the organization that could guide the research on social program evaluation, voice, and power.

Figure 3: The Systems View of the Organization



(Source: Luciano, 1979)

The major subsystems that constitute an organization include the managerial, technological, objectives, structural, psychosocial, and environmental subsystems (Luciano, 1979). The psychosocial subsystem is part of the human relations view of organizational change, which suggests considering the informal and social nature of the organization rather than just the economic and rational aspects (Stickland, 1995). The human relations theory is consistent with the systems theory since it argues for the considering of the underlying informal and non-rational forces that determine organizational behavior and change process. Other organizational change theories that overemphasize rational decision-making processes in human behavior within organizational hierarchies can be too prescriptive since they do not consider the subjective and informal influences on human decision-making. For example, Grandori's (1984) research on the prescriptive contingency view of organizational decision-making suggests that human beings adopt a computational strategy to decision-making if system-level cause-effect relations are clear and a judgmental strategy if the cause-effect relationships are unclear or there is a conflict of interest.

Discussion and Conclusions

The research has demonstrated that how organizations engage with evaluators tend to exclude pertinent voices in their evaluations. By perpetuating the goal-based evaluation approach, organizations could be exposed to biases that influence evaluation outcomes through inherent complex voices and power that speak to the evaluation process. Negotiating a balance between evaluator biases and organizational power during the rolling out of social program evaluation could be daunting. The voice that has the power to direct and institute the program theory of change adopts a prescriptive approach to change processes, the consequence is the exclusion of pertinent perspectives that could help the implementation of change processes in social programs. Therefore, understanding the organizational politics that determine the voice heard during change processes could help in the inclusion of evaluation report narratives that might improve organizational outcomes despite the level of the voice heard in the organizational hierarchy. The research has found that the implementation and acceptance of goal-free approaches are hampered by lack of knowledge, evidence from practitioners, and biases and worldviews that evaluators can have on rhetoric and goal-free program evaluations.

The evaluation process and interactions of the various actors involved (Figure 3) assume a systematic aspect that is amenable to remove the limitations of goal-based evaluations using goal-free evaluations. From a system's view of the organization, the organization is comprised of elements that constantly interact with each other to create the overall organizational outcomes. Therefore, the complexity of the organization demands rigor in the evaluation of social programs to account for the systemic and complex nature of social change. A prescriptive voice in organizational theories of change could undermine the complexity and systemic nature of organizations, thereby leading to erroneous or inaccurate representations of change and impact during evaluations. Some of the major advantages of adopting a system's view of the organization include having a thorough understanding of all aspects of the organization, thereby assisting in

processes such as planning and implementation for social change. When evaluators and analysts consider an organization in terms of its structural parts, including development, research, production, and marketing, the results can be misleading because of myopia associated with ignoring the subsystems that contribute to social outcomes. Therefore, considering all the elements that comprise the organization can provide a holistic perspective that incorporates all the interacting elements, thereby providing a better assessment of organizational program outcomes during evaluations.

The major problem with change theories that emphasize the rational elements of organizational change processes is that they ignore an essential influence of organizational outcomes, which includes the informal organizational sub-strata or subsystem that influences outcomes. The subsystems are the underlying elements that influence organizational outcomes as measured by the structural elements such as the performance in the various departments. Practice holds that, a lot of social change evaluations default to goal-based mind frame without apparently meaning so or realizing it. Many shy away from goal-free evaluation methods as though it was one single method by arguing it lack merit, evidence from practitioners and consistency with real life social change dynamics. Without attempting to diminish goal-free evaluation in favor of goal-based methods, we find that power mutate in many forms to dictate evaluation choices. To dealing with this demand dismantling the inherent power structures that drive the development sector. Who holds the money, holds the decision to determine what evidence is obtained. Deciding walking before the data or following it is the first decision to make before choosing the evaluation method.

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