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SKU: 9781544348162-TEST-BANK

Chapter 2: Evaluation Ethics and Quality Standards

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Essay

1. Contrast ethical guidelines to code of conduct.
Ans: An organization's code of conduct is a directional document that focuses on compliance and rules specific to how its members should behave in specific situations (e.g., forbid sexual harassment or racial intimidation). In contrast to this, ethical guidelines include broad aspirational values and principles intended to provide an organization's members with a general idea of the types of decisions and behaviors that are acceptable and encouraged by the profession (e.g., treat others with respect). Individuals must interpret the organization's ethical principles and adapt them in practice. A discipline's ethical statements are used to guide practitioners or that discipline in determining the right course of action in a situation.
Learning Objective: 2-1: Explain the origins of research ethics codes and their relevance to evaluation.
Cognitive Domain: Knowledge
Answer Location: Ethics in Evaluation
Difficulty Level: Easy

2. Explain cultural competence in evaluation and provide a description of a culturally competent evaluator.
Ans: Cultural competence in evaluation is a reflective activity that requires evaluators to achieve and maintain a high degree of self-awareness and self-examination to better understand how their own cultural backgrounds and life experiences can serve as either assets or limitations in the conduct of an evaluation. The American Evaluation Association (AEA) provides examples of culturally competent ethical practice in their *Public Statement on Cultural Competence*, which include:

- The use of approaches that are appropriate to the context; for example, verbal consent can be used in communities with oral traditions, high levels of concern about privacy, or low levels of literacy.
- Engage issues of culture directly, respectfully, and fairly when collecting data, making interpretations, and forming value judgments.
- Incorporate ways to make findings accessible to all stakeholders, including forms of communication beyond written text and the use of languages other than English.
- Consider unintended consequences when reporting findings; for example, in some cultural context, participants in evaluations who are proud of their accomplishments may want to forgo anonymity and have their names attached to their stories. While this may be appropriate in some instances, in other situations, the identification of participants may infringe on the rights of people who have not given informed consent.

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A culturally competent evaluator is most accurately described as an individual who draws upon a wide range of evaluation theories and methods to design and carry out an evaluation that is optimally matched to the context; the evaluator reflects the diverse values and perspectives of key stakeholder groups.
Learning Objective: 2-2: Identify sources of ethical thinking in evaluation.
Cognitive Domain: Comprehension
Answer Location: Cultural Competence as an Ethical Imperative
Difficulty Level: Medium

3. The chapter expresses that there are multiple sources of ethical dilemmas for the evaluators. Analyze the sources of ethical dilemmas and discuss three sources that are not mutually exclusive.
Ans: The first source, ethical issues that arise from doing the evaluation, may be demonstrated in numerous ways such as delivering evaluation findings or reports that (a) are laundered to omit negative findings, (b) exaggerate successes and positive findings, (c) are suppressed altogether, (d) are released belatedly so that they are no longer relevant, and (e) are prematurely released or leaked to the public. A second source of evaluation dilemmas includes ethical issues that are created by the evaluator. Examples of this dilemma in practice would include the evaluator's (a) personal or financial interest in the evaluand (i.e., conflicts of interest), (b) lack of knowledge or skill in the evaluation technique or method being used, (c) lack of cultural competence and sensitivity (such as lack of knowledge and respect for local culture and values), (d) ideological positions or values that can bias the evaluation outcome, and/or (e) propensity to deliver positive evaluations to increase job security. The third source of ethical dilemmas includes ethical issues that do not arise from the conduct of the evaluator or from doing the evaluation but instead exist within the context of the evaluand and are discovered when planning or conducting the evaluation. Examples include uncovering (prior to any data collection activity) that program administrators are engaging in illegal activities (e.g., theft) and malfeasance (e.g., misappropriation of program funds). In addition to this, uncovering program activities that are knowingly harmful to clients or to public health or safety can pose an ethical dilemma for the evaluator.
Learning Objective: 2-5: Use the *Evaluators' Ethical Guiding Principles* and *Program Evaluation Standards* to support ethical decision making and evaluation quality in diverse context.
Cognitive Domain: Analysis
Answer Location: Sources of Ethical Dilemmas
Difficulty Level: Medium

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