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Ethical problems in program evaluation: Advice for trapped evaluators

Charles Windle ... William Neigher

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Abstract

This paper argues that ethical problems in program evaluation are increased when conflicting or incompatible evaluation models are applied concurrently. Three models are illustrated: an *Amelioration Model*, generating better information for a program's own decision makers; an *Accountability Model*, focusing on public data disclosure and citizen participation in evaluation; and an *Advocacy Model*, in which the evaluation is designed to advance the program's interests in the competition for resources. Ethical problems inherent in each model, and arising from combining models are presented, along with case examples and discussion. The authors suggest several directions that program evaluators can consider to reduce their vulnerability to ethical problems.



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