Evaluating Policy
Implications, Strategies, Challenges
Proposed learning objectives. Participants will...

• Understand and describe the core elements of policy evaluation and how they are similar to—and distinct from—program evaluation.

• Understand how policy evaluation can be used—and misused-- by multiple stakeholder groups.

• Identify the challenges associated with evaluating policy at various stages of design and implementation.
1. States with more gun control laws have lower levels of firearm homicide and firearm suicide.

Using state data from 2007-2010, we found that states with more key firearm laws had fewer firearm homicides and fewer firearm suicides, after controlling for poverty, unemployment, education, race and non-firearm violence-related deaths.


2. “Shall issue” laws have no significant effect on the overall homicide rate

We analyzed the effect on homicide of changes in state-level gun carrying laws using pooled cross-sectional time-series data for 50 states from 1979-1998. There was no statistically significant association between changes in concealed carry laws and state homicide rates. The finding was consistent across a variety of models.

Hepburn, Lisa; Miller, Matthew; Azrael, Deborah; Hemenway, David. The effect of nondiscretionary concealed weapon carrying laws on homicide. *Journal of Trauma*. 2004; 56:676-681.
3. Child access prevention laws may reduce unintentional child firearm fatalities

We analyzed the effect on unintentional firearm fatalities to children of child access prevention (CAP) laws, which allow a firearm owner to be charged with a crime if a child gains access to an unsecured firearm, using pooled cross-sectional time series data for 50 states from 1979-2000. We found that states that enacted CAP laws—with felony rather than misdemeanor penalties—experienced greater subsequent declines in the rate of unintentional firearm deaths for children age 0 to 14 compared to states not enacting CAP laws.


4. Some gun policy evaluations are designed to ensure that no effect will be found.

This article on statistics describes the limitations of studies that claim no effect of gun shows, and no effect of the Australian gun buyback.

Legislators debate Dayton's $348 million preschool proposal

He wants another $238M to make initiative available for all of the state's 4-year-olds.
D.C. Dispatches

Why the EPA's Clean Power Plan makes even green Minnesota a little nervous

By Devin Henry | 03/11/15
WASHINGTON — Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. used an email alias named for the Motown group The Temptations. Lisa P. Jackson, a former Environmental Protection Agency administrator, used “Richard Windsor” — a combination of her dog’s name and a New Jersey town — for her electronic alter ego.

Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter keeps his personal and government emails separate on two different BlackBerrys. But two of his predecessors never used email for official business at all.

Members of President Obama’s cabinet have a wide variety of strategies, shortcuts and tricks for handling their email, and until three months ago, Carter had been no different.
MinnPost's education reporting is made possible by a grant from the Bush Foundation.

Kline and Senate ally launching new push for NCLB overhaul and less federal oversight

By Beth Hawkins | 01/06/15
• Why are you here?

• What questions do you have about policy evaluation?

• How is policy evaluation distinct from program evaluation? Why should we care?

• Can we have flawed policy that is well executed? Examples?

• Why is this relevant to the conference theme: Social Justice Amidst Standards and Accountability: The Challenge for Evaluation
Figure 2.2. The Evaluation Policy Wheel

- Meta-evaluation
- Use
- Process and Methods
- Goals
- Participation
- Capacity Building
- Roles
- Management
Evaluation Policy (Trochim, 2009)

1. Evaluation Goals
   The primary goals of our policy evaluations are to...

2. Evaluation participation
   Evaluations will be designed with input and consultation from.....

3. Evaluation capacity building...
   The organization will develop sufficient organizationwide capacity to support evaluation activities

4. Evaluation management
   Staff will be given sufficient time to accomplish evaluation-related activities
Evaluation Policy  (Trochim, 2009)

5. Evaluation roles
   {Who} is responsible for {what}

6. Evaluation process and methods
   Whenever possible a mixed methods approach will be used; evaluation data will be stored in a secure location for no less than XX years

7. Evaluation use
   Every evaluation must include a written plan for how results will be reported and used.

8. Meta-evaluation
   Every XX years the organization will contract for an independent meta-evaluation to assess the implementation, quality and utility of its evaluations.
Is establishing evaluation policies feasible in the “real world”? How or under what circumstances?

- Nonprofit sector?
- Public sector?
Policy Analysis: The 8-Fold Path (Eugene Bardach)

- Define the Problem (think: excess/deficit; AVOID embedding solutions)
- Assemble Some Evidence
- Construct the Alternatives
- Select the Criteria
- Project the Outcomes
- Confront the Trade-offs
- Decide
- Tell Your Story
Contemporary Policy Evaluation Opportunities …
Social Justice Implications of Evaluating Policy ... (SenGupta and Hopson)

problem definition and program theory

policy discourse and decisions

evaluation design (evaluation that seeks vs evaluation that checks)