The Epistemological base (valuing branch) of the Evaluation Tree (Christie & Alkin, 2013)

Using a Substantive Theory (Greene, 2007) to validate a hypothesis (see p. 5)

Background on Spiral Dynamic Theory (SDT):
  - Memetics
  - Cognitive Complexity and Emergent Hierarchical Worldviews (see pp. 6-7)
  - Individualism and Collectivism

Research Design – Mixed Methods Dissertation Study (see p. 8)
  - Triangulation and Complementarity purposes

Civic Engagement Findings in the Chile, South American Context

Converting Academic Research for Evaluation theory, methods, and practice

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Title: Using the Substantive Theory of SDT to Guide the Design of Higher Education Evaluation

Session Abstract:

This session addresses converting scholarly research for purposes of developing a formative and/or summative evaluation design, taking as an example my own quasi-experimental mixed methods study conducted in Chile, South America. The study compared civic engagement outcomes among post-graduate adults at private for-profit universities and traditional public universities in Chile as a means to promote intentional civic engagement outcomes for adults.

Spiral Dynamic Theory (SDT) served as the substantive theory (Greene, 2007) used in the inquiry because it offered a framework from which to guide evaluation research within an environment of dynamically shifting worldviews among stakeholders. The session seeks to garner feedback and recommendations—from leaders in the field of Evaluation—on how best to utilize this innovative type of futures studies framework to enhance evaluation design, facilitate data collection and analysis, and guide the production of meta-inferences achievable via this mixed methods approach.

Relevance Statement:

This proposal is developed in the spirit of those evaluators that focus on the epistemological foundation of the evaluation tree (Christie & Alkin, 2013), where the valuing branch is privileged. The relative importance of this proposal to the field is based on theories of how evaluation can serve to validate hypotheses upon which educational institutions operate (Alkin, 2004). Using a quasi-experimental mixed method design for this study allowed for a triangulation of data that revealed complementarity of findings and also served to counter the biases that are traditionally found in a purely qualitative or quantitative mono-methodology approach (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006). The findings aid in epistemology development and best practices by allowing stakeholders access to empirical outcomes grounded in the two paradigmatic traditions.

Commonly referenced as Spiral Dynamics in the corporate domain, the theoretical framework—or substantive theory—used in this mixed methods inquiry is termed Spiral Dynamic Theory (SDT). This kinesthetic naming is due to its creation, grounded in the research of psychologist Clare W. Graves (2005, 2009), who explained cognitive development as having systems of thoughts or points of view which he said were, “emergent cyclical levels of existence conception” (p. 29) or E-C. SDT provided a model that helped frame and guide the study and its analysis by accounting for the complexity and diversity among university environments. SDT applies a biological construct (e.g., gene) from the natural sciences to the social science fields in
the form of memes—behavioral units of culture that are imitated and transferred between people (Beck & Cowan, 2006; Blackmore, 1998; Dawkins, 1989). This roundtable is aimed at converting SDT’s use to that of an evaluation assessment tool for understanding dynamic program/stakeholder change. The framework is grounded in the science of cognitive complexity, where there is a movement from the simple to more complex thinking and worldviews. The hierarchical changes in problem solving capacity among stakeholders shifts between themes of individualism and collectivism which also impacts evaluation outcomes.

1. What do you think are some major challenges to converting scholarly academic research to fundamental evaluation design and implementation?

2. What do you see as the major benefit of having a substantive theory guide your evaluation study, which in essence is grounded in an a priori assumption about what people may or may not know?

3. What is the value of the quasi-experimental design for evaluation work when there is an “indirect” treatment, but no control group?
   a. What are the validity and reliability concerns I should hold when using the SDT framework?

4. What are the focal points for this particular approach that stakeholders might see as worthy or necessary in order to obtain formative, summative, and developmental evaluation outcomes?

5. Can the case be made in consideration of the research design that this was essentially an evaluation study?
   a. Why or why not?

6. In consideration of utilization-based evaluation, what would be the best practices for identifying key stakeholders in advance of the study and/or post-evaluation?
   a. How does one market a post-evaluation study from within the academy the does not necessarily have pre-existing stakeholders engaged in the entire process of the evaluation?
   b. Would the above notion (i.e., post-evaluation stakeholders) be untenable for evaluation work?

7. How would one present herself to the field in order to serve as an educational evaluation consultant using the SDT framework?
   a. How do you identify potential clients?
   b. What types of things could one do in order to convince stakeholders that you are the best evaluator/firm for the job?
Figure 1. A graphic depiction of the conceptual model used for the study and how Spiral Dynamic Theory offers a meta-framework for the research.
Open-ended System of Value Memes (‘MEMEs)
The Spiral Dynamic Theory (SDT) Organizing Principles/Worldviews ©

Figure 2. SDT’s dynamic oscillating framework. Lowest order thinking begins at the color BEIGE (A/N) and moves in an upward, zig-zag pattern through the open-ended spiral to TEAL (J/W). Tier 1 represents those ‘MEME system levels focused on survival through innate sensor abilities and instinct. Tier 2 are the SDT systems that represent self-awareness, which is reflexive. On Tier 2, one acquires the capacity to imagine multiple future(s) as one begins to cognitively understand and negotiate complex interconnected realities. Copyright 2015 by Brown. Reproduced with permission.
# Table 1

**Narrative Descriptions of the Color-Coded Mnemonic SDT Framework Constructs ©**

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<th>MEME System Level</th>
<th>Description of the SDT Memetic Worldview</th>
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<td><strong>RED (C/P) System</strong></td>
<td>is the egocentric memetic worldview often marked by perceptions that “Life is a jungle” where there exist the “haves and have-nots” (p. 215). One looks to avoid shame and to defend one’s reputation and respect even if it requires deadly force to do so. It is impulsive and often remorseless, as consequences for one’s action may or may not come to fruition. The locus of control is internal and individualistic.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BLUE (D/Q) System</strong></td>
<td>is the purposeful memetic worldview marked by traditionalism: a need to bring order and stability to a disorderly situation. It tends toward self-sacrifice and the enforcement of divine principles, holding that people are assigned to their specific place in life. It holds to a belief in a divine truth or moral absolute. More extreme aspects of this meme would require dogmatic obedience while employing paternalistic attempts to bring order to chaos. Rules are to be followed and are non-negotiable. The locus of control is external and collectivist in nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ORANGE (E/R) System</strong></td>
<td>is the strategic memetic worldview marked by autonomy and independence in order to seek material gain. This worldview construct searches for the “best solutions,” which are often located through science and technological applications. Competition is a prevailing meme aspect within this construct, as is winning. This memetic worldview is cautious not to arouse the suspicions and disfavor of other authorities, holding logic and reasonable certainty for success above a power impulsive. The locus of control is internal and individualistic in nature.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>GREEN (F/S) System</strong></td>
<td>is the relativistic memetic worldview marked by exploration of the personal inner-self in conjunction with the inner-self of others. There is a prioritizing of community, unity, and harmony, as a promotion of shared societal resources for the benefit of all is valued. Notions of greed and dogmatic authoritarianism are rejected, as decision-making based upon consensus is promoted. Togetherness, harmony, and acceptance serve to replace the previous stage’s scientific logic. Interpretive reality makes space for the metaphysical and one’s feelings as analysis tools. The locus of control is external and collectivist in nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YELLOW (G/T) System</strong></td>
<td>(Tier 2) is the systemic memetic worldview marked by functionality, competence, flexibility, and spontaneity that allows for creative thought. There is an imperative to restore order to the chaotic. Independence and autonomy of “being” is sought within the bounds of what is reasonable. This worldview produces a more tempered individualism and better results will always default to the better plan without allegiances to a likely temporal leadership. This meme is described as the “Flex-Flow perspective” (Beck &amp; Cowan, 2006, p. 277). It recognizes the layered dynamics of both the nature of human beings and societies. It is the worldview most likely to recognize things as possessing a “both/and” nature and not be bound to a simplistic “either/or” perspective. The locus of control is internal and individualistic in nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TURQUOISE (H/U) System</strong></td>
<td>(Tier 2) is the systemic memetic worldview marked by its ability to easily negotiate complexity. It can recognize patterns and their consequences more immediately than those operating under (Tier 1) vMEMES systems. The world is seen as a single dynamic organism with its own mind. Dichotomies are more easily accepted and this particular worldview uses physics and metaphysics together to explore the problems of life and being (Dawlabani &amp; Beck, 2013). It is a holistic and intuitive way of thinking that is open to notions of spirituality, yet at the same time holding that general life is more important than individual personal life. This worldview maintains a holistic global perspective relative to life. The locus of control is external and collectivist in nature.</td>
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Figure 3. Mixed methods research design that includes a triangulated meta-inference.