

Assessment Brown Bag Lunch

Differences and Similarities between
Research and Assessment:
Goals and Data Collection Techniques

University of Idaho
Institutional Research and Assessment
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Let's begin by defining goals associated with research and assessment

▶ Research

- When you conduct research in your field, what are your goals?
 - To confirm a hypothesis
 - To solve a problem
 - To gain new information
 - To advance new knowledge in a discipline

Group Participation

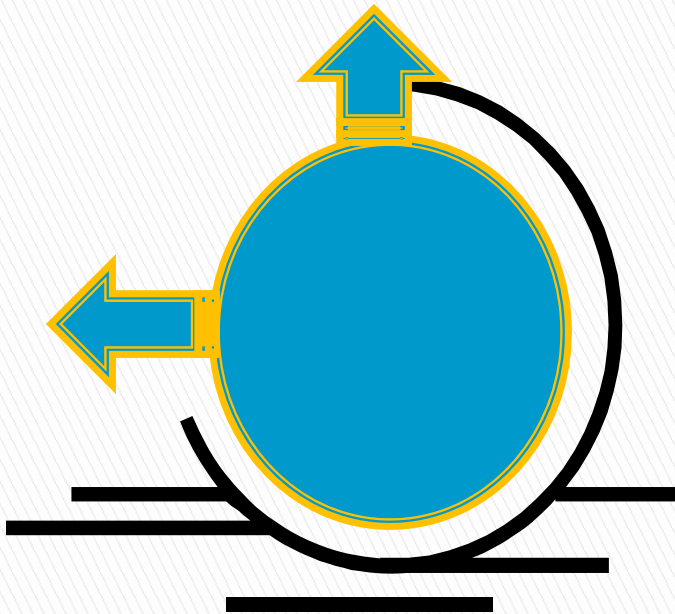
▶ Assessment

- To inform local action
- To gather indicators that will be useful for decision-making and planning
- To gather evidence about how well students are meeting the learning outcomes
- To promote continuous improvement

Walwood, B. E. (2004). *Assessment Clear and Simple*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

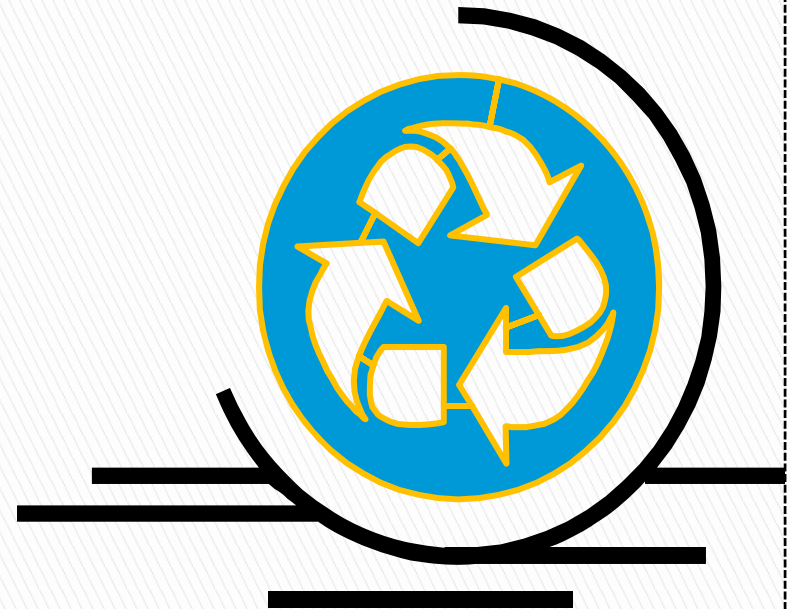
External vs. Internal Focus

- ▶ Research: Scholarly and Creative Activity



External Focus

- ▶ Assessment of Learning Outcomes



Program Review:
Internal Focus

Next, let's identify data collection techniques

▶ Research Data Collection Techniques

- When you conduct research in your field, what data collection techniques do you use?
 - Controlling variables
 - Replication

Group Participation

▶ Assessment Data Collection Techniques

- Direct Measures
- Indirect Measures
- Focus Discussion

Walwood, B. E. (2004). *Assessment Clear and Simple*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Assessment

From where does good evidence come?

- ▶ Direct Evidence of Student Learning
 - Internal Standards
 - Portfolios of student work
 - Student work scored using a rubric
 - Capstone projects or presentations
 - Musical performances
 - External Standards
 - Licensure examinations
 - Nationally normed discipline examinations

Walwood, B. E. (2004). *Assessment Clear and Simple*.
San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Assessment

From where does good evidence come?

- ▶ Indirect Evidence of Student Learning
 - Surveys
 - Students, faculty, alumni
 - Exit Interviews
 - Student ratings of their knowledge and skills
 - Records of job placement, graduate school admissions, or fellowships won by graduating majors
- ▶ Focus Group Discussions

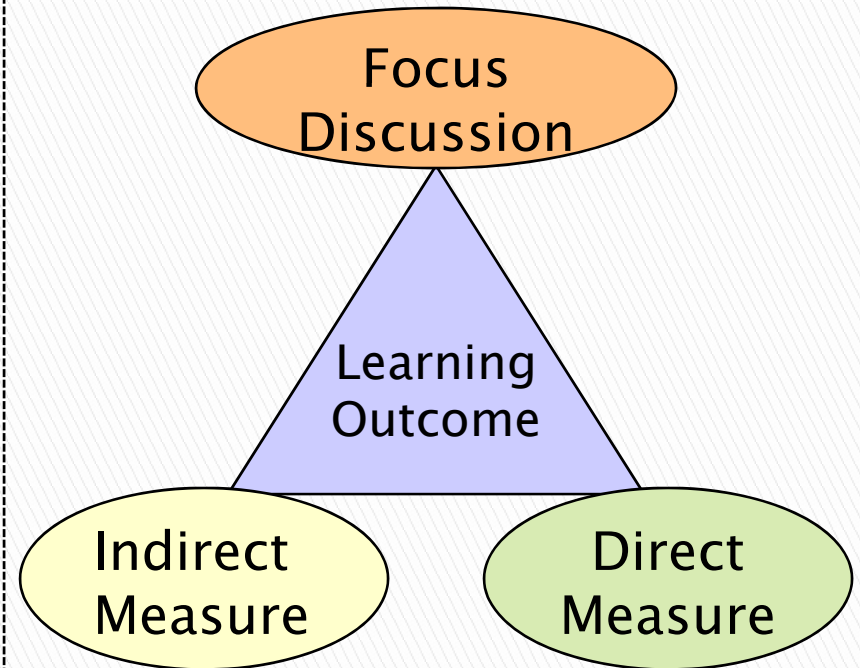
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San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

The integrated use of qualitative and quantitative methodologies

- ▶ “Good assessment requires multiple ways of measuring goal achievement Assessment should use multiple measures, both qualitative and quantitative, rather than relying on one instrument or activity.”

(Baillargeon, J. (1999 – handout). *Student Learning Assessment at the Program Level*.)



Using Mixed Methods in Assessment

The integrated use of qualitative and quantitative methodologies

- ▶ “The data from mixed methods research provide a rich source for measuring the environment....According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, ‘the goal of mixed method research is to maximize the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of [qualitative and quantitative methods] in a single research study’ (2004, p.15). Departments that strive to gain a deeper understanding of their proposed assessment question find the mixed methods approach to be beneficial.”

(Kennedy-Phillips, L. & Meents-DeCaigny, E. (2007). Chapter 7. A Mixed Methods Approach to Assessment in Student Affairs. *Using Mixed Methods in Institutional Research* (ed Howard R.D.). Tallahassee: Association for Institutional Research.

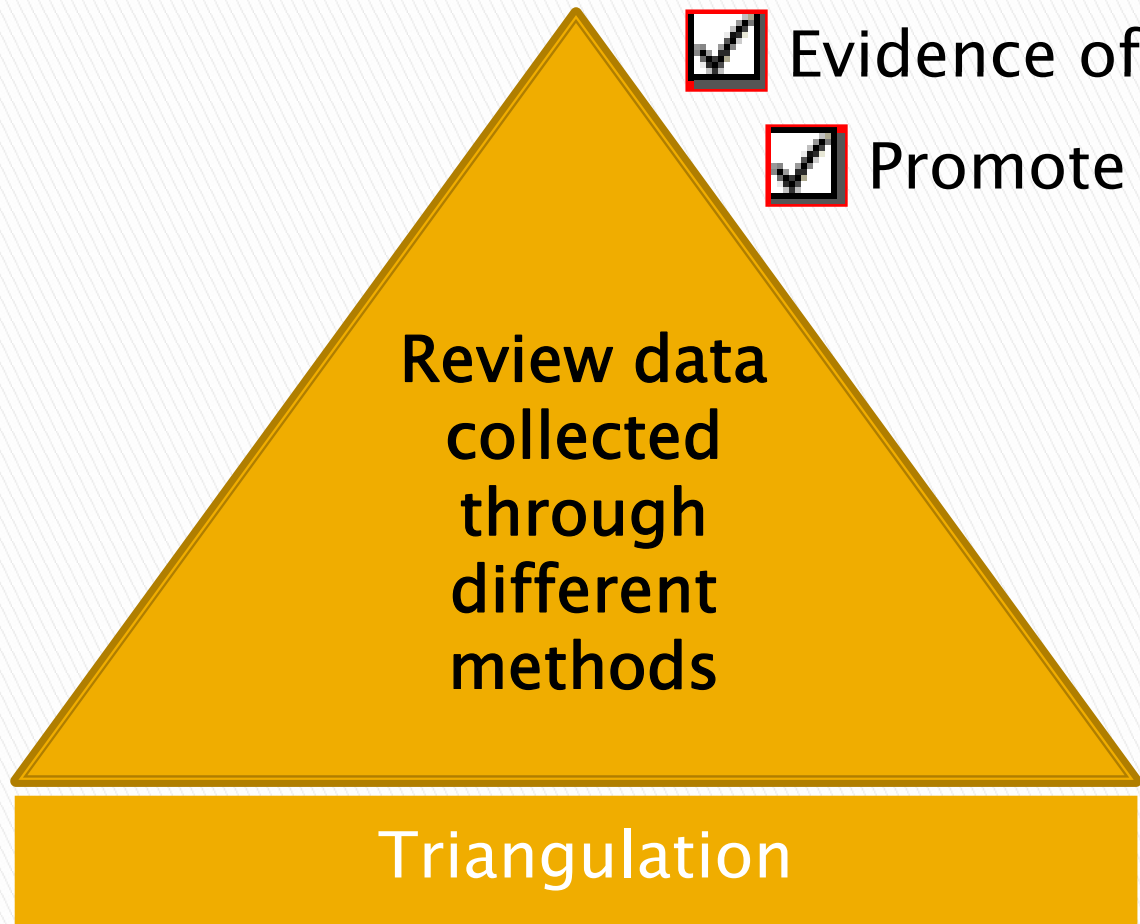
Using Mixed Methods in Assessment

Other methods to promote the rigor of assessment

- ▶ Prolonged engagement with the participants and setting
- ▶ An audit trail of changes that occurred during the study
- ▶ Providing a thick description of setting and context
- ▶ Clarification of researcher bias
- ▶ Member checking – when participants agree with conclusions
- ▶ Peer debriefing – when a colleague challenges results and the researcher provides support

Baillargeon, J. (1999 – handout).
Student Learning Assessment at the Program Level.

What is Triangulation?



Evidence of trustworthiness



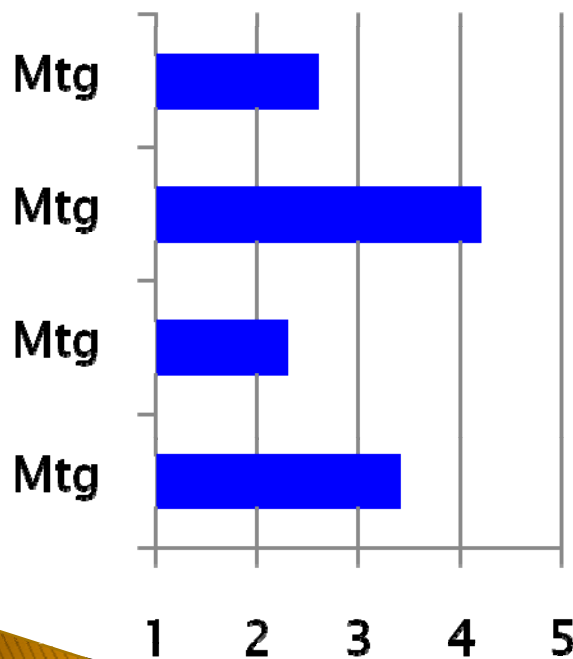
Promote rigor of assessment

Example: Results of an assessment process

DIRECT MEASURE

Meeting Observations

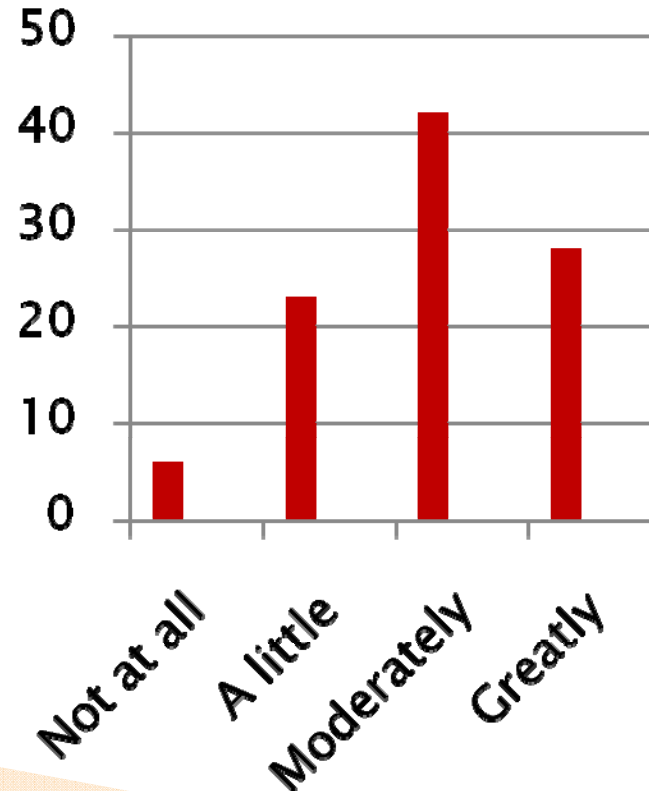
Facilitative Leadership Rubric



INDIRECT MEASURE

Graduating Senior Survey

Ability to... lead others, use effective group process skills



FOCUS GROUPS

Code & Identify "Common Themes"

Unclear Goals

"I didn't know what we were trying to accomplish."

Limited Group Participation

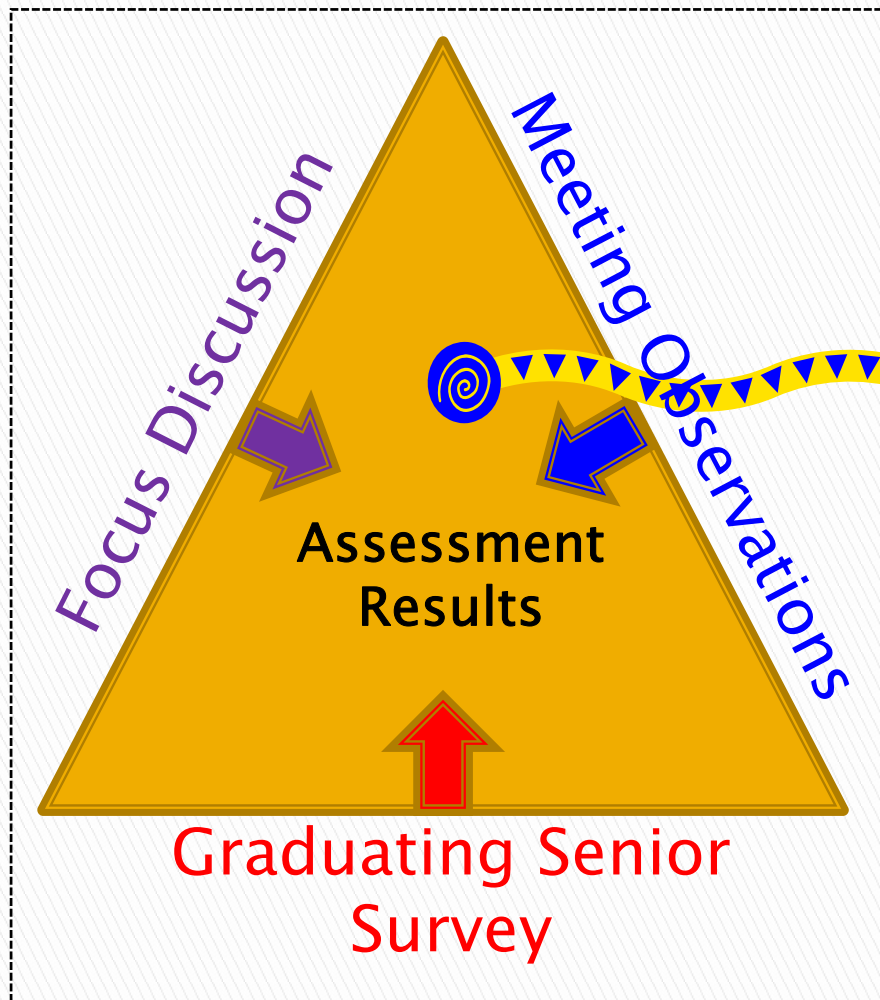
"A few people dominated most meetings."

More Training

"I would like leadership feedback after meetings."

Triangulation: What do the data reveal?

What actions do you plan to take?



- ▶ Actions need to be linked to the data used in the review and analysis of the program

4/30 to Beginning of Fall Semester:
Minutes from this meeting are a required upload in the system.

Program Assessment

How rigorous do you want your data collection to be?

- ▶ “Scholarship of Assessment”
 - More rigorous data

- ▶ “Data-driven and Quality Decision Making”
 - Less rigorous data



“Good Enough Assessment”

- resource limitations
- time limitations
- organizational contexts
- implementation limitations
- political contexts

Assessment for data-driven decision making: Potential limitations and compromises

- ▶ A sample may not be representative of the population under study
- ▶ The response rate may not be as high as desired, and thus the statistical analyses may be limited or the sample error increased (or both)
- ▶ Instruments may be poorly designed
- ▶ Instruments failed to meet psychometric standards such as reliability and validity
- ▶ Fewer people than expected showed up to participate in focus discussions
- ▶ Interviewers failed to perform effectively

Schuh, J.H., Upcraft, M.L. (2001). *Assessment Practice in Student Affairs*.
San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Assessment

The “Good Enough” Principle

- ▶ When does an assessment study become so compromised that it should never be done, or discarded if implemented?

Group Participation

- ▶ “Good Enough” Principle
 - “Rossi and Freeman (1993)...the investigator has the responsibility to ‘raise the question whether to undertake the assessment at all, especially if meaningful results are unlikely’ (p. 220).”

(Schuh, J.H., Updraft, M.L., (2001). p. 7)

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Assessment

The “Good Enough” Principle

- ▶ When it comes to the usefulness of an assessment study for decision-making, is a study with substantial limitations better than no study at all?

Group Participation

- ▶ “...Within reason, limited data are better than none at all, but bad data should never be used under any circumstances.”

(Schuh, J.H., Updraft, M.L., (2001). p. 7)

Schuh, J.H., Upcraft, M.L. (2001). *Assessment Practice in Student Affairs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Assessment

The “Good Enough” Principle

- ▶ “Good Enough” with one important and major caveat:
 - “...all compromises made must be clearly identified when an assessment report is published, cautioning all prospective audiences to taken into account the study’s various limitations as they decide what credence to give to the study.”

(Schuh, J.H., Updraft, M.L. (2001), p. 8)

Schuh, J.H., Upcraft, M.L. (2001). *Assessment Practice in Student Affairs*.
San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

How would you respond?

Program assessment for data-driven decision-making requires....	Yes	No	Possibly
A random sample that is representative of the population to be studied			
A sample which is in a position to be knowledgeable about the topic under consideration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Reliability testing: the extent to which an instrument, experiment, test or any procedure yields the same results on repeated trials			
Validity testing: the degree to which a study accurately reflects or assesses the specific concept the researcher is trying to measure			

How would you respond?

Program assessment for data-driven decision making requires....	Yes	No	Possibly
A peer review or expert panel to review focus discussion questions			
The use of a tape recorder when conducting focus group discussions			
Member checking – have participants review/edit/agree with the qualitative analysis			
A systematic method to code qualitative data	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

How would you respond?

Program assessment for data-driven decision making requires....	Yes	No	Possibly
A statement of the problem and purpose of the study	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
A statement of the research hypothesis			
A theoretical framework on which to base the study			
A literature review			
Statistical analysis			
A statement of limitations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Conclusions and recommendations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

The Six Thinking Hats[®] method in assessment activities



Blue Hat: Managing the Thinking



Red Hat: Feelings, Intuition, Instinct



Black Hat: Risks, Difficulties, Problems



White Hat: Information and Data









Yellow Hat: Benefits and Feasibility



Green Hat: New Ideas, Possibilities

Example: Questions to ask using Six Thinking Hats[®]

 Managing the Thinking	<p>Analyze the methods used to collect data for the assessment plan.</p>
 Information & Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What data were we intending to gather? • What data do we have? Do we still need? • What compromises/limitations were made?
 Benefits & Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What worked well? • What knowledge did we gain?
 Risks & Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What difficulties did we encounter? • What unexpected problems surfaced?
 Feelings & Intuition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I feel about the process used? • Do the data agree with my intuition and experiences?
 New Ideas & Possibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base focus group questions on the results from the pre/post-trip surveys • Have three peers review the questionnaires • Use an outside facilitator and note-taker for focus group discussions

Questions & Comments

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