



Intentional, Culturally Responsive Evaluation: The Essential Role of Inquiry

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*To make a revolution, people must not only struggle against existing institutions. They must make a philosophical/spiritual leap and become more **human** human beings. In order to change/transform the world, **they most change/transform themselves.***



Grace Lee Boggs
1915-2015

What comes to mind when
you think of evaluation?

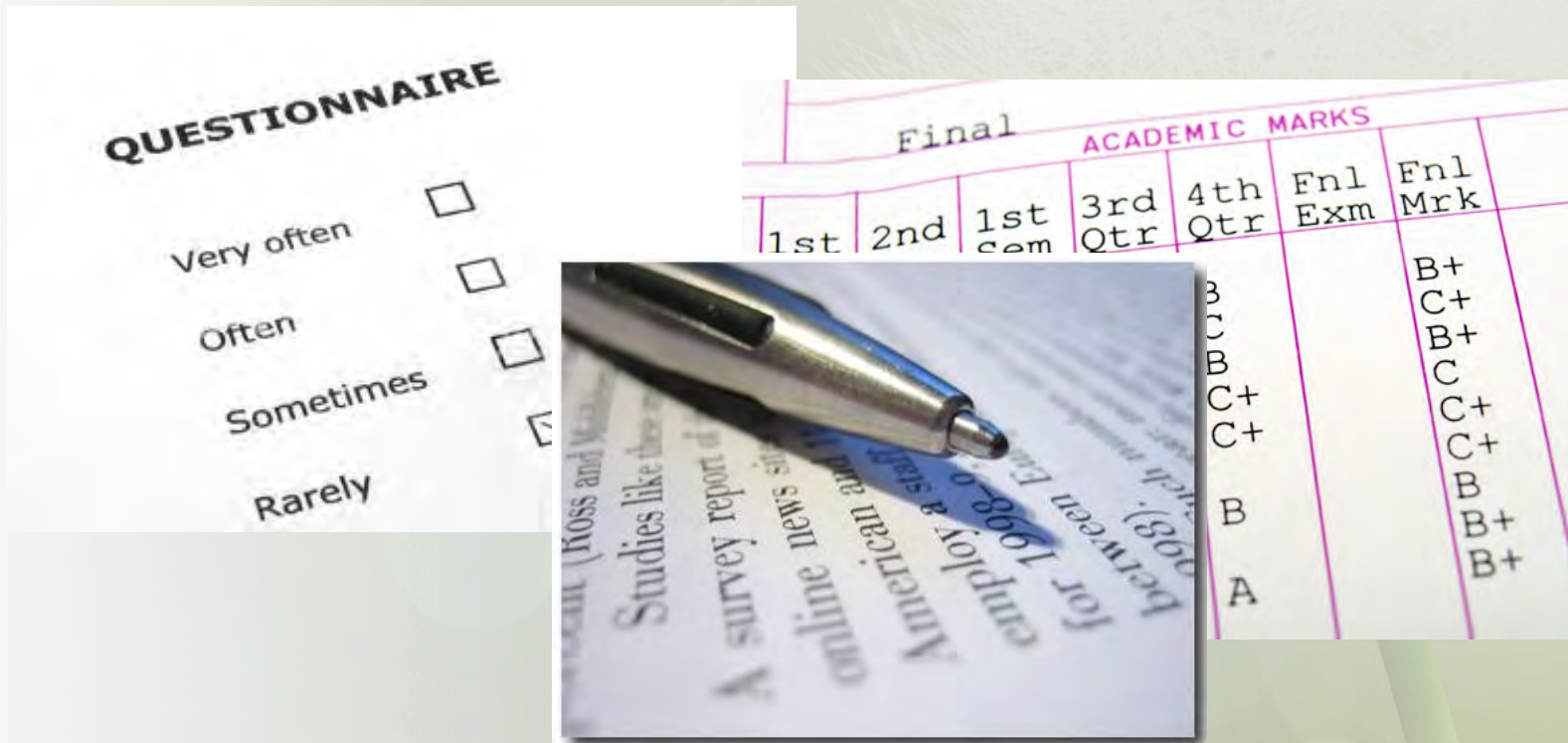
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Evaluation is a form of inquiry that communicates judgments regarding:

- Human experience
- Attitudes about significant others, students, colleagues...
- Feelings about the systems in which we live, work and play
- Our motivation for doing what we do
- What we need to be supported in our work
- Areas for growth, learning, inquiry.....

Common evaluation strategies



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Function of Evaluation



Intentional Evaluation

- Assessment and evaluation judged by the utility of its *actual use*.
- Focus on “intended use by intended users”.
- Highly personal and situational.
- Provides useful feedback to **all** involved.

- Appreciative Inquiry
- Empowerment Evaluation
- Utilization-Focused Evaluation

Goals of Inclusive Evaluation

- Culturally sensitive
- Diversity-grounded
- Equity-minded
- Contextually-aware (self and other)



Evaluation as a social construct



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Judgments of responsibility

Privilege grants the cultural authority to make judgments about others and to have those judgments stick. It allows people to define reality and to have prevailing definitions of reality fit their experience. Privilege means being able to decide who gets taken seriously, who receives attention, who is accountable to whom and for what.

Johnson, A. G. (2005). *Privilege, power and difference*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

With little consequence for ourselves, we do violence to others' truths when we fail to develop and refine the self as an open, diversity-conscious and expansively learning-centered, responsive instrument. Without such vigilant attention, our capacity to do excellent boundary-spanning work suffers greatly.



Hazel Simonette, 2014

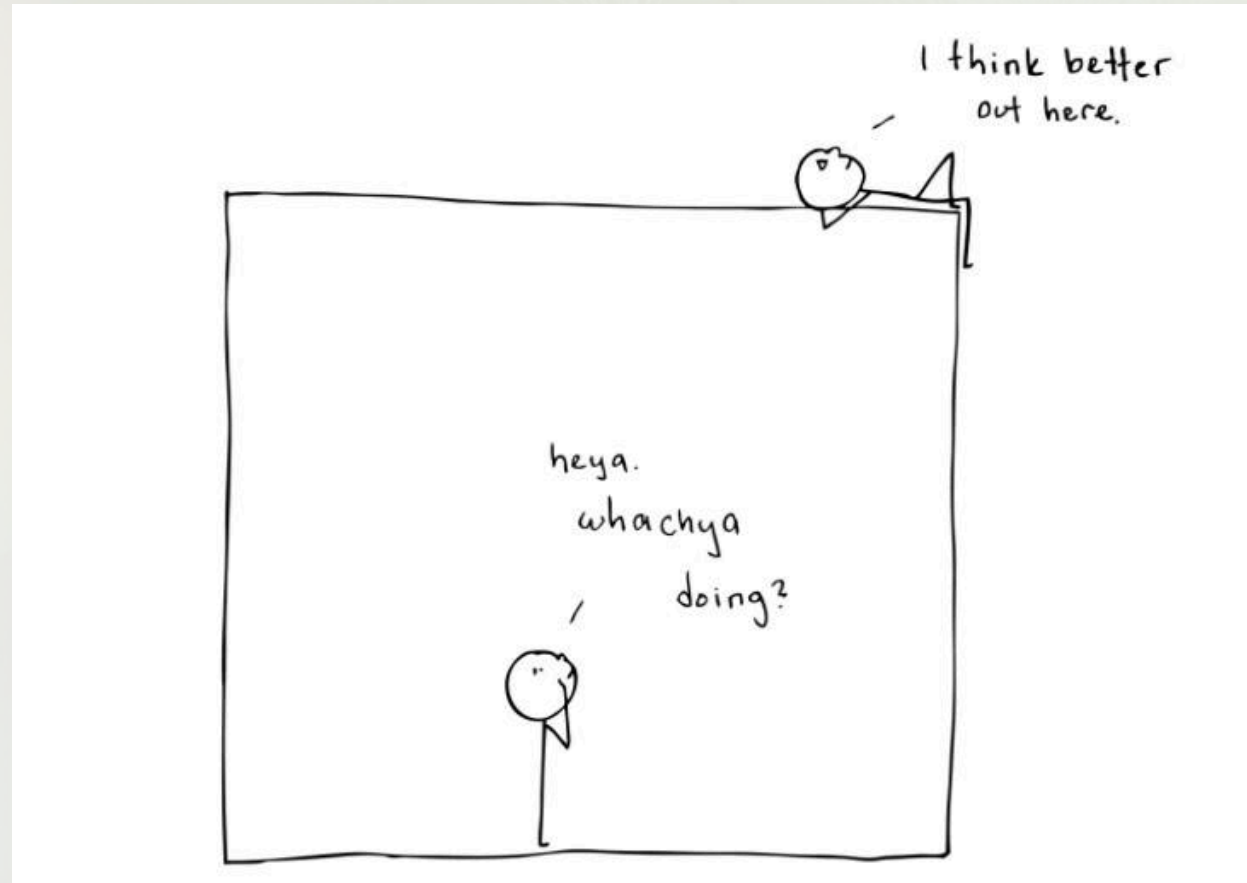
Culturally responsive evaluation

...requires expansion of our understandings of the self in dynamically diverse contexts within power and privilege/oppression hierarchies at a single point in time and also our understandings of the contexts embodied in the self across time.

(Simonette, 2014; Harrow, 2010)

In what ways do institutionalized values, beliefs and systems affect evaluation?

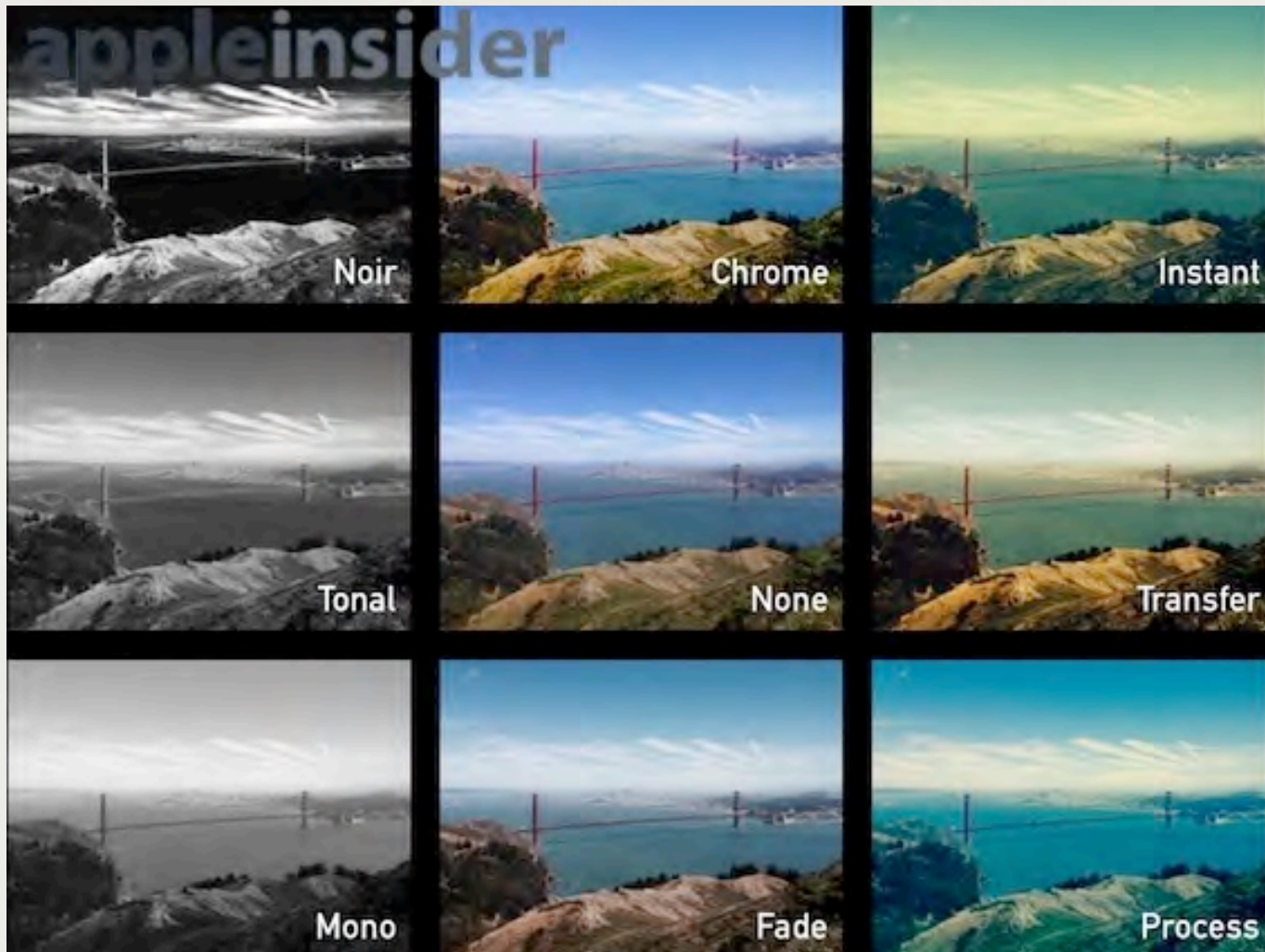
Moving beyond institutional structures



Evaluation as contemplative practice

- Recognize, slow down or stop automatic and habitual reactions.
- Respond more effectively to complex or difficult situations.
- See situations more clearly.
- Become more receptive/creative/flexible.

What lens do you bring?



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What individual and institutional or systemic values shape **your** perceptions and/or work?

*Your assumptions
are your windows
on the world.
Scrub them off
every once in a
while, or the light
won't come in.*



Isaac Asimov

Our work

- Cultivate ourselves as clear channels to listen, hear, touch and respond to the diverse needs of stake holders from multiple vantage points.
- To consistently inquire about our readiness, preparedness and ability to be responsive to the independent, complex and sometimes competing and conflicting demands.

Contemplative inquiry

“Instantiation of what you know and feel most deeply, bringing all of your intelligence to bear, including the feeling of *not knowing...*”

~John Kabat-Zinn



What assumptions or biases impede your ability to see, listen or interpret clearly?

What does our self-assessment reveal about our capacity to design and provide evaluation services to leave those we are serving better off from not only our perspective but theirs?

Questions to consider

- Who is to be helped by your intervention?
- Who are the primary helpers/interveners?
- What transformational bridge are you building through your intervention and evaluation?
- Does it leave participants better off?

You cannot change any society unless you take responsibility for it, unless you see yourself as belonging to it and responsible for changing it.





Let's continue this exploration
together

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