

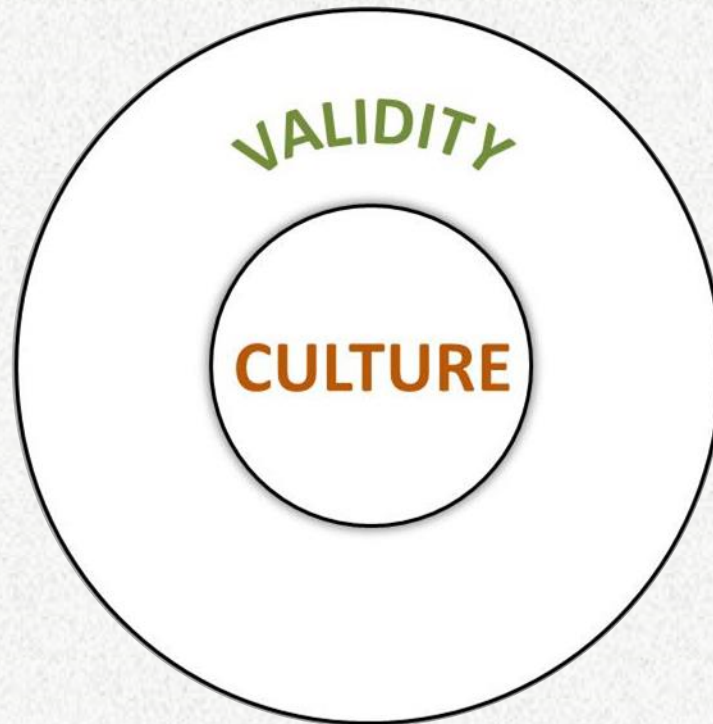


Repositioning Validity

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Culture and Validity



Culture and Validity



Considering Culture

■ Multiplicity

- Simultaneous Identifications
- Micro and macro

■ Fluidity

- Shifting salience across context
- Idiographic meaning

■ Non-neutrality

- Power attached to cultural identifications
- Privilege and inequity

Multicultural Validity

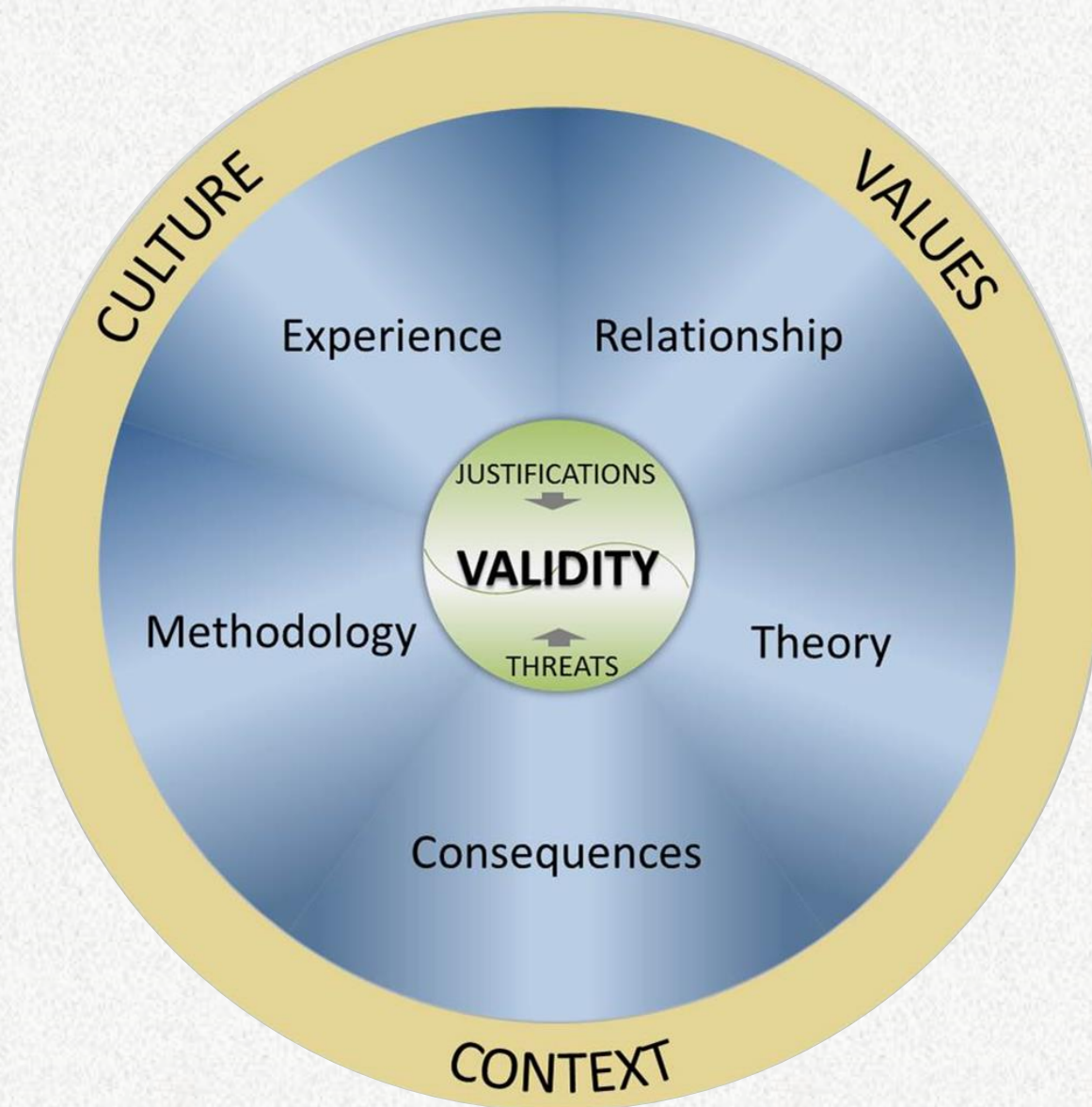
■ *The accuracy or trustworthiness of understandings and judgments, actions and consequences, across dimensions of cultural difference*

(Kirkhart, 1995)

Validity

- *An overall evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of interpretations and actions on the basis of test scores or other modes of assessment.*

(Messick, 1989)



Methodological

■ Justifications

- Based upon the cultural appropriateness of epistemology and method—designs, measurement tools, and procedures

■ Examples

- The sampling frame insures inclusion of diverse cultural perspectives.
- The study design employs a time frame appropriate to the context.
- Evaluation questions represent a range of perspectives, values and interests.
- Measurement tools have been validated for a particular populations and application site.

Methodological

■ Threats

- Threats that reside in the choice of design, data collections tools or procedures, or inappropriate application of a majority framework.

■ Examples

- Design incongruence
- Construct invalidity of cultural variables
- Measurement invalidity, incongruence
- Language non-equivalence
- Dominant epistemology, framework

Experiential

■ Justifications

- Based upon the lived experience of participants

■ Examples

- Local citizens and program consumers contribute their wisdom to the evaluation process
- Evaluative data are interpreted and understood in terms of the realities of the people they represent
- Evaluators reflect on their own cultural location and history, surfacing assumptions and gaps

Experiential

■ Threats

- Disconnection from the lived experiences of program participants, evaluation participants, and community members

■ Examples

- Invalidation, minimization of experience
- Exclusion of experiential evidence
- Unawareness of own cultural location
- Cultural ignorance, misinformation
- Acultural synthesis

Relational

■ Justifications

- Based upon the quality of the relationships with persons and context that surround and infuse the evaluation process

■ Examples

- Evaluators respect local norms and authority in entering the community to undertake evaluation
- Evaluators take time to build relationships and understandings within planning and design development.
- Meaningful roles are established and barriers to full participation are addressed.
- Relations to place are respected.

Relational

■ Threats

- Broken or damaged relationships among persons or context in which the evaluation process is imbedded

■ Examples

- Inappropriate entrance
- Rushing the agenda
- Limited cultural communication
- Disrespect of the environment
- Differential power

Theoretical

■ Justifications

- Based upon the theoretical perspectives that are congruent with cultural context

■ Examples

- Evaluation theory is appropriate to the context and purpose of the evaluation
- Program theory is grounded in social science research that addressed cultural context in valid and responsible ways
- Program theory is grounded in the cultural traditions and beliefs of program participants.

Theoretical

■ Threats

- Use of theoretical perspectives that are ill-suited to or incongruent with context

■ Examples

- Evaluation theory incongruent with context
- Social science base of program theory does not address relevant cultural dimensions
- Transformation bias in program theory

Consequential

■ Justifications

- Based upon the social consequences of understandings and judgments and the actions taken based upon them

■ Examples

- History of evaluation in community is acknowledged and addressed, especially if that history is oppressive, exploitive
- Mechanisms are identified and negotiated by which evaluation will give back to the community
- Evaluation promotes equity and social justice

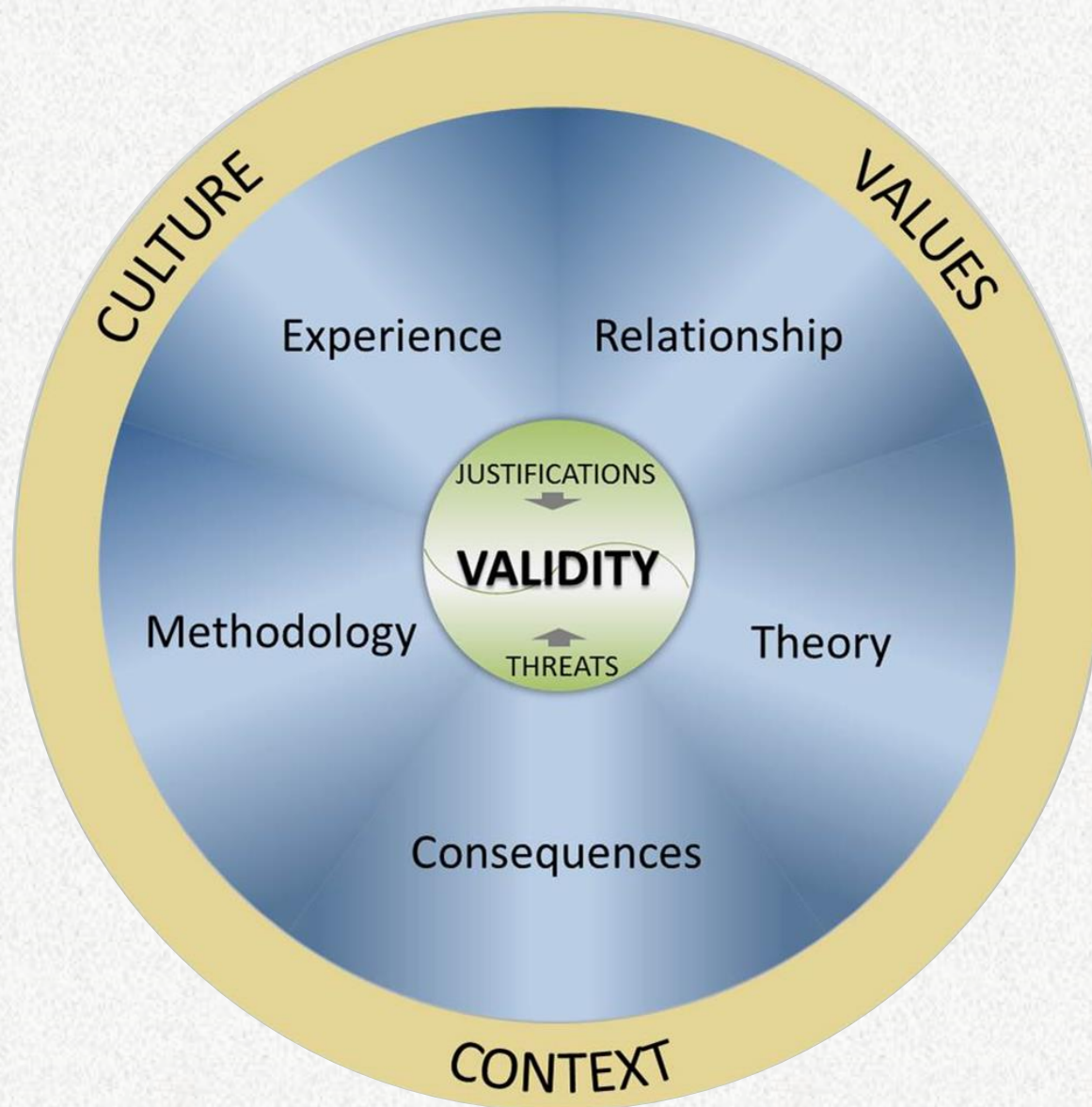
Consequential

■ Threats

- Failure to attend to social consequences of evaluative judgments and the actions taken based upon them

■ Examples

- Ignoring, underestimating consequences
- Exploitation/non-reciprocation
- Disempowerment
- Oppression



A Culture Checklist

- Concepts, not procedures
- Iterative, not episodic
- Elements to be *checked on*, not checked off.
- Necessary considerations
 - *necessitata*—items that must be checked in order to avoid invalidity in evaluation (Scriven, 1991)
- Elements are intertwined, not independent

A Culture Checklist

- History
- Location
- Power
- Voice
- Relationship
- Time
- Return
- Plasticity
- Reflexivity

History

- History of place, people, program (or other evaluand), and evaluation's role. Knowledge of cultural heritages and traditions, including their evolution over time.
 - How has what is here today been shaped by what came before it?
 - What is the story of this community?
 - What is the story of how this program came to be in this place?
 - What is the history of evaluation in this community or with this program?

Location

- Recognizes multiple cultural intersections at individual, organizational, and systems levels. Cultural contexts and affiliations of evaluators and evaluand. Geographic anchors of culture in place.
 - What are the cultural identifications of persons in this community, of the program staff and of the evaluators?
 - How do people relate to the land?
 - What is valued here?
 - How do people understand their lives?

Power

- Understanding how privilege is attached to some cultural signifiers; prejudice to others. Attention to equity and social justice; avoid perpetuating discrimination, disparity, or condescension.
 - Who holds power in various ways?
 - What are the impacts of how power is exercised?
 - What are the formal, legal, political, social and economic sources of power?
 - What are the informal sources of power?

Voice

- Addresses whose perspectives are amplified and whose are silenced. Maps inclusion and exclusion or marginalization. Includes use of language, jargon, and communicative strategies.
 - Who participates in the planning, design, implementation and use of the evaluation?
 - Whose messages are heard and heeded?
 - Whose languages and expressions are used?
 - Whose communicative styles are reflected in methods of communication?

Relationship

- Connections among the evaluation, evaluand and community. Relating evaluation to place, time and Universe. Maintaining accountability to community with respect and responsibility.
 - How does the evaluation relate to the core values of the cultures, community and context?
 - How do members of the community relate to one another, to the program and its personnel, and to the evaluators?
 - How do the evaluators relate to persons in the program and in the community?

Time

- Calling attention to rhythm, pace and scheduling, to time both preceding and following evaluation. Directs attention to longer impacts and implications—positive or negative.
 - How does the rhythm of this evaluation fit the context? Is it moving too fast? Too slowly?
 - Have important outcomes been considered at various points in time?
 - Will evaluation have the patience to watch carefully for small changes? For long-term consequences?

Return

- Attention to how the evaluation or the persons who conduct it return benefit to the evaluand and the surrounding community, both during and after the evaluation process.
 - How does evaluation advance the goals of this community or serve the needs of its people?
 - Has the benefit returned to community compensated them fairly for their time and any disruption created by this evaluation?
 - In what ways are persons better off?
 - Have any been harmed or disadvantaged?

Plasticity

- The ability to *BE* molded, to receive new information, reorganize and change in response to new experiences, and evolve new ideas. Applies both to evaluators and to their designs, process and products.
 - How is this evaluation changing in response to local context?
 - Am I overly committed to following a fixed plan or timeline or am I staying open to new discoveries?
 - What has surprised me here that changes how I think about evaluation?

Reflexivity

- Apply the principles of evaluation to one's own person and work. Self-scrutiny and reflective practice. Underscores the importance of metaevaluation.
 - What do I think I know in this context and why?
 - What areas of new learning must I watch for and reflect upon?
 - What are the strengths and limitations of how this evaluation has addressed culture?
 - How strong are the justifications supporting validity? How strong are the countervailing threats?

Benefits of Checklist

- Focused attention

- *active-selective attention* = the act of tuning in to stimuli that had been continuously tuned out of awareness over extended periods of time (Ridley et al., 1994)

- Applying, modifying, and refining theory

- Format is accessible to persons not trained in assessment and evaluation, supporting inclusion.

Validity Requires More

- Theory alone will not insure validity, either in evaluation or assessment.
- A conceptual checklist, translating theory, is also insufficient.
- Validity requires modeling, mentoring, and application that links these considerations to practice on a context-specific basis.
- Motivation to engage in difficult, ongoing work.

Acknowledgements

- Thanks to Kelly D. Lane (Syracuse University) for graphic design in creating this slide show.
- Portions of this presentation are based upon a forthcoming book chapter honoring the works of Michael Scriven:
 - Kirkhart, K. E. (forthcoming, 2013). Advancing considerations of culture and validity: Honoring the Key Evaluation Checklist. In S. I. Donaldson (Ed.), *The future of evaluation in society: A tribute to Michael Scriven*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age.