ALL ARE INVITED TO ATTEND

The final, public dissertation defense for:

Julia Rollison

Thursday, November 6, 2014
in
Campion 224
at
10 a.m.

METHODOLOGICAL DECISION-MAKING IN EVALUATION: AN EXAMINATION OF IMPLICATIONS OF USING A STAGE OF CHANGE OUTCOME VARIABLE

Committee:
Committee Members:
Dr. Lauren Saenz, Chair
Dr. June Horowitz, Reader
Dr. Larry Ludlow, Reader
Dr. Jessica Williams, Reader
ABSTRACT:

Methods for classifying and treating an outcome variable are critical to explore in health research and evaluation, given the potential impact the choice of method may have on the findings and subsequent recommendations (Merbitz, Morris, & Grip, 1989).

Further, given the prominent application of the Transtheoretical Model in health research, the stages of change construct continues to be a critical outcome measure concept used in various applied evaluation studies (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992; Bridle et al., 2005; Nigg, 2002). The purpose of this dissertation study was to determine if findings differ depending on the approach to categorizing and analyzing a stage of change outcome variable, and if so, to highlight how these may affect policy and programmatic decision-making.

Using data from a study on evidence-based program adoption decisions, this dissertation examined five approaches to treating and analyzing a single "decision to adopt" outcome variable. These different approaches were compared from both a methodological and pragmatic perspective. Hypothetical stakeholder illustrations were used to highlight differences in decision-making priorities and use of findings based on role, background, and organizational priorities.

In comparing methods for classifying and treating the stage of change outcome variable, findings revealed a statistically significant improvement in each research question yet differences in effect size, estimation, implication of major findings, and limitations of approach were notable. The hypothetical stakeholder illustrations stressed the significance of personal values and preferences combined with practical challenges as key influential factors during evaluation planning. The proposed directions for future research seek to continue advancing this understanding of the impact of methodological decisions in different contexts and help improve the utility of evaluations more broadly.