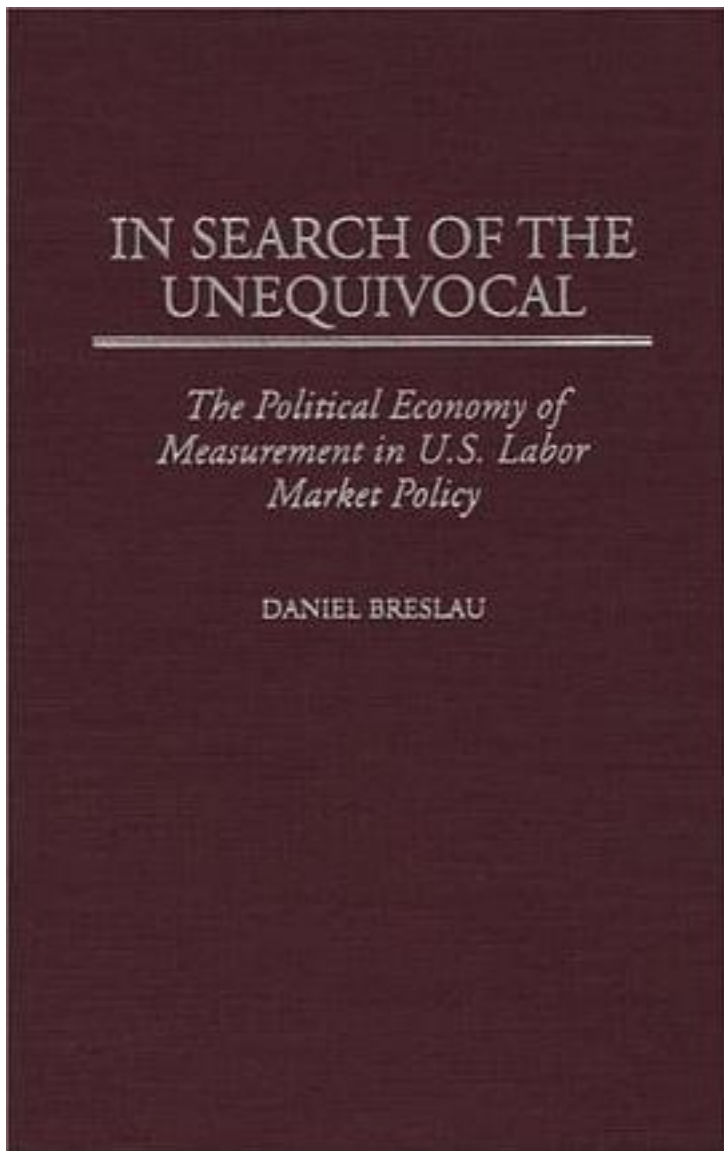


In Search of the Unequivocal



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Evaluation of social programs is now performed with greater frequency and with more methodological rigor than ever before. Yet it is not clear that the programs' effectiveness has improved because of this, or even that evaluation results have a rationalizing effect on policymaking. The author of this volume--which is based on a study of evaluation of U.S. employment and training policy from the passage of the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1963 to the welfare reforms of the 1980s and 1990s--argues that the increasing use of social scientific evaluations nonetheless has profound political consequences. Rather than influencing the programs themselves, evaluation research shapes the political discourse surrounding these programs, setting the terms in which the policy is known and discussed, and establishing conditions for entry into the debate. This study shows that even the most technical features of evaluation methodology are objects of a politics of knowledge and are by no means neutral with regard to the politics of the policies themselves. By applying ideas from the sociology of science to the area of applied social science, this work yields new insights that will be of interest to both of these areas. For the sociology of science, it demonstrates the value of this approach beyond the study of the natural sciences. For policy studies, it stimulates reflection on the political implications of methods normally assumed to be politically neutral. The conclusions about the political significance of evaluation research will also be of interest to political sociologists, who will find a novel way of looking at the role of social science in the formation of social policy.

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评论

读了缩写版论文，留笔记备考。1960年代对于如何进行职业评估，事务工作者希望职业培训与工作提升为目标，而政府希望消除贫因为目标。政府主导下MDTA以数据报告系统来考核培训者绩效，使其针对素质高的易找到工作的客户以完成业绩指标。专业经济学家主张使用净影响概念，用类实验、反事实的方法来评估，初期遭到反对，成立新机构后统一要求使用对照组，因此得以成功使用新方法。借此说明，科学虽然往往被用来给政治利益背书，但一种客观的方法背后亦有对社会的想象与差异化的社会要求。真正价值在于进入科学方法本身，分析具体方法的预设，而非简单将其视为铁板一块。略显粗糙。

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