

Evaluation Theory, Models, & Applications by Daniel L. Stufflebeam and Anthony J. Shinkfield. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007. 736 pages. \$70

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When reviewing a text, there typically are a number of characteristics addressed that are not necessarily independent or exhaustive, but provide a focus for the review. Those characteristics considered in this review are credibility (of the authors), content, organization, and usability. Some reviewers might consider characteristics such as quality of the writing, but in this review such factors are subsumed in content, organization, and usability.

When reviewing a text, a potential user considers by whom it was written. Even a newly minted assistant professor new to the publishing game must provide a resume. Stufflebeam and Shinkfield are renowned contributors to the field of evaluation, although Stufflebeam may be a little better known because he is American. However, Shinkfield, like Stufflebeam, has extensive experience and has published widely, much of it in cooperation with Stufflebeam. Both authors are experienced theory developers and have conducted many evaluations. It would be difficult to come up with two names in evaluation with more credibility. (Scriven and Stake might be examples, approaching the same levels of credibility, but certainly not exceeding it.)

The content of the text is divided into four parts, consisting of twenty-seven chapters. These parts are:

Part One: Fundamentals of Evaluation

Part Two: An Evaluation of Evaluation Approaches and Models

Part Three: Explication and Application of Selected Evaluation Approaches

Part Four: Evaluation Tasks, Procedures and Tools and the Metaevaluation Imperative

The parts are somewhat independent, however they are underlined by what the authors call “themes.” There are six themes, which address the theoretical and practical essentials of evaluation. The themes provide an excellent unifying base for “tying together” the parts and the chapters within parts.

Part Four is the longest part (nine chapters), which it should be. Evaluators will have a tendency to go to Part Four, because this part covers the “nuts and bolts” of conducting evaluations. Some users may be surprised by the

emphasis on metaevaluation and the process of conducting appropriate metaevaluations.

The content certainly is appropriate for the intended audiences of the text. The comprehensiveness of topics is outstanding. The documentation is extensive. Of course, every possible evaluation publication cannot be included, but the documentation here is more than adequate. It supports the content, but it does not imply that a student, for example, is required to read all the sources documented.

The content contains many examples of actual evaluations. The majority of these tend toward education, but this is not a deficiency. A lot of evaluations of educational projects have been conducted, and there are numerous common factors of evaluations across disciplines. Evaluators in other areas, such as health care, readily will be able to make the transfer of principles and methods to their own areas. The extensive use and variety of examples are especially commendable.

It might be argued that organization is part of content, and indeed it is, but for a text it is especially important. The book's organization is logical, beginning with fundamentals and continuing through applications (methods). Although the content is not sequential for understanding, as for example, the content of a statistics text, it does follow a logical sequence. The numerous chapters divide the content so that it is easily accessible. The organization of topics within chapters eliminates confusion and focuses the topic being addressed. There is no "see-sawing" of topics, that is, going back and forth with the same topic that initially had not been covered adequately.

Consider usability. Receiving high marks on content and organization should go a long way toward enhancing usability. This is true, and appropriate content and good organization are prerequisites for usability. The authors identify two major uses for the text: as a text for evaluation courses and as a handbook. Consider first its use as a text.

The authors suggest that the content is adequate for two-semester courses, essentially an academic year of study. An instructor has options as to topics covered. Any first course should cover Part One. However, if only one course were offered, an instructor could make selections from Parts Two and Three and include commonly used methods from Part Four. Also, it would be important to cover metaevaluation, its rationale, and procedures.

If a two-course sequence is offered, the initial course could concentrate on Parts Two and Three more than for a single course. The second course could then concentrate heavily on Part Four. For any arrangement, instructors and students would want to be exposed to Part Four because of its importance for practicing evaluators.

There are review questions and group exercises at the chapter ends. These enhance the book's use as a text. Unlike exercises in a statistics text or even a research methods text, questions and exercises are not quantitative, and some require quite descriptive responses. This characteristic makes providing solutions to exercises more complicated if not more difficult.

As a handbook, the text has many positive features. Because of its comprehensiveness, any topic or issue can be found. The glossary is a helpful feature, as is the detailed table of contents. Finally, the indices, so important in a handbook, are extensive.

Evaluation Theory, Models, & Applications is a major contribution to the evaluation literature. However, a few suggestions or comments apply. A little less documentation would have shortened the text and, although documentation does not deter, the amount in this text may not have been necessary. In any event, the necessity for a revised edition is a long way off.

Upon my initial renew of the table of contents, I was surprised at the small number of figures (three). There are numerous tables and exhibits, but additional figures could have been effective. The three figures are well done within

their contexts. Numerous additional figures could have been included. An example is in Chapter 27, where a figure could be used to show the steps in the process of metaevaluation. Exhibit 27.1 essentially does this, but a figure would provide a “flow-chart” view, indicating sequence and possible overlap among steps. For example, after Step 6 (collect and review pertinent available information), Step 8 (analyze and synthesize findings) might begin and additional information (Step 7) may be required. Figures also tend to break up long sections of narration, although the authors do a good job of this with headings within chapters.

The content of this text will not become obsolete. Any additional efforts might be directed toward supplementary materials, for example, a test-item bank or an instructor’s manual. Supplementary materials would apply to its use as a text.

Using the terminology of the authors, this text scores very high on both merit and worth. The text is high in quality and should serve both of its intended audiences well. The worth of the text is high because it has a combination of excellence and service addressing a need for well-done evaluations.

My reaction, upon my first examination of the text, was that “this text does for evaluation what the Campbell-Stanley chapter (1963) and the Kerlinger text (1964) did for research methods.” However, the text does not contain the occasional implied misconceptions of the Campbell-Stanley chapter and the reading is not as complicated as Kerlinger’s book (possibly because of the content).

This review has focused on characteristics of *Evaluation Theory, Models, & Applications*. For a review more focused on specific content, the reader is referred to Lois-ellin Datta (2007).

References

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