

In This Issue

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We are pleased to present the 8th issue of JMDE, and the second to appear using the Public Knowledge Project's (PKP) Open Journal System (OJS). As you may have noticed, the journal's past issues are slowly being transferred to the new system's archives and we hope to have the move completed later this year or early next year (as well as publishing HTML versions of all of the papers that have appeared in the journal). Volumes 5, 6, and 7 are currently available in these archives and 1, 2, 3, and 4 can still be found at the journal's previous URL: <http://evaluation.wmich.edu/jmde/>.

Other notable changes since the 7th issue include the move to a new and more easily recognizable and recallable domain name—the journal's new URL is <http://www.jmde.com>—as well as indexing of the journal in ERIC and several other scholarly databases. For those interested, citations to papers appearing in JMDE are now beginning to emerge in other scholarly journals such as the *American Journal of Evaluation*, *New Directions for Evaluation*, the *Evaluation Journal of Australasia*, *The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, and *Evaluation and Program Planning*, as well as on many government Web sites and in a few policy-related documents and reports (e.g., 'The Tertiary Education Committee of New Zealand report (ex)Citing research: A bibliometric analysis of New Zealand university research 1981-2005).

In this issue's editorial, E. Jane Davidson discusses some of our own habits and practices that inhibit good evaluative practice and good evaluative thinking. In particular, she focuses on

four (social) scientific barriers to good evaluation practice. First, she discusses the tendency by many of us to include models or theories in evaluations, but not using them evaluatively. Second, she presents the affinity by many evaluators to leap too quickly to measurement. Third, she discusses, in reporting evaluation results, our habit of reporting them separately by data type or source. Finally, she concludes by discussing the practice of ordering our evaluation reports like a Master's thesis (i.e., the typical APA-style introduction, method, analysis, discussion) and argues that rather than forcing clients to wade through the technical jargon that we should just get to the bottom line.

Four peer reviewed articles covering an array of important evaluation-related topics appear in this issue. First, P. Cristian Gugiu discusses the development of and conceptual framework for his work on 'Summative Confidence,' an algorithm for determining the degree of certainty (i.e., confidence) that can be given to evaluative conclusions. Second, Donald Friesner and Laura Peck present a method for identifying comparison groups for difficult-to-evaluate populations and address key threats to the internal validity of evaluation designs and ruling out plausible rival explanations for program impacts. In the third paper, Jill Chouinard and Brad Cousins review the empirical literature surrounding culturally competent evaluation in the context of conducting evaluation in Aboriginal communities. Finally, Michael Bamberger and

Howard White provide their experience- and practice-based perspective on one of evaluation's enduring issues—the use of strong evaluation designs, particularly in developing countries.

In our ongoing “Ideas to Consider” series, Michael Scriven discusses the general nature of evaluation as a cognitive process. In this brief note, he describes evaluation as one of the many so-called ‘higher order’ cognitive processes that are involved in the brain's survival activities, including, for example, extensions of basic coping processes that go into scientific and technological developments like hypothesis testing. In this section, he also discusses the question “why does an electronic journal need any money?”

We also have a special section devoted to papers on the extremely challenging and increasingly important issue of evaluating scientific research titled “Reforming the Evaluation of Research.” One of this journal's editors, Michael Scriven, and I have just completed editing a volume of *New Directions for Evaluation* with the same title that is due to appear later this year or early next year. This volume includes contributions from authors who have or are currently working in Australia, Austria, Ireland, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The three papers in this special section are a preview of, and supplement to, that volume (these papers were not included in the volume due to space limitations, not due to the quality of the papers). A fourth paper on this topic will appear in the next issue of JMDE and a related paper by myself, John Hattie, Michael Scriven, and David Hartmann is scheduled to appear in the next issue of the *American Journal of Evaluation*, in which we comparatively evaluate the national-level research evaluation systems in sixteen countries.

This issue concludes with Hellmut Eggers commentary on Michael Scriven's “Predictive Evaluation” which appeared in the 7th issue of JMDE. In his commentary, Eggers asserts that evaluators cannot foresee the future or predict

what will happen and that evaluators evaluate the past, including the most recent past, but never the future and therefore we are never in a position to conduct predictive evaluation.

On another note, the Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in Evaluation (IDPE) housed here at Western Michigan University and formerly directed by both of the editors of this journal, E. Jane Davidson from 2003-2004 and Michael Scriven from 2004-2007, had its first two graduates this past Summer (at least two more are anticipated yet this year with three to four more to follow in the Spring), myself included. Dissertation and thesis abstracts can be found at this site under “Thesis Abstracts”—and we encourage other students studying evaluation or related disciplines to submit theirs.

Finally, and if you have not already done so, we would like to encourage you to create a JMDE user account (this is not required to access or read papers appearing in the journal) so that you can be added to our list of reviewers for submissions to JMDE or submit your own. To create an account simply click on the “Register” button and follow the instructions. By registering, you can, for example, follow your submission through the peer review process. If you would rather just receive notification of new issues, simply register under the “Register (E-Mail Notification).”