

Review of Evaluation and Program Planning, Volume 28(4)

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The latest issue of *Evaluation and Program Planning* (Volume 28, Issue 4, November 2004) features seven articles, which, like our own *Journal of Multidisciplinary Evaluation*, cover a wide diversity of subjects that stretch the boundaries of the evaluation field. These range from the practical, to the technical, and even to the atypical—such as the subject of evaluating the public policy of beer keg registration laws. Also featured are reviews of three recently published evaluation books.

In general, the published articles focus on presenting the subjects, methodology, and findings of evaluation projects undertaken by the authors. For example, the first article, “Measuring public policy: The case of beer keg registration laws” by Harwood, Silianoff, Toomey, and Wagenaar explores their efforts to examine beer keg registration laws nationwide and evaluate the regulatory methods, goals, and successes of the general category of legislation (359-367). Indeed, in all seven articles the subject matter is specific, practical, and unique—making them too

numerous and detailed to fairly summarize here. The following list of articles provides an idea of the subject matter breadth included in the latest issue.

1. “Measuring public policy: The case of beer keg registration laws” Wagenaar, C., Harwood, E. M., Silianoff, C. and Toomey, T. L. (359-367).
2. “Computer systems in addiction treatment programs: Availability and implications for program evaluation” Ducharme, L. J., Knudsen, H. K., and Roman, P. M. (368-378).
3. “Outcome measurement in homeless systems of care” Crook, W. P., Mullis, R. L., Cornille, T. A., and Mullis, A. K. (379-390).
4. Evaluating high-tech alternatives by using analytic network process with BOCR and multiactors” Erdogmus, S., Kapanoglu, M., and Koc, E. (391-399).
5. “A model of impacts of research partnerships in health and social services” Currie, M., Kang, G., Rosenbaum, P., Law, M., Kertoy, M., and Specht, J. (400-412)
6. “Using primary and secondary stakeholders to define facility-to-community transition needs for adjudicated youth with disabilities” Unruh, D. (413-422).
7. “Using survival analysis to demonstrate the effects of training on employee retention” Mattox, J. R. II. And Jinkerson, D. L. (423-430)

Readers should not be dissuaded from fully exploring the articles of this journal merely because the subject matter appears to be technically focused or outside their

area of interest. Professional evaluators looking for practical methods and lessons, as well as academics interested in methodology and theory, will find that *Evaluation and Program Planning* does provide lessons that are of value across the broad spectrum of evaluation. What really stands out as unique is the common inclusion of a “lessons learned” section or subsection in most of the articles. In it, authors discuss what was challenging about the project, what went wrong or right, and how the real process of evaluation compared to their expectations.

Finally, in the November issue three books on evaluation-related subjects are reviewed. The first book covered is “Letting them die: Why HIV/AIDS intervention programmes fail” by Catherine Campbell, which details a HIV study project conducted in South Africa. The reviewer, H. van Rooyen “highly recommends” (432) the book, particularly praising the case studies of sex workers and youth as captivating and hopeful.

The second review by Kendon J. Conrad provides an overview of M. Wilson’s book “Constructing measures: An item response modeling approach”. Conrad concludes that the book provides “state-of-the-art thinking on the theory and practice of measurement” (434) as well as being unique in promoting a hands-on approach to learning measurement by doing it—with the book going so far as to even provide a CD-ROM with software and data to replicate the examples provided by Wilson.

The third and final review, of H.F. Wolcott’s book “The art of fieldwork, 2nd edition” is far less enthusiastic than the first two literature assessments. Reviewer P. Ginsberg states that although the audience for this book appears to be the “budding doctoral level ethnographer” (435), he does “not recommend [it] as a

primary textbook.” (437). In making this conclusion, he cites Wolcott for his controversial alignment of fieldwork with art as opposed to the social sciences, as well as for at times making arguments that are weak or oversimplified. Instead, it appears that the only value of the book recognized by Ginsberg may be “as a supplement...or as a stimulus of discussion of epistemological and ethical issues” (437).

Concluding Comments

As a student of evaluation, my first reaction to *Evaluation and Program Planning* (Volume 28(4), November 2004) was that it may be too technical or focused on research-type projects to be of great interest. However, the focus on pulling out the lessons associated with topics, as well as substantial discussion of methodology and evaluation issues make the articles worthwhile, even to those with interests outside of traditional program and policy topics. Furthermore, although it is not as multidisciplinary as *JMDE*, I found it to be a nice fit that should be on the reading list of most of our readers.