

Review of The Evaluation Exchange, Volumes XI(1), XI(2), and XI(3)

Brandon W. Youker

Western Michigan University

The *Evaluation Exchange* is a free, online evaluation periodical (<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval.html>) published by the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) three or four times annually. It is aimed at addressing issues that program evaluators frequently encounter. The journal emphasizes innovative methods and approaches to evaluation, emerging trends in practice, and practical applications of evaluation theory. It is designed to serve as a medium for evaluators, program practitioners, funders, and policymakers. The journal is divided into five sections; (i) Theory & Practice; (ii) Promising Practices; (iii) Spotlight; (iv) Evaluations to Watch, and (v) Beyond Basic Training. The submissions are typically very brief (2-4 pages) and succinct. Each issue has an overarching theme or topic. The three most recent issues included *Complementary Learning* (spring 2005), *Evaluation Methodology* (summer 2005), and *Democratic Evaluation* (fall 2005).

The spring 2005 issue (Vol. XI, No. 1) was on complementary learning. Complementary learning states that children's learning and achievement can be

improved by connecting the children's school and non-school lives. The spring issue contains articles on the mechanisms through which, the authors feel, evaluators can create and sustain these linkages. In "Beyond the Classroom: Complementary Learning to Improve Achievement Outcomes," the Harvard Family Research Project introduces complementary learning as a way to improve learning outcomes without relying only on school reform. Other contributors discuss promising approaches for evaluating the existing complementary-learning practices, in terms of outcome and methodology.

The summer 2005 (Vol. XI, No. 2) issues focused on evaluation methodology, containing articles on contemporary evaluation thinking, techniques, and tools. The first article is by Mel Mark, president of the American Evaluation Association, where he discusses the role that evaluation theory plays in methodological decision-making. Additionally, this issue includes an article by Gary Henry, who makes the case for a paradigm shift in how evaluators conceptualize evaluation use and influence; and an article by Robert Boruch who discusses the role of randomized trials in defining "what works." Other papers were written to answer "how to" questions. For example how to foster strategic learning, how to find tools that assess nonprofit organizational capacity, how to select and use various outcome models, how to increase the number of evaluators of color, how to enhance multicultural competency in evaluation, and how to measure what we value so others value what we measure. The issue concludes with papers on theory of change, cluster evaluation, and retrospective pretests.

The fall 2005 edition (Vol. XI, No. 3) contains articles based on the teachings of Ernest House and his deliberative democratic evaluation. This edition also includes an article by House himself. In the first article, the author presents three theoretical

approaches to democratic evaluation. Various contributors examine different strands of democratic evaluation while emphasizing the importance of power sharing. House contributes “The Many Forms of Democratic Evaluation” where he argues that democratic evaluation calls for more ingenuity than other forms of evaluation and that as a result its methods can take many forms. In “Questions and Answers”, Jennifer Greene of the University of Illinois discusses efforts to advance the theory and practice of alternative forms of evaluation, such as qualitative, participatory, and mixed-method evaluation; she also highlights the importance of broad inclusion of the perspectives of stakeholder. In “Evaluating Evaluation Data,” McCartney and Weiss recognize public accountability, particularly regarding the conduct of flagship evaluations to maintain their scientific integrity while also serving the public good. Other contributors offer discussion on methods and tools to promote democratic evaluation, including the facilitation of dialogue, the training of researchers, the use of technology, and access to interactive information through the Internet.