

BOOK REVIEWS

edited by Darrel N Caulley

Title:	The Program Evaluation Standards: A Guide for Evaluators and Evaluation Users
Authors:	Donald B Yarbrough, Lyn M Shulha, Rodney K Hopson and Flora A. Caruthers (with oversight from the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation)
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Description of the book

This is the third edition of the Program Evaluation Standards over seen by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE). Summaries of the standards presented in previous editions are included in the appendices. The standards and the explanatory and illustrative material accompanying them are presented as a guide for evaluators and evaluation users. The JCSEE strongly recommends that evaluators and evaluation users commit themselves to evaluation practices based on these standards.

The Preface to the book summarises the processes used to develop the standards, how the authors have responded to feedback about previous editions concerning, for example, the case applications, and the most significant ways in which the third edition differs from the second.

The focus of the standards from the first edition onwards has been on evaluation of educational programs. However, over the years the standards have been generally accepted by the worldwide evaluation community as relevant to a wide range of program evaluation contexts. The Preface notes that the third edition:

provides an integrated guide for evaluating programs that foster human learning and performance across the life span. These standards apply to a wide variety of settings in which learning takes place: schools, universities, communities, governmental organisations, medical and health care organisations, the military, private sector enterprises, and nonprofit and nongovernmental organisations.

The Introduction provides additional information about the development processes and explains decisions made by the authors about use of technical terms. It also discusses the concepts of evaluation stakeholders, standards, programs and projects and what evaluation is. It gives an overview of the book and tells readers how they can contribute to, and be informed about, further developments in relation to the standards by visiting <<http://www.jcsee.org>>.

A chapter on how to apply the standards follows the Introduction. It gives advice on ways to become familiar with the standards and how both practising evaluators and evaluation users can apply the standards, including how to balance individual attributes and standards and how to use them

for evaluation accountability. The authors discuss the need to be selective about the standards sometimes according to the setting, the stage of the evaluation, and so on.

One consideration that affects the relevance of particular standards is the stage of the evaluation. As in the previous edition, this edition includes a very useful functional table that shows which standards are particularly relevant at the different stages (e.g. when: deciding whether to evaluate; negotiating and developing evaluation purposes and questions; managing the evaluation; and when communicating and reporting).

The book has five parts, with each part corresponding to a major attribute of evaluation quality: Utility, Feasibility, Propriety, Accuracy and Evaluation Accountability. The latter is new to this edition. However, some of the standards included under Accountability were previously located with one or another of the remaining four attributes.

Each of the five parts includes the following components:

- The name and a brief description of each of the standards for that attribute.
- An overview discussion about the attribute. For example, in the case of the 'Utility' attribute, the discussion:

traverses different ways of thinking about use; refers to the increasing focus on process use as distinct from use of evaluation products (reports etc.); explains the focus on an orientation to stakeholder needs; identifies challenges in implementing utility, including the need both to plan for utility and be responsive to changing circumstances; explains how the Utility standards relate to other standards; and provides an overview of the rationale for the Utility standards.

- A detailed description of a scenario for a particular evaluation that is then used as a context for exploring how each of the standards within a particular attribute (e.g. Utility) might be applied.
- A more detailed description and rationale for each standard within the attribute (e.g. Standard U1 is Evaluator Credibility within the Utility attribute). Also included is: advice on how to implement the standard, hazards in implementing the standard and application to the scenario; and a list of references relevant to that standard. At the end of the book these references are consolidated for each attribute (i.e. all references relating to Utility standards are brought together in one place and similarly for Feasibility, Propriety, Accuracy and Evaluation Accountability).

Review

Those who have purchased previous editions of the standards might ask whether they should purchase the third edition. My response would be: Definitely! Overall, there is much more useful and understandable information about each standard than in previous editions. This edition is a goldmine of information about good evaluation practice that would be useful for evaluators at all levels, from beginners to advanced. It reflects changing and expanding

evaluation practices that are now recognised as good practice.

While discussing general considerations concerning technical issues, understandably and appropriately the book does not give a lot of technical detail (e.g. about different types of evaluation designs and their strengths and weaknesses). It is not an alternative to a textbook and purchasers would be disappointed if they expected a textbook on how to do evaluation. However, it provides many references for suitable texts as they apply to particular standards.

The standards and their accompanying material are presented in a way that would be understandable and useful not just for evaluators but also for evaluation users who may wish to apply the standards both in planning and conducting an evaluation and undertaking or commissioning a meta-evaluation. Case applications through scenarios bring the standards alive. The functional table showing which standards are relevant at various stages of planning and conducting an evaluation provides a useful way to engage with the standards.

Although it is helpful to have an overall understanding of the full set of standards from the commencement of an evaluation, users can hold off delving into the detail of particular standards until the time and need arises. This will make the process of engaging with the standards much more feasible than trying to read and absorb the standards cover to cover. As in previous editions, the 'ready reckoner' lists of standards on the inside covers of the book and at the beginning of each part make the standards accessible for those who simply want to revisit the general concepts without all the detail.

The inclusion of the scenarios and the explanatory material for each of the standards would make the book an excellent resource for those teaching evaluation. Teachers of evaluators could discuss the scenario responses presented

in the book and explore with students alternative approaches that might have been adopted for the scenario. This would enable an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches in relation to the standard in question and a discussion of how different approaches might promote or detract from the achievement of other standards (e.g. how the response to a particular Utility standard might affect how well a particular Feasibility standard could be met).

In most cases, the presentation of responses to the scenarios stops short of saying how well the responses did, or did not, meet the standard and why or why not. Generally, it is self-evident how the standard has been applied in the scenario and what some of the challenges were in applying it. However, as a reader and as a means of reinforcing learning I would have liked a summary statement about this at the end of the scenario response. A brief discussion of alternative responses could also have been provided, but providing too much information might have detracted from its usefulness as a teaching resource.

Given that a generation of evaluators has been exposed to the second edition of the standards, I would have found it useful if the book had made a more direct attempt to cross-reference the new standards with the previous set, standard by standard. In many cases, the names have changed slightly but the description has stayed largely the same or slightly modified. The order in which similar standards are presented has changed and this makes it more onerous for users of past versions of the standards to cross-reference the two sets themselves. For example, Standard A1 (Program Documentation) in the 1994 edition is now roughly equivalent to standard A4 (Explicit Program and Context Descriptions) in the third edition.

However, some new standards have been included that do not appear to have an equivalent in

the previous set and it appears that some standards included in the previous edition have either been removed or edited beyond obvious recognition. It is not within the scope of my review to comment on the additions, removals and changes to the standards.

Many people have been involved in the process of coming up with the current set (which have been field tested) and it would be presumptuous of me to comment on their conclusions. However, I would have found it helpful if the book had identified which new standards had been added and which standards had been removed and why. This is not really an issue for those who are not familiar with the previous editions.

The introductory section comments that various technical terms are used that may not be familiar to all stakeholders and gives examples: 'randomized field trial, quasi-experiment, ethnography, process use, instrumental use, program theory, service delivery and institutional review standards'. The book has a generally useful glossary but unfortunately, of the above technical terms, the only one included in the glossary is 'randomized field trial'. Recognised definitions for quasi-experiment, ethnography, program theory, and so on exist and should also have been included. It is possible that other technical terms were also used in the book but do not appear in the glossary. In my view, the inclusion in the glossary of a simple definition of a common term such as 'ethnography' would have been far more useful than the definition of an 'escrow agent'. The lack of definitions of the above important terms reduces the usefulness of the glossary and potentially reduces the usefulness of the book for non-evaluator users of evaluation. However, the sample of scenarios that I read are generally explained in ways that would be familiar to non-evaluators without having to know the technical terms, and

this may overcome some of the inadequacies of the glossary.

The book places considerable emphasis on evaluation stakeholders and gives a list of different types of stakeholders in the introduction (e.g. sponsors, clients, evaluators, evaluation users, evaluation participants). I was disappointed not to see any direct reference in this list to intended program beneficiaries and others that might be affected by the processes, results and impacts of an evaluation (including those beyond the program who might, for example, suffer collateral damage as a result of decisions made on the strength of an evaluation). The interests of these types of stakeholders are clearly addressed by various standards (e.g. Propriety standard P3, concerning human rights and respect), and themes relating to such issues as inclusiveness and cultural sensitivity run through many of the standards. However, it is strange that these were not included in the list of evaluation stakeholders at the beginning of the book.

The authors present the standards as heuristic rather than as technical standards. They are open for discussion and the exact ways in which they will be applied will differ. The authors comment that evaluators and evaluation users can agree contractually to be guided by the standards. It seems to me inevitable that different people (different evaluators, evaluators compared with evaluation users) will apply the standards differently: there will be different interpretations of how, and to what degree, the standards should be met; some stakeholders will focus more on individual standards and some on the collective of standards. It would have been helpful in the section on how to apply the standards to have included some advice on how to conduct constructive discussions between, for example, evaluators and evaluation users, the sorts of conflicts that might arise and some ideas for resolving them.

The authors emphasise the importance of achieving a good

balance among the various standards, noting that there will be trade-offs. Throughout the book as the authors discuss one standard and how to implement it, they helpfully cross-reference with other standards that may be relevant or affected by decisions made in relation to the standard under discussion. A previous edition included a caveat that appears to have been excluded from the most recent edition: namely, that while it is important to recognise the need to be selective about the application of standards, there should be no compromises when it comes to applying standards that relate to Propriety. It would be helpful to understand the discussions that occurred that led to the apparent removal of this caveat.

The authors are from the United States and Canada and most of the consultation and development processes occurred in the United States and Canada. Inevitably, some standards will be more appropriate in the context of North America than in Australasia. It is beyond the scope of this review to identify what some of those differences in appropriateness might be. Moreover, arguably there would be as many differences across different contexts within the United States and Canada as there would be between that region and our own. Reinforcing the authors' advice: the standards are heuristics and should be treated as guidelines rather than as technical directives.

The four scenarios that are presented in detail are: an evaluation of a community health and wellbeing program for Utility standards and for Evaluation Accountability standards; an evaluation of a school district for Feasibility standards; an evaluation of a community participation, empowerment and leadership program for Propriety standards; and an evaluation of a professional development of teachers program for Accuracy standards. Readers who work in other contexts such as environmental engineering (as distinct from behaviour change in

relation to the environment), in medical treatment or in delivery of aid in developing countries may wish to see examples that are more relevant to them. Although the principles are generally transferrable, including those relating to cultural sensitivity, the absence of relevant examples puts more onus on the reader working in other fields to make the translation. Perhaps the fourth edition will expand its horizons more directly to a wider range of evaluation contexts.

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Title:	The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research
Editors:	Norman K Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln
Publisher/year:	Sage, Los Angeles, fourth edition, 2011
Extent/type:	766 pages, hardback
Price:	\$A169/\$NZ258 from Footprint Books which offers a 15% discount to AES members, phone +61 2 9997 3973, email <info@footprint.com.au>, website <http://www.footprint.com.au> for the latest prices
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We no longer just write culture. We perform culture. We have many different forms of qualitative inquiry today. We have multiple criteria for evaluating our work ... It is a new day for our generation. We have drawn our line in the sand and we may redraw it. But we stand firmly behind the belief that critical qualitative inquiry inspired by the sociological imagination can make the world a better place. (Denzin & Lincoln 2011, p. xi)

As in previous editions (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, 2005), this fourth edition contains both familiar and new works. As noted on the back cover, there are 26 new chapters, with 16 chapters retained from the previous edition that have been substantially revised. There are 42 chapters divided into the following six sections:

- Part 1: Locating the Field
- Part 2: Paradigms and Perspectives in Contention
- Part 3: Strategies of Inquiry
- Part 4: Methods of Collecting

and Analyzing Empirical Materials

- Part 5: The Art and Practices of Interpretation, Evaluation, and Representation
- Part 6: The Future of Qualitative Research.

The format is a welcome change from the great doorstops published in 2000 (blue) and 2005 (brown). This latest edition is red and slim, although nudging towards folio size. It's 766 pages long, while the 2005 third edition had 1209 pages.

As Lincoln and Denzin point out in the Epilogue, qualitative research is 'far more nuanced, sophisticated, and sensitive than it was even 20 years ago' (p. 715), and this edition goes a long way to demonstrate the complexities involved in contemporary qualitative research. This book successfully distils current knowledge and interest in this field and serves as a powerful introduction as well as a provocative and affirming text for those familiar with qualitative inquiry. Political and

social concerns are reflected in research practices, and this book takes up issues of social justice, the scientific 'backlash' seen particularly in the United States, where the politically motivated 'evidence-based' requirements are inextricably linked with the No Child Left Behind legislation. It also addresses the rise in popularity of mixed methods research and continues to include a broad range of interpretive approaches and forms of representation.

The book begins by historically locating qualitative inquiry and then considers the traditions of social and educational research, followed by ethics, politics and critical social science. In the second section, the major historical and contemporary paradigms that now impact on qualitative research have been identified. The significant chapter on paradigms formerly written by Guba and Lincoln (2000, 2005) has been much improved in this edition and is now authored by Lincoln, Lyneham and Guba

and is entitled 'Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions and Emerging Confluences, Revisited'. It remains an important text, but is now more accessible, and I consider it essential reading for those new to research. Following this chapter are specific interpretive perspectives, including a new and welcome chapter by Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg that focuses on critical pedagogy and qualitative research, using the bricolage metaphor in a sophisticated way. There are also chapters here on queer theory, Asian epistemologies, transformative disability research and feminist interpretations.

Part 3 focuses on specific strategies of inquiry and includes discussion about research funding as well as two chapters on mixed methods approaches. Social justice is a noticeable thread throughout many of this handbook's chapters. The fourth section seems familiar with its chapters on narrative research, performance ethnography, arts-based inquiry and focus groups. A focus on social justice and 'the critical' is found throughout.

The fifth section takes up the political dimensions with comprehensive chapters by Harry Torrance and Norm Denzin. Both have written on these issues elsewhere, but bring together coherent and helpful chapters. But my favourite chapter so far is the beautifully written 'Post Qualitative Research: The Critique and Coming After' by Elizabeth Adams St Pierre. She begins by discussing whether the 'post' of her chapter heading is too late or too soon, and notes that 'qualitative research is still under a deliberate, naïve, and crude attack as it has been since the beginning of the 21st century'. And she outlines the political context, particularly that in North America, that has impacted significantly and negatively on

educational and qualitative research. One of the most appealing features of this chapter is the author's assertion about the importance of reading and studying theory. She also points to the importance of philosophy as preparation for the study of research methodology, particularly in order to understand the importance of the epistemological and the ontological.

While 43 of the authors and both editors are from the United States, the remaining 18 authors come from the UK, Canada, the Netherlands, India, New Zealand and Scandinavia. Julianne Cheek is the only Australian author, but her affiliation these days is Norwegian. And although the cover of this new edition features young Asian women dancing in traditional dress, this perspective is missing, apart from James H Liu's chapter, 'Asian Epistemologies and Contemporary Social Psychological Research'.

As with previous editions of the Handbook, researchers need to own a copy of this book. Anyone teaching research methods also needs to be familiar with this book as well as earlier versions. As with previous editions, there is something for everyone, and the editors continue to undertake this mammoth task to produce such a valuable volume every five years. I miss some of the classic chapters, such as Laurel Richardson's (2000) 'Writing: A Method of Inquiry' and Carolyn Ellis and Art Bochner's (2000) 'Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject', and feel concern that newcomers may not be pointed to these classic chapters. Nevertheless, I understand the editorial constraints of revision and the need to update, but worry about throwing the baby out with the bathwater, in this pursuit of the new.

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Title:	The SAGE Handbook of Case-based Methods
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The editors begin the book with the statement 'Science studies cases'. The purpose of this collection of 32 chapters is to present an account of case methods in their range and variety of application. The turn to the case represents a fundamental break with a tradition of explanation that has dominated the physical sciences, been understood (although not without challenge) as representing a model for the biological sciences, and has been much contested in the social sciences.

In contrast to the constructivist-interpretivist approach to evaluation and research methodology that has dominated methodology in Australasia, the approach of the book is the elucidation of causes that extend beyond the unique specific instance. In other words, science should have generalising claims and explanation of social phenomena by revealing the causal mechanisms that produce them. The editors write:

It is important to be able to develop an understanding of causation that goes beyond the unique instance—the object of ideographic inquiry. However, it is just as important to be able to specify the limits of that generalisation. We cannot establish universal laws in the social sciences. There is no valid nomothetic project. We hope to demonstrate here that case-based methods help us both to elucidate causation and to specify the range of applicability of our account of causal mechanisms. (pp. 1–2)

The purpose of the book is to present the methods that can be employed by case-based

researchers and evaluators, certainly in such a way to enable people to employ them in practice, but also as a foundation for a practical social science that gets beyond the dichotomies of qualitative/quantitative – explanation/interpretation. Use is made of a synthesis of complexity theory and critical realism. They reject causal modelling based on the correlation or relationship between variables. They do not reject quantitative measurement but they reject the separations of qualitative work from the investigation of causes.

The tools used include: the numerical taxonomy techniques of cluster analysis; the configurational approaches developed on the basis of Boolean algebra by Ragin (one of the co-editors) and others; the potential of neural networks in social research; and the availability of computer-based methods, which is usually miscalled 'qualitative analysis' (although there are analytic components) but would be better described as 'systematically structured qualitative interpretation'. All these are important for case-based work and are dealt with in the book. Classification and comparison are central to any case-based method that attempts any sort of generalisation. The comparative method in different forms is central to case-based understanding.

The intention of the editors was to assemble the chapters to cover three interrelated domains of knowledge: (1) the methodological status of case-based methods; (2) the sets of techniques that can be deployed in case-based investigation; and (3) actual examples of the use

of methods in the fields and disciplines that constitute the territory of the social sciences, both in the academy and applied in practice.

There are five chapters in Part One of the book titled 'The Methodological Context of Case-based Methods'. These five chapters engage with the way in which contemporary social science handles causality. These pieces develop a set of overlapping themes that include: the historical development of causal reasoning in social explanation; the resonances among complexity theory, critical realism and configurational approaches to identifying complex and contingent causes; and the ways in which method, methodology and meta-theoretical reasoning about the nature of the world and how it may be known to interact with each other in forming the character of science (note the apologetic confining of this to the social sciences).

Part Two is titled 'Methods and Techniques of Case-based Research.' Part Two begins with a subset of four chapters that addresses the range of issues associated with classification. The four chapters combine in varying degrees the outlining of methods for classifying with methodologically focused discussions of just what we are doing when we classify and how classification shapes our ways of understanding. The editors write:

Two explicitly developed accounts emerge here. One is essentially a classification located repetition of the ontological position which are common to the chapters in Part One. The other represents

the major coherent rival to the concern with causality that underpins that style and draws on actor-network theory (ANT). ANT represents the most sophisticated version of a conventionalist account of the nature of scientific knowledge and moreover, one that is firmly grounded in careful consideration of scientific practices themselves. (p. 8)

The second subset of Part Two comprises a set of five chapters that deal in different ways with quantitative, and especially configurational, ways. These contain elements of technical discussion and demonstration, but are primarily concerned with the underlying logic of explanation and inform configurational techniques.

The final subset of Part Two has five chapters dealing with qualitative approaches to case-based research. The editors state:

What these chapters demonstrate is that the issues of explanation transcend the false and—let it be bluntly said now—really rather silly false dichotomy between

quantitative and qualitative approaches to understanding the social world. (p. 8)

Part Three titled ‘Case-based Methods in Disciplines and Fields’ contains 11 chapters. There is constant engagement with methodological issues. The areas covered in these chapters include historical accounts, political science, organisational studies, economics, medicine as both medical practice and biomedical science, health policy, development studies, cultural studies, and the general deployment of case method in applied social research as understood by applied social researchers and evaluators. The focus of these chapters is on how methods can be understood and used, with the argument often illustrated by a specific empirical example or examples of research, explanation and interpretation in the discipline or field. The Handbook concludes with an overview of the themes emerging in it by co-editor Ragin.

I found the book a difficult read, mainly because it dealt with ideas and methods that

I was not familiar with, for example complexity theory and configurational ways of analysis. However, Part Three was useful as it gave examples of the use of case-based methods. In its breadth the Handbook is most impressive. If you want a book that is at the cutting edge of methodology this is it.

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The Program Evaluation Standards book. Read 3 reviews from the world's largest community for readers. With oversight from the Joint Committee on Standard...
Goodreads helps you keep track of books you want to read. Start by marking "The Program Evaluation Standards: A Guide for Evaluators and Evaluation Users" as Want to Read: Want to Read savingâ€¦
Want to Read. The Program Evaluation Standards: A Guide for Evaluators and Evaluation Users. Donald B. Yarbrough, Lyn M. Shulha, Rodney K. Hopson, & Flora A. Caruthers. Publication Date: 2010.
Description: With oversight from the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, Yarbrough, Schulha, Hopson, and Caruthers have revised and illustrated this new edition of the Program Evaluation Standards. These thirty standards support the core attributes of evaluation quality: utility, feasibility, propriety, accuracy, and accountability, and provide guidance to anyone interested in planning, implementing, or using program evaluations. The book is an invaluable resource for practicing evaluators, students, evaluation users, and clients.