



**HARVARD FAMILY
RESEARCH PROJECT**

THE EVALUATION EXCHANGE:

Emerging Strategies in Evaluating Child and Family Services

Volume III, Number 1 1997

Free Quarterly Newsletter

From The Director's Desk

*Heather B. Weiss
Director, HFRP*

For those of us whose life-blood is evaluation, keeping up with the "latest and greatest" methodologies can be difficult. Since evaluation gained recognition as a discipline in the 1970s, the field has developed in response to both our growing knowledge as well as changes in the programs and policies that we seek to learn about.

We have come a long way from the experimental models that first guided our work. Since that time, we have developed approaches that have enabled us to look at programs more holistically, that incorporate participants in the design and conduct of studies, and that even help to build self-evaluative capacity. We have learned

how to study large-scale categorical programs as well as more complex and integrated community-based ones. We have expanded the quantitative methods we use and have drawn from the disciplines of anthropology and sociology to gain new insights for qualitative research.

We first launched the *Evaluation Exchange* as a forum to help evaluation practitioners and others to share new ideas and experiences in evaluating systems reform and comprehensive child and family services. Over the past three years, we have highlighted work in the areas of family support, school-linked services, results-based accountability, and community-based initiatives. While evaluation methodology has been an undercurrent in all our issues, in this first issue for 1997, we focus more explicitly on this topic. In our "Theory and Practice" section, we focus on a particularly contentious issue in evaluation – that of mixing methods. Jennifer Greene, who has worked extensively in this area, sets forth a new framework for mixing evaluative approaches that promises to move us beyond the discussions of paradigms that have mired us in controversy in the past. In "Promising Practices," HFRP researcher Julia Coffman reminds us that ideas outside our discipline also have relevance for us, among them that of "learning organizations," which has come to be used frequently in the private sector. Included in this article are citations for a number of publications about this important and growing field. In "Questions and Answers," Robert Yin, author of *Case study research and Applications of case study research*, answers some of our questions about applying case study methodology to the

evaluation of comprehensive and collaborative community-based initiatives. As our field evolves, particularly with the focus on accountability these days, management information has become an important aspect of evaluation and program practice. In our "Spotlight" section, Susan Blank of the Foundation for Child Development presents some of her observations from a recent study she conducted of MIS development and use in community-based agencies. In our last issue of the *Evaluation Exchange*, we discussed the struggle that many community-based organizations face in trying to evaluate client experience with comprehensive rather than categorical programs. Our

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“Evaluations to Watch” section features Maurice Lim Miller, who discusses an evaluation instrument for self-sufficiency that he developed and is using in San Francisco. Finally, while an exhaustive list of new books and publications on evaluation methodology would fill several newsletters, we have included a few in our “New and Noteworthy” section.

In the current climate of shrinking public resources and a generally cynical view of government programs, policymakers and program practitioners will continue to look to evaluators for insights about what works. And we will be challenged to refine our craft such that we can continue to make a contribution.

In closing, I would like to introduce our new *Evaluation Exchange* team: Ann Hannum, our new co-editor and publications coordinator; Karen Horsch, our co-editor and evaluation research specialist; and Caroline Schaefer, our research assistant. ♦

Call for Resumes

The Harvard Family Research Project anticipates openings for talented senior- and junior-level professionals with experience and training in evaluation and policy related to child and family services. These professionals will play a vital role in HFRP's mission to build the family support field's capacity for evaluation and documentation, and to generate information that will result in better services for children and families.

The positions will involve research on family support initiatives and evaluations. Individuals must demonstrate a knowledge of evaluation/research planning and management, qualitative and quantitative methods and analysis, technical assistance, and outcomes measurement. They must have superior communication, coordination, analytic, and writing skills. Technical assistance in evaluation, writing policy reports, and assisting in grant proposal development may be required.

For anticipated senior-level openings, Ph.D. in relevant field (e.g. social sciences, human services, government, public health) required, with approximately 5 years related experience. For anticipated junior-level openings, M.A. required, with approximately 1-3 years experience.

If you are interested, please send a resume/cover letter to (no phone, fax, or e-mail replies please):

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THEORY AND PRACTICE

Advancing Mixed-Method Evaluation

Evaluation theory and practice today are characteristically pluralistic, embracing diverse perspectives, methods, data, and values within and across studies, toward the generation of more insightful and meaningful evaluative claims. Yet traditionally, mixed-method work has concentrated on the technical level, focusing on combining qualitative and quantitative methods within one evaluation study. This article strengthens the promise of pluralistic evaluation by advancing an enhanced conceptual framework that extends beyond the technical level for planning and implementing mixed-method evaluation studies.

When planning an effective and defensible mixed-method evaluation design, one must consider three levels: the political level, which includes the purpose and role of evaluation; the paradigm level, which incorporates assumptions about the social world and our ability to know it; and the technical level, which represents discrete methods and procedures for gathering and analyzing data. It is at the paradigm level where the greatest controversy over mixing methods arises. Paradigms serve as the philosophical “anchor” of social inquiry, providing the framework within which are grounded assumptions about knowledge, our social world, and our role as evaluators in it. These include, for example, assumptions regarding the objectivity or subjectivity of knowledge claims and the realism or relativism of our social worlds.

The current mixed-method conversation consists primarily of three stances on the sensibility of mixing paradigms while mixing methods in evaluative inquiry: (1) the *purist* stance, whose adherents argue against the sensibility of mixing paradigms; (2) the *pragmatic* stance, in which paradigms are viewed as useful conceptual constructions but of little value in guiding practice, and in which methodological decisions should be made to maximize contextual responsiveness; and (3) the *dialectic* stance, in which paradigms are viewed as important frameworks for

inquiry practice, and the inevitable tensions invoked by juxtaposing different paradigms are viewed as potentially generating more complete, more insightful, even more revisioned or transformed evaluative understandings.

Past discussions about mixing methods demonstrate clearly that focusing on the philosophical differences between evaluation approaches mires us in controversy. If we as evaluators wish to maximize the possibilities in intentionally using multiple methodologies, we must shift the mixed-method conversation away from a preoccupation with explicit assumptive differences among paradigms and toward other characteristics of social inquiry traditions. This is not to say that philosophical underpinnings should be eschewed; indeed, each paradigm offers a meaningful and legitimate way of knowing and understanding. Rather, the argument here is for a middle ground and a balance between philosophy and methodology, between paradigms and practice. There is a need to focus on characteristics that define the different inquiry traditions and therefore warrant our attention and respect, but also that are not logically irreconcilable when juxtaposed with contrasting characteristics.

One such characteristic is that of *knowledge claims* generated by different traditions. For example, concepts such as closeness and distance, particularity and generality, and meaning and causality are characteristically advanced by the traditions of interpretivism and postpositivism, respectively, and are not necessarily logically incompatible. A mixed-method design combining these two traditions would strive for knowledge claims that are grounded in the lives of the participants studied and that also have some generality to other participants and other contexts; that enhance understanding of both the unusual and the typical case; that isolate factors of particular significance while also integrating the whole; and that are full of emic meaning at the same time that they offer causal connections of broader significance. Such a study pro-

duces results that are potentially more useful and relevant.

An alternative set of characteristics that may productively advance the mixed-method conversation are the *different values and interests* advanced by different methodological traditions. For example, postpositivism characteristically advances values of efficiency and utilitarianism; interpretivism characteristically promotes values of diversity and community. A mixed-method approach would focus on the value-based and action-oriented dimensions of each of the different inquiry traditions and become the grounds on which methods and analysis decisions were made. An evaluation focusing on these areas represents a greater plurality of interests, voices, and perspectives, and offers a potentially more constructive dialogue among different evaluation traditions.

Two design alternatives that may effectively combine the critical features of different traditions are component and integrated designs. In component designs, the different methods remain discrete throughout the inquiry, so that the combining of methods is conducted at the level of interpretation and inference. Three specific examples of component designs that build directly from earlier work on mixed-method purposes are triangulation, complementarity, and expansion. Triangulation has typically entailed the use of different methods, each with offsetting biases, to assess a given phenomenon. However, this same logic can be applied to inquirer bias, bias of substantive theory, and bias of inquiry context. Complementarity designs are those in which results from one method-type are enhanced or clarified by results from another method-type, both within a single inquiry framework and across different inquiry frameworks. Expansion designs rely on different inquiry frameworks and methods for different inquiry components and bring them together in a side-by-side fashion.

Integrated mixed-method designs at-

tain greater integration of the different method types during the inquiry and analytic processes. Examples of such designs include iterative, embedded or nested, holistic, and transformative designs. Iterative designs are characterized by a dynamic and ongoing interplay over time among the different methodologies. Methods are employed in multiple iterations such that findings and interpretations are developed at increasing levels of sophistication. Embedded designs join one methodology within a different methodology – for example, an ethnographic study within a quasi-experimental framework. In holistic integration, there is a simultaneity of the mix of methods which offers a synthesis of perspectives, of understandings and insights reached, and of study results and conclusions. The transforming design takes into consideration the value-based and action-oriented dimensions of the different inquiry traditions and emphasizes the plurality of interests. By in-

fusing values and political dimensions into the evaluative inquiry, these designs are intentionally pluralistic.

Discussions and debates about assumptive differences among evaluative paradigms will continue. Each paradigm offers a meaningful and legitimate way of knowing and understanding and

orients us in the world of inquiry, but each is also limited. The challenge for us as evaluators is to make methods choices that are philosophically defensible and, at the same time, contextually practical and responsive. Mixed methods have the potential of enabling us to understand more fully, to generate insights that are deeper and broader, and to develop important knowledge claims that respect a wider range of interests and perspectives. They offer significant potential in enabling us to understand better the complex social phenomena which we now face. ♦

Jennifer C. Greene
Associate Professor,
Cornell University

The challenge...
is to make methods
choices that are philo-
sophically defensible
and, at the same time,
contextually practical
and responsive.

This article is adapted with permission from an upcoming issue of New Directions for Evaluation, by Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, to be published in July 1997. The issue focuses on mixed-method design in evaluation and will include articles on parameters for making methods decisions, analyses of mixed methods studies, discussions of paradigms, and examples of mixed-method designs. For more information or to order, call (800) 956-7739.

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Interview with Robert K. Yin

Robert K. Yin is President of COSMOS Corporation, an evaluation research firm based in Bethesda, Maryland. Dr. Yin's extensive publications on case study methodology include *Case study research* and *Applications of case study research*. COSMOS is currently using case study methodology in three of four of its evaluations of community-based collaborative initiatives. We asked Dr. Yin to share with us some of his insights about the use of case study methodology in evaluating such initiatives.

(1) How can case study methodology be used to study the effectiveness of comprehensive and collaborative community-based initiatives?

As evaluators of program effectiveness, we are often faced with the challenge of identifying why and how interventions lead to observed results or outcomes. Case study methodology, by investigating phenomena in their real-life context, can be a very important tool in opening the "black box" of how interventions and program effectiveness are linked. This is an advantage over traditional experimental and quasi-experimental designs which may measure outcomes and some process variables but fall short in dealing with the dynamic that is inherent in community-based collaborative initiatives.

Our case study work uses a tool called the "logic model." The logic model outlines the cause and effect steps that link interventions with expected outcomes. It thus lays out the mystery of the "black box" as a set of linkages and hypotheses about how a collaborative really works. These hypotheses can then be "tested" using both quantitative and qualitative data.

The logic model concept is not new, as it was first used in evaluability assessment. However, we are using this approach to address one of the perennial challenges evaluators face – determining causality. We use the logic model also to help us identify conflicting models, or rival hypotheses, to use the traditional evaluation term. In traditional evaluation designs, comparison and control groups are used to establish causality. In community-based initiatives, however, it is virtually impossible to identify com-

parisons, much less control groups. We use the logic model to help us identify alternative hypotheses about both processes and outcomes and collect data on these as well. We recognize that this approach does not lead to results having the same level of certainty as the perfect experiment, but it can help us to begin to pick things apart and understand what is going on in these very complex initiatives.

(2) What role can the case study evaluator play in providing formative input to community-based initiatives?

The logic model, as we apply it, facilitates a participatory approach. We believe everyone's practice is based on a theory about how things work. The logic model enables practitioners to get these theories, as well as rivals, out in the open. Such an approach may reveal that a theory is flawed, that there are gaps in interventions and what they are expected to yield. This exercise thus helps to build a better theoretical model. We use evaluation workshops and include the evaluators, project director, and staff in the development of the model. We find as well that this process serves an important program development function. This process enables us to refine the theories as we learn more about them and can also make evaluation a better experience.

While there might be concerns about the objectivity of results that come from a more participatory evaluation, I think that there is an increasing yielding of the idea of the distant third-party evaluator. However, the participatory approach should not be seen as corrupting the evaluator's role. Although the evaluator interacts more with those involved in a program, he/she is committed to collect all relevant data and make conclusions on that basis. The participation of others in the process early on helps them to understand that in this case, the evaluator plays both a program development and an assessment role. In many cases, we find that practitioners are surprised that those who are typically viewed as third-party evaluators can play an important role in providing ongoing feedback.

(3) What are the methodological issues one needs to consider when using case study

methodology to examine community-based initiatives in multiple sites?

The important aspect of these evaluations is the role of the rival hypotheses. If you don't think about the alternative hypotheses that might explain what you are seeing, it won't work. The articulation of rival hypotheses, as discussed earlier, helps to improve the validity of the evaluation.

One also needs multiple evidence. There are many sources of evidence that can be used for evaluation, including surveys, archival data, and observations. One needs to use these in a converging manner and be able to understand and address their various strengths and weaknesses.

In evaluating multiple sites, the issue that frequently comes up is whether one or several case studies need to be conducted. I believe that one can test theories with a single case. One well-known use of a single case to test three theories is Graham Allison's analysis of the Cuban Missile crisis (*Essence of decision*).

Multiple cases strengthen single-case results. One has to understand that in case study design we are talking about small numbers; two cases rather than one strengthen the results greatly, while six cases rather than two strengthen the results manifold. One way to use multiple case design is to find sites that operate under different hypotheses in reaching the same goal. For example, if there are three theories – A,B,C – about different interventions to reduce violence in the community, we might choose Site 1 because it is addressing the goal primarily using Theory A; we might choose Site 2 because it is primarily using an approach based on Theory B; etc. By collecting data on all three interventions at all three sites, we should begin to understand the contributions of the different interventions. Such a design, while difficult to implement, does help us to begin to get at the challenge of causality. ♦

Karen Horsch
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Research Assistant, HFRP

Building the Capacity to Build Capacity

The role of the evaluator is once again expanding. It is expanding beyond a recent focus on increasing participation and collaboration during the evaluation process, to helping programs develop the capacity to evaluate and improve themselves – that is, to become *learning organizations*.

The concepts of developing learning organizations and building organizational capacity originated in the fields of private sector business and management. They define a learning organization as one that assumes that learning is an ongoing and creative process and one that continuously develops in response to the needs of its customers and employees. It is an organization that institutionalizes process and outcome measures, and uses its members to identify plausible avenues for improvement (*see text box*).

Evaluators are well-equipped to facilitate the development of learning organizations. A sizable knowledge gap exists among evaluators, however, in understanding how a learning organization works, identifying ways to build capacity, and

defining the role of the evaluator in facilitating this process. This gap is widened by the fact that much of what is known about learning organizations comes from private sector examples, rather than public sector or non-profit organizations and programs. Thus, while it is easy to see how creating a program that embraces evaluation and uses evaluation results for programmatic decision making is conceptually in line with the evaluation discipline, the pathway to achieving this goal is less discernible.

This is the first in a series of *Evaluation Exchange* articles designed to build an ongoing dialogue among evaluators about their role

in developing learning organizations. The initial step in this process is to define the concept further by identifying common qualities among learning organizations. In addition, this step examines these qualities in a context familiar to evaluators – service programs – and then articulates the need for their development. Future articles will identify specific methods that programs can use to become learning organizations, and the part that evaluators can play in this process.

Evaluators are well-equipped to facilitate the development of learning organizations.

placed the same emphasis on constantly exploring the link between process and outcomes. For many years, programs emphasized outcomes and put most of their resources into measuring results. More recently, programs have begun to emphasize process and to measure various facets of service delivery. Less emphasis, however, has been placed on examining the cause and effect relationship between the way services are delivered and the eventual outcomes achieved.

Learning Organizations Recognize the Importance of the Individual.

Learning organizations recognize that employees are ultimately responsible for the organization's success, and therefore find ways to inspire and reward good performance. Their human resource management systems use practices such as performance-based accountability, feedback, incentives, and rewards to achieve high productivity. The idea is that employees are responsible for their own performance and for producing results. Part of this responsibility includes identifying ways to measure, evaluate, and improve performance. Organizational rewards are then directly linked to employees' ability to demonstrate positive results.

While service programs recognize the importance of staff in delivering services, they typically do not hold individuals directly accountable for achieving program outcomes. The current national trend toward results-based accountability (*see Evaluation Exchange* Volume II, Numbers 1 and 3) demonstrates a movement toward holding agencies and programs accountable for results, but does not demonstrate the same movement for individuals within those agencies. While arguably, it does not make sense to hold individuals responsible for broad program outcomes, it does make sense to hold them accountable for playing a part in achieving such outcomes. Individuals can define goals and objectives for themselves that are directly in line with the broader program vision, and measure

A Learning Organization

- Increases its capacity to produce desired and continuous results
- Assumes learning and evaluation are ongoing and creative processes
- Develops, adapts, and transforms in response to changing needs and conditions
- Practices generative learning (which includes expanding capabilities) in addition to adaptive learning (reactive)
- Recognizes the need for all members and stakeholders to participate in the learning process
- Employs a motivated workforce

Learning Organizations Emphasize the Link Between Process Quality and Outcomes.

It is no mystery that the process used to manufacture a product has much to do with the quality of that product. Similarly, the way in which a program delivers services has much to do with the strength of its outcomes. Learning organizations emphasize the link between process and outcome, and therefore incorporate mechanisms for constantly improving process quality in their efforts to secure better outcomes. These organizations are able to anticipate, implement, and institutionalize process change.

Service programs traditionally have not

their progress in meeting these objectives. In this way, individuals become accountable for furthering the progress toward broader program goals.

Like profit-seeking organizations, service programs must constantly accommodate change to maintain "profitability." Successful organizations possess the ability constantly to think, analyze, evaluate, and adapt to changing conditions. Currently, however, few programs possess the qualities common to learning organizations. Many are familiar with the idea of evaluation, but few are familiar with self-evaluation. As a result, few possess the capacity to implement learning activities such as process quality measures and performance-based feedback or incentives.

Evaluators, who are familiar with the concepts that form the core principles of learning organizations – measuring performance and outcomes, collecting data, analyzing findings, interpreting results, and developing recommendations for change – can facilitate the development of this capacity. Thus, in addition to their roles as researchers, instructors, observers, interpreters, advisors, facilitators, conveners, analysts, theorists, and even sometimes therapists, evaluators can look forward to facing the further challenge of becoming capacity-builders. ♦

Julia Coffman
Research Specialist, HFRP

Further Reading:

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BEYOND BASIC TRAINING

Canadian Social Services Senior Managers Forum

How does a nation design a framework for developing human service goals, measuring progress, and holding citizens and public programs accountable for achieving progress? How can a nation accommodate federal and regional perspectives in such a framework? How can a human services framework address employment, training, child care, and disability issues alike? The Social Services Senior Managers Forum in Alberta Canada, November 24-27, 1996, addressed these important issues.

The attendees of the management training – whose roles are comparable to those of federal and state deputy secretaries in the United States – listened to international and national speakers, held round table discussions, and broke into small groups to develop an accountability framework that could be used for all of Canada as well as for individual provinces. In Canada, the federal Department of Human Resource Development and each provincial department of social services have begun the development of individual frameworks. The November meeting determined the common elements among these plans and developed a comprehensive framework.

Attendees and presenters at the training left with an understanding of the current strengths and limitations of results-based accountability frameworks. They began the development of a framework that will be used throughout Canada. Following are highlights of the information presented and discussed:

- The governments of Canada, the United States, Great Britain, and Australia are increasingly focusing on the results of publicly funded programs. This changing context creates new pressures for managers of public programs. Many believe that demonstrating to the public the results of programs paid for by their tax dollars will create a climate of civic engagement. This civic engagement is an important benefit of a results-based accountability effort.

- Developing a results-based accountability framework involves political as well as technical and resource challenges. It is important to engage politicians, program managers, and citizens in the process of developing a successful and adoptable framework. By engaging individuals who represent different perspectives, the process of developing a results-based accountability framework can build champions who will help sustain the effort.

- Although process and context measures have inherent weaknesses, they are important to include in a results-based accountability framework. While it is important to focus on goals and hold programs accountable for results, it is necessary to keep in mind the limits of a public manager's authority. For example, public managers cannot be held accountable for changing economic contexts, and doing so will only garner ill will on the part of citizens and those working in government. It is therefore important to consider significant context variables, such as changing economic conditions, when developing a human services results-based accountability framework.

- Developing a system that generates information that is of use to program managers is an essential component of a results-based accountability effort if it is to reach its potential of creating an environment of learning. Merely reporting indicator data will not necessarily lead to program improvements. Evaluation data should be used to understand why changes occur. It is also important that this information be available to managers so they can make better decisions. ♦

Diane Schilder
Project Manager, HFRP

For further information on this conference, please contact Alice Leung, Alberta Family and Social Services, Centre West, 10035-108 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, T5J3E1. (403) 427-3641.

Summer Training:

The Evaluators' Institute

The Evaluators' Institute will be held at the Georgetown University Conference Center in Washington, D.C., from July 14-19. Courses include program evaluation, mixed-method evaluations, controlled field experiments, performance measurement, faculty evaluation, applied sampling, cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis, mail and self-administered surveys, coping with difficult measurement problems, optimizing use of research and evaluation in policy-making, and getting the most from small studies. Courses range in price from \$350 to \$995; group discounts are available. Deadline for course registration and payment is June 16, 1997. Those interested should contact The Evaluators' Institute, 401 E. Jefferson Street, Suite 205, Rockville, MD 20850. (301) 251-7712. e-mail: evalinst@phoenixpp.com ♦

Summer Survey Institute at the University of Michigan

The Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research will offer graduate-level courses in two consecutive four-week sessions, June 2 - June 27 and June 30 - July 25, 1997. Several one-week workshops also will be offered. The Summer Institute is a training program in survey research techniques conducted by the staff of the Survey Research Center and other survey research specialists. Course topics include an introduction to survey research, questionnaire design, cognition and survey measurement, survey data collection methods, sampling methods, analysis of survey data, and analysis of event history data. Course and instructor descriptions are available on the Institute's Web page: <http://www.isr.umich.edu/src/si/> To receive a brochure, contact James M. Lepkowski, Director, Summer Institute Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1248. (313) 764-6595. e-mail: summer@isr.umich.edu ♦

EVALUATIONS TO WATCH

Asian Neighborhood Design: A Practice-Based Anti-Poverty Analysis

People living in poverty are generally thought of as being both economically and socially apart from the mainstream and requiring "special" assistance. The assistance has often taken the form of categorical services addressing the specific needs of targeted neighborhoods or populations, delivered through a variety of public, private, and community programs. While such an approach has led to the development of some excellent programs, their special focus and relatively short duration have often failed to account for the fact that the struggle out of poverty is more of a dynamic process than a static problem.

Stable self-sufficiency is another way to view the goal of attacking poverty. Stable self-sufficiency goes beyond the traditional notions of income level that have defined those in and out of poverty: Those who are self-sufficient exhibit a number of qualities, including the ability and resources to make choices based on plans for the future rather than immediate survival. While those struggling to achieve self-sufficiency must have access to service programs, these must be interconnected and combined with a supportive family or community environment. Thus, anti-poverty work cannot be generic or categorical; rather, it is very personal and individualized.

For the past several years, Asian Neighborhood Design (A.N.D.) in San Francisco has developed and implemented an anti-poverty strategy which focuses on individual strengths and weaknesses as a means to address the challenge of self-sufficiency. The foundation of this approach has been an evaluation instrument in which the client and the case

worker work together to develop a "self-sufficiency plan" for the client.

The self-sufficiency plan is based on an assessment of seven personal and environmental indicators: income/assets; education/skills; housing/food; safety/environment; human services; relationships; and personal attributes. Underlying this approach is the belief that each person's life is a combination of strengths (assets) and weaknesses (barriers) in these areas and it is the accumulation of a critical mass of strengths which is the distinguishing feature of those who are considered self-sufficient. While those who can be considered self-sufficient may still exhibit a number of weak-

nesses, the accumulation of strengths is enough to allow these individuals to function independently.

The instrument enables the case worker to get to know the participant in much the same way as one might know a relative or close neighbor. Through a self-assessment and interviews, a profile of the client, including his or her assets and barriers, is developed. The baseline assessment would be charted much as it is for a hypothetical client, Lyn, in Figure 1. The methodology allows the client and the case worker to discuss the various interrelated issues that must be addressed in order for the client to achieve self-sufficiency.

This baseline assessment becomes the starting point for the case worker and the client to develop a personal self-sufficiency plan for the participant. This plan delineates what needs to be done to help the client to reach stable self-sufficiency. This is accomplished primarily through utilization of mainstream support systems or through special assistance based on the client's knowledge or initiative. Progress

The instrument enables the case worker to get to know the participant in much the same way as one might know a relative or close neighbor.

Self-Sufficiency Assessment

in achieving self-sufficiency is mapped on the chart at regular intervals. Figure 2 shows that after two years, Lyn has turned a number of barriers in her life into strengths.

Important, however, is the understanding that self-sufficiency is not achieved when one criterion is met. Rather, there are transitional phases. In the case of Lyn, although she has found a job and completed training, a number of factors in her life could still destabilize her. The program does not disengage from the individual until stable self-sufficiency is established.

In some cases, a client may take a number of years to develop and stabilize a critical mass of assets that will help him or her manage the risk factors that still affect his or her life. Figure 3 shows Lyn after four years. She has now secured a critical number of assets to help her to deal with the risk factors that continue to affect her life.

Unlike similar analytical instruments, the proposed methodology can be used to track progress of one individual or family over time. The method seeks to capture obvious difference in situations rather than nuances or gray areas. While not intended to be precise, the instrument breaks up overly complex life issues into seven basic elements.

A.N.D.'s work with individuals and families to develop self-sufficiency plans is one aspect of its three-pronged, interactive approach to community building and empowerment. Another aim is to develop or enhance communities of people to support one another by establishing a tradition of peer assistance and responsibility and a sense of shared success. The program encourages the establishment of "career clubs" and a credit system as well as natural cultural or religious affiliations. At the same time, the program is working with policymakers, service providers, and funders by providing recommendations to make the "system" more compatible and responsive to the needs of the clients and their self-sufficiency plans. ♦

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Executive Director, A.N.D.

For further information on this evaluation approach, please contact: Asian Neighborhood Design, 461 Bush Street, Suite 400, San Francisco, CA 94108. (415) 982-2959.

Figure 1 Baseline Assessment – Lyn

| Healthy Community | 7 Elements | Income/Assets | 1 | Education/Skills | 2 | Housing/Food | 3 | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|--|
| Major Life Issues | AFDC income inadequate; no savings | quate; no savings | High School dropout; | no skills | Substandard housing; inadequate | quate food | Apt. burglarized, family- | |
| strong, stable asset +2 | -2 high risk/crisis | | ASSETS | | | | | |
| +1 | | | | | | | | |
| -1 | | ♦ | | ♦ | | ♦ | | |
| | | | ♦ | | ♦ | | ♦ | |
| | | | BARRIERS | | | | | |

Figure 2 Two Years Later – Lyn

| Healthy Community | 7 Elements | Income/Assets | 1 | Education/Skills | 2 | Housing/Food | 3 | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------|------------------|---------------|------------------------------|---------------|--|
| Major Life Issues | Union job, beginning to save | Has G.E.D. and completed | training | Little change | Little change | Private child and healthcare | Little change | |
| strong, stable asset +2 | -2 high risk/crisis | | ASSETS | | | | | |
| +1 | ▲ | ▲ | ♦ | | ▲ | ♦ | | |
| -1 | | ♦ | | ♦ | | ♦ | | |
| | | | ♦ | | ♦ | | ♦ | |
| | | | BARRIERS | | | | | |

Figure 3 Four Years Later – Lyn (Essentially Self-Sufficient)

| Healthy Community | 7 Elements | Income/Assets | 1 | Education/Skills | 2 | Housing/Food | 3 | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|--------------------------|---|
| Major Life Issues | Still working | Taking classes | New safe apartment | Neighborhood still dangerous | dangerous | Stable benefits | New supportive relation- | |
| strong, stable asset +2 | -2 high risk/crisis | | ASSETS | | | | | ♦ |
| +1 | | ♦ | ♦ | ♦ | | ♦ | | |
| -1 | | | | | ♦ | | | |
| | | | BARRIERS | | | | | |

Making the Transition to Automation: Observations from Six Community-Based Agencies

It took months for the case manager responsible for helping Head Start parents with employment to produce a draft of her first Management Information System (MIS) report. She knew that once the MIS was functional, she would have information that would help her in her work. But the report raised as many questions as it answered: Did a caseload of 36 represent all parents she had counseled or only those currently active? What was meant by “active?” Should parents be considered part of the caseload if interaction with her was brief and informal? When was a parent’s success in finding a job an outcome that would have happened anyway and when was it counted as a credit to the project?

The challenges of developing a new MIS are examined in an upcoming report by the Foundation for Child Development (FCD) on six “two-generation” service projects operated by community-based agencies. The report grows out of an FCD grantmaking initiative that provided modest support to the agencies to help families gain access to two complementary sets of services: employment and training help for parents, and developmental services like high quality child care for children. During the grant period, each agency was undergoing a transition to automated record keeping. Following are three conclusions from the FCD report:

Management information systems can provide important benefits to community-based multi-service projects. The Head Start case manager eventually reached resolution on questions raised by her draft report. The exercise of clarifying definitions and identifying specific questions – routine for researchers but unfamiliar to many grassroots agencies – was a first step in helping the project gather information on family characteristics, staff-family contacts, number of job and child care placements, etc. An added benefit was that the exercise revealed

key underlying questions for the project: What do our “services to families” consist of? What is a meaningful level of participation? What is “success”? Paper recording might have suggested such questions as well, but technology brought them into sharp focus.

The gains of implementing an MIS are often hard won. At the outset of their grant periods, sites expressed a willingness to set up monitoring systems to help them and the Foundation learn about project operations and whether and under what circumstances their services benefited families. Yet the first wave of sites to receive funding began by making only fitful progress, as other management tasks took priority. While FCD’s budget did not permit full-scale technical assistance to the sites, FCD did engage the services of an evaluation-information system consulting firm which provided approximately five days of assistance to each site each year, although actual time spent at some sites was much greater.

Under the technical assistance arrangement, progress varied from site to site. The two sites with the quickest progress took approximately six months to have the system installed, to become somewhat accustomed to it, and to produce the first rudimentary report. After two years, another site was using the MIS to produce reports but only with some difficulty, and the MIS was not yet being used regularly as a management tool.

Planners should take into account the many factors that can affect MIS progress at community-based agencies. At the agencies examined in this report, physical conditions such as old wiring and inconvenient locations for scarce PCs obstructed progress. Learning and using the MIS was time consuming. For example, at the Head Start site, early logs showed the case manager was spending about 30 percent of her week on MIS-related tasks. The lack of continuous on-

site technical assistance also delayed progress. The fact that, at the outset, consulting help was not available to the first wave of sites seemed to make a difference; the two sites where technical assistance coincided with start-up proceeded more smoothly.

Installing a system that not only produces monitoring data but also helps with routine tasks like generating mailing labels provides an incentive to make the transition to automation. This, however, is probably less important to success than the more intangible quality of commitment. To overcome the very real obstacles that undermine staff enthusiasm for MIS work – competing demands on time, discomfort with technology, density and obscurity of early MIS reports – managers had to sustain belief in the power of automated tracking to help them understand their interventions. At the Head Start site, this belief was instrumental in getting the project to a point where it could generate reports that let the site director speak with considerable confidence about parents’ progress and the role of the case manager in this process. For family programs that provide the difficult-to-quantify services associated with case management and that must stretch resources to make room for MIS work, the level of effort required to achieve this kind of clarity is formidable. But, in a political climate marked by skepticism about the value of such services, the need to invest in this work can only grow. ♦

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The complete report on which this article is based, Theory meets practice: A report on six small-scale two-generation service projects, will be available from FCD later this year. For information, please contact: Foundation for Child Development, 345 East 46th Street, New York, NY, 10017. (212) 697-3150.

We regret that we cannot provide copies of the materials listed below. If you are interested in obtaining any of these resources, please contact the publisher or authoring organization directly.

Bartunek, Jean M. & Louis, Meryl R. (1996). *Insider/outsider team research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

In their consideration of insider/outsider research, the authors explore the relationships that external researchers develop with people who work within the setting that is the focus of study. After describing how to conduct such research, the authors map the process of insider/outsider collaboration through a comprehensive case example. They then examine the practical and ethical challenges which may arise when conducting insider/outsider team research and conclude by contemplating implications for the quality of knowledge gained from such research.

Chelimsky, Eleanor & Shadish, William R. (Eds.). (1997). *Evaluation for the 21st century: A resource book.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Evaluators from around the world explore the evolution and future of evaluation. Sections include a recent history of evaluation; auditing and evaluation; performance measurement and evaluation; international evaluation; new topics for evaluation; current methodologies; and the purpose of evaluation.

Denzin, Norman K. (1996). *Interpretive ethnography: Ethnographic practices for the 21st century.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

The author examines ethnography in a postmodern and multinational age. He argues that postmodern ethnography is the moral discourse of the contemporary world and that ethnographers can and should explore new sorts of experiential texts — such as performance-based text, literary journalism, and narratives of the self — to form a new ethics of inquiry.

Heron, John. (1996). *Cooperative inquiry: Research into the human condition.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

This guidebook offers strategies for implementing inquiry groups and presents three key methods for approaching group development. It introduces different forms of cooperative inquiry, principal kinds of inquiry development, phases of the inquiry cycle, as well as topics related to its use. The guide also provides an exhaustive, theoretical background on cooperative inquiry.

International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). *Participatory learning and action.*

This series is designed to enable practitioners of participatory methodologies to share their field experiences, conceptual reflections, and methodological innovations. (This informal series is published three times a year; subscription \$25 /year. 3 Endsleigh Street, London. e-mail: iiedagri@gn.apc.org).

Narayan, Deepa. (1996). *Toward participatory research. (World Bank Technical Paper No. 307).* Washington, DC: The World Bank.

This practical guide discusses the principles underlying participatory techniques, insights gained from the use of such techniques in the field, best practices for designing and implementing these methods, and actual participatory activities and checklists. While the findings draw primarily from the water and sanitation sector, they are proving applicable in other sectors and settings as well.

Narayan, Deepa & Srinivasan, Lyra. (1994). *Participatory development tool kit: Materials to facilitate community empowerment.* Washington, DC: World Bank.

Based on training experience in 20 developing countries, this tool kit has been developed to assist trainers, practitioners, and others to incorporate participatory processes and methods into their programs. The tool kit includes visual materials, activity envelopes for participants, and a guidebook which assist in the generation of locally-based program information.

Stringer, Ernest T. (1996). *Action research: A handbook for practitioners.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

After explaining community-based action research in terms of qualitative methodology, the author presents clear, comprehensive strategies for conducting action research. Advancing a concise, three-tier approach, Stringer recommends that practitioners simply look, think, and act in order to resolve issues and problems within their communities. In addition, the author discusses the legitimacy of action research as well as its function in the future.

Trochim, William M.K. & Campbell, Donald T. (In press). *The regression point displacement design for evaluating community-based pilot programs and demonstration projects.*

The Regression Point Displacement Design is a pre-test/post-test quasi-experimental design that usually involves a single treated group and multiple control groups. This design appears to have potential, especially for assessing the impact of pilot programs and demonstration projects. The validity issues and statistical analysis for this design are described. Several real and hypothetical examples are presented. [Note: The draft of the paper can be accessed on the Internet at <http://trochim.human.cornell.edu/research/rpd/rpd.htm>] ♦

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Corrections

In our last issue (Vol. II, Number 4) we incorrectly identified the funder of the John Heinz Neighborhood Development Program (NDP) Grantees' Technical Assistance as the Heinz Endowments (page 10). The funder is not the Heinz Endowments but the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. We also incorrectly identified the telephone number for the Harvard Project on Schooling & Children (page 16). The correct number is (617) 495-3266. We regret the errors.

Achieving and Measuring Results: Lessons from HFRP's Parenting Study

In this era of increased accountability, family support and parenting programs are under pressure to demonstrate their results. Programs must look to and build on the lessons from the past three decades of research and evaluation in order to increase their chances of success and survival. Their results will determine their future.

In a forthcoming sourcebook on family support programs which focus on improving parenting, the Harvard Family Research Project reflects on what is known about family support and parenting programs from the field's history of research and evaluation. We lay out what can be done to meet demands for accountability in terms of program and evaluation practice.

Based on in-depth analysis of 30 programs profiled in the study, we make twelve recommendations about program and evaluation elements. These recommendations can be used for future decisions about programs that aim to improve parenting or support good parenting practices.

- **Develop services that focus on and seek to modify parent-child interactions.** An emphasis on parent-child interactions is called for since good parent-child interactions lead to better developmental outcomes for children.
- **Tailor services to meet the needs of unique regional, cultural, and ethnic groups.** Our nation is composed of diverse communities with equally diverse values and needs. Programs should match their designs to these needs without sacrificing important core attributes of interventions.
- **Start interventions early and acknowledge the potential need for a continuity of services.** It is easier to prevent the negative effects of poor parenting than it is to reverse them, so early intervention is recommended. The availability of supports and services in the later years is also important.
- **Have reasonable expectations about the time commitment required of families and providers.** Time expectations for program participation must fit with other demands on families and providers. Alternate service arrangements may be necessary.

- **Recognize that factors in parents' social and cultural context have an impact on parenting.** Programs must think about ways to address variables outside of their purview that can have a negative impact on families.

- **Work with other providers to form a system of efficient and comprehensive services.** Families need access to a variety of services to sustain their ability to be good parents. Family support and parenting programs alone cannot provide all of these services; they must work with other providers to develop systems of services for families.

- **Use evaluation strategies that reflect and support the field's move toward more comprehensive initiatives.** Traditional evaluation methods are not sufficient to assess complex and comprehensive initiatives.

- **Examine child and parent outcomes and needs longitudinally.** It is important that program results be examined over time to demonstrate long-term program success and to assess periodically the needs of parents and children.

- **Choose measures that reflect intended program outcomes.** As the pressure to prove results increases, programs must be confident that their measures are a good reflection of their progress and are applicable to the populations they serve.

- **Examine the relation between parent and child outcomes.** Programs that are interested in changing parenting to affect child development should examine the relationship between changes in parent outcomes and changes in child outcomes to demonstrate that they have achieved their goal.

- **Establish mutually beneficial relationships between evaluators, providers, and child development researchers.** Collaborative relationships are necessary to ensure that evaluation results are useful and used.

- **Consider using cost-effectiveness analyses as a method for measuring and reporting program results.** These analyses determine the effectiveness of a program in terms of program costs. They provide valuable decision-making criteria for policymakers and providers.

The recommendations and detailed program profiles will be included in the forthcoming sourcebook. ♦

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Immediate Job Opening

Project Manager, Building Capacity for Family/School Partnerships (Three-Year Project)

Harvard Family Research Project is seeking a talented senior professional with strong organizational and managerial skills to manage the new Building Capacity for Family/School Partnerships project. The Project Manager will supervise a 5-7 member team which is responsible for providing technical assistance to national organizations to support their efforts to build capacity for replicable and sustainable family/school partnerships. The Manager will be responsible for conceptualizing, organizing, and facilitating annual meetings/workshops with organizations; helping to build an organizational learning network; conducting documentation site visits/needs assessments; disseminating new knowledge; related duties. Some travel is required.

Experience/Skills: M.A. in educational administration/policy required, with a minimum of 5-7 years related experience. Strong technical assistance and management skills, workshop facilitation experience, familiarity with qualitative/applied research, and superior interpersonal, organizational, and writing skills required. Knowledge of organizational development/leadership in the non-profit sector is required. Experience with schools/ school administration and culturally diverse populations is helpful.

Salary/Benefits: This full-time position is grant funded through 12/31/97 with strong possibility of continuation through 12/31/99. Minimum hiring salary is \$42,700.

To Apply: Send resume/cover letter immediately to Susan G. Riegler, Human Resources, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 118 Longfellow Hall, Appian Way, Cambridge, MA, 02138. In your cover letter, please note that the job requisition number is 74771. No phone calls, faxes, or Internet replies please.

ELECTRONIC MAILBOX

Consider joining one of the following LISTSERVs, or electronic discussion groups, as a way to contribute to the dialogue surrounding your research and evaluation interests.

EVALTALK: An American Evaluation Association (AEA) Listserv

EVALTALK is a medium for open discussions about evaluation issues. Subscribers include a diverse and renowned range of evaluation professionals. Although sponsored by the AEA, the list is open to anyone. To subscribe, send an e-mail to LISTSERV@UA1VM.UA.EDU with the message SUBSCRIBE EVALTALK YourFirstName YourLastName.

AERA, ERL-L, etc.: American Educational Research Association (AERA) Listservs

The AERA offers several listservs, including two general lists (AERA and ERL-L), twelve division lists, one graduate student list, and several Special Interest Group

lists. To choose one that interests you, see the AERA Web site at <http://www.ed.asu.edu/aera>. To subscribe, send an e-mail to LISTSERV@ASU.EDU with the message SUBSCRIBE LISTSERVNAME YourFirstName YourLastName.

APPSOC: A Society for Applied Sociology Listserv

The Society for Applied Sociology is an international organization of professionals that apply sociological knowledge in a wide variety of settings. To subscribe, send an e-mail to MAJORDOMO@INDIANA.EDU with the message SUBSCRIBE APPSOC YourFirstName YourLastName.

EMPOWERMENT-EVALUATION: A Collaborative, Participative, and Empowerment Evaluation Listserv

This listserv grew out of the American Evaluation Association's Collaborative, Participatory, and Empowerment Evaluation (CPEE) Topical Interest

Group (TIG). It is an excellent opportunity to share experiences in this new evaluation domain. To subscribe, send an e-mail to MAJORDOMO@LISTS.STANFORD.EDU with the message SUBSCRIBE EMPOWERMENT-EVALUATION@lists.stanford.edu

GOVTEVAL: A Public Sector Evaluation Listserv

This list is for evaluators of government programs, as well as others interested in public sector evaluation. It is based at the National Institute of Public Administration, Malaysia, on a joint basis and in close cooperation with the Program for Public Sector Evaluation, Royal Melbourne Institute of Public Administration, Australia. To subscribe, send an e-mail to LISTSERV@JARING.MY with the message SUBSCRIBE GOVTEVAL YourFirstName YourLastName. ♦

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