



Evaluation Policy and Evaluation Practice: New Directions for Evaluation 123, Fall 2009

Edited by William M. K. Trochim, Melvin M. Mark and Leslie J. Cooksy, 2009, New Directions for Evaluation, No. 123, Jossey-Bass, 128 pages, \$29, ISBN: 978-0470556924



Are you doing a good job? Are your clients getting better as a result of your interventions? Is society getting a significant return on its investment in your work?

More important, can you prove it?

Evaluation Policy and Evaluation Practice is designed to help you answer exactly those kinds of questions. The book is part of the New Directions for Evaluation series, published quarterly by Jossey-Bass in conjunction with the American Evaluation Association (AEA). For the record, William M. K. Trochim is director of the Office for Research Evaluation at Cornell University; Melvin M. Mark is head of the Department of Psychology at Pennsylvania State University; and Leslie J. Cooksy is a faculty member at the University of Delaware and president of AEA.

The relatively concise volume is composed of seven chapters written by various experts in the field of evaluation. Whereas most of the book is written in a distinctly American voice, it was refreshing to find that two of the chapters examine evaluation policy in the European Union and the Netherlands. The inclusion of international perspectives serves to give the ideas presented a much more universal appeal.

As the editors observe in the initial chapter, "There is not a single, generalizable answer to the question of

how evaluation policy is set." The editors then proceed to discuss the implications of this reality in terms of how a variety of different stakeholders conceptualize evaluation.

During the past two decades, a discernible shift has taken place in most disciplines toward "evidenced-based" practices. In the United States, for example, the federal government has accentuated empirical verification as a primary criterion in evaluating research proposals in the social sciences and education. Applications that do not include an evaluation component grounded in scientific research typically are not funded. This change has had a profound impact on fields such as mental health counseling, which has not historically engaged in or even valued this kind of external validation.

Along these lines, Trochim notes that "President Obama has pledged to review all government programs to identify those that work and those that don't, and to make vital programs work better than they do now." It is no longer acceptable to engage in strategies or techniques that, on the basis of the perceptions of those engaged in the practices, just "seem to work." The anecdotal documentation typically offered as "evidence" of their success is no longer adequate as a justification for their continued use.

In a particularly engaging chapter on the role of evaluation policy in government programs, Eleanor Chelimsky describes three levels of political pressure that have a direct influence on precipitating the need for a more definitive framework from which to operate. These levels are "cross-branch politics," which encompasses the almost constant tension between the executive and legislative branches, the "bureaucratic climate" that exists within any given agency or department and the "dominant professional culture" that

tends to characterize the unit. Chelimsky does an exemplary job of clarifying the rivalries and resentments that often arise as an inevitable consequence of these pressures. Her discussion affords the reader some very interesting insights into how evaluation policy is often translated into evaluation practice.

It should be noted that Chelimsky has the credentials to speak authoritatively about her subject matter. For 14 years, she oversaw a division of the Government Accountability Office that was responsible for conducting formal evaluations for Congress in a number of different areas. She had a staff of about 100 social scientists at her disposal. If nothing else, she reminds us that even so-called empirical studies are still subject to the prejudices inherently associated with human preferences and biases.

Toward the end of the book, the editors argue convincingly that "the development of sound evaluation policy may be especially important in a context of the economic uncertainties." This is a nontrivial point that is hardly controversial. As our efforts to address societal problems are increasingly constrained by fiscal realities, evaluation will take on an even greater significance. Those who are unable to substantiate that their efforts are making a difference in a precise and verifiable way will eventually find themselves with decreasing resources.

Evaluation Policy and Evaluation Practice is an excellent resource for counselors attempting to establish the efficacy of a particular therapeutic approach. The implications are unambiguous; this is a dimension of professional practice that will continue to expand in scope and priority.

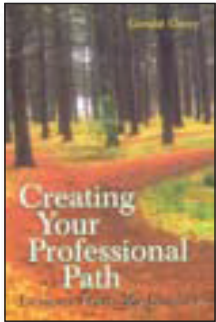
As Trochim, Mark and Cooksy point out, we all need to become more comfortable with the notion of constant evaluation. It must be seamlessly integrated into every aspect of what we

do. Their book serves as the perfect guide for this process.

Reviewed by Aaron W. Hughey, professor of counseling and student affairs, Western Kentucky University.

Creating Your Professional Path: Lessons From My Journey

By Gerald Corey, 2010, American Counseling Association, 232 pages, \$19.95 (ACA members); \$24.95 (nonmembers), Order #72899, ISBN: 978-1-55620-309-1



Professional development is the overall theme of *Creating Your Professional Path: Lessons From My Journey*, making it a very useful, comprehensive resource for graduate

counseling students as well as new professionals beginning their careers as practitioners or counselor educators. With a career spanning half a century as a counselor, counselor educator, supervisor and prolific writer in the field, Gerald Corey brings tremendous credibility to the task. This text provides a theoretical framework for developing a personal approach to counseling, group work and becoming an ethical counselor, while also stressing the importance of both obtaining and becoming a mentor.

In Chapter 2, Corey explains the personal and professional aspects of being a counselor and includes some of the frustrations and challenges involved. Stories from a variety of practitioners drive home these themes.

Chapter 8 is particularly useful to doctoral-level students because it focuses on the importance of becoming a good writer. Corey details the experience of completing a dissertation, as well as preparing effective proposals for presentations at professional conferences, producing meaningful letters of recommendation and tackling articles for professional journals.

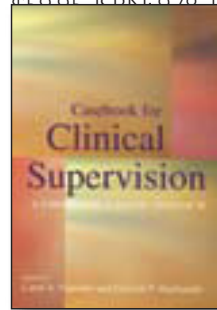
Master's-level students will find Chapters 3 and 4 particularly enlightening. Chapter 3 discusses the significance of being mentored as a new

counselor as well as the joys of learning to mentor others. Corey finds that both aspects of this crucial process provide a sense of connectedness among counselors. Chapter 4 addresses the concept of developing a personal approach to counseling. Here, Corey provides a brief overview of the major counseling theories. One of the central lessons of this book is to give yourself time to learn and discover. In reading this book, you'll be doing just that.

Reviewed by Stacey Stump, doctoral student, North Dakota State University.

Casebook for Clinical Supervision: A Competency-Based Approach

Edited by Carol A. Falender and Edward P. Shafranske, 2008, American Psychological Association, 259 pages, \$59.95, ISBN: 978-1-433803420



Providing competent clinical supervision is a daunting task for many counselors. All too often, clinical supervisors are practicing clinicians with little to no training

in clinical supervision practice. The *Casebook for Clinical*

Supervision: A Competency-Based Approach aims to help the reader conceptualize and provide supervision from a variety of approaches, including developmental, theoretically based and systemic perspectives.

Dialogues between supervisors and supervisees within the different chapters provide well-illustrated examples of the various modes of supervision in practice. The resulting blend of theory and practice provides the reader a clear vision of how to establish a supervisory relationship that results in strong clinical competence.

Consisting of 11 chapters from multiple contributors, this text offers insights on navigating varying aspects of clinical supervision, including addressing legal and ethical concerns in supervision and evaluating and enhancing supervision. Each chapter highlights a specific supervision approach while

providing the reader with tools and considerations for implementation. The text transitions smoothly from one approach to the next, providing a satisfying sampling of supervisory strategies.

Particularly fascinating to clinical supervisors will be Chapter 7, which outlines a relational approach to supervision and focuses on addressing discord in both the therapeutic and supervisory alliances. Utilizing relational methods, authors Jeremy D. Safran, J. Christopher Muran, Christopher Stevens and Michael Rothman offer a unique approach for handling ruptures or strains within a therapeutic or supervisory alliance. The chapter clearly outlines a model to implement in group supervision sessions utilizing mindfulness exercises, video and audio tapes and role-plays. It also offers suggestions for debriefing at the end of the group meeting. This well-organized chapter enables the reader to clearly conceptualize this approach, and understanding is further enhanced by a real-life example.

Although individual chapters do not provide enough information to expertly implement any one specific approach, the diverse approaches illustrated throughout the text provide a launching pad for supervisors to begin exploring which clinical supervision styles correspond best with their own beliefs, values and goals for their supervision practice. The *Casebook for Clinical Supervision* would be a valuable resource for beginning clinical supervisors and counselor educators who are working to enhance competencies in clinical supervision.

Reviewed by Amber Bach-Gorman, mental health counselor and doctoral student, North Dakota State University. ♦

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