The three full-length research articles and three practice notes of this issue of CJPE combine to provide readers with some truly innovative thinking about more and less mainstream evaluation issues. The issue is characterized by discussions of both conceptual development and transfer of practical learning.

This issue contains a fair bit of conceptual development. Elaine Hogard starts us off with a bold piece on that topic. In a goal-free evaluation mode, she pushes us to consider a particular brand of unintended consequences—perceived changes in self and identity of program recipients. This conceptual piece includes a measurement tool that offers a welcome practical element. In a departure from what we usually see, two of the practice notes are more conceptual than practical in nature. In his provocative piece, Renger argues that experimental research designs are being inappropriately used to evaluate programs. Going to the heart of the evaluation versus research debate, he seeks to clarify terminology and set evaluators straight on the purposes of their work. Poth et al.’s description of their attempts to define evaluation within the Canadian context is closely related, and it is appropriate that it precedes Renger. Together, these practice notes raise serious questions about what is and should be happening under the guise of evaluation.

Many evaluators find themselves brushing closely with Knowledge Translation and Exchange (KTE) activities. Donnelly et al. nudge forward our understanding of the relationship between these two endeavours as they tackle the question, “How can an evaluation be designed to facilitate knowledge translation?” This exploratory study holds promise for helping evaluators understand how they might contribute to the KTE enterprise, which has benefited from increasing institutionalization.

Jacob and Desautels share results of a meta-evaluation of evaluations of Aboriginal programs in the federal context. Their findings, that these evaluations are generally of high quality, lead them to speculate that the Treasury Board Secretariat Evaluation Policy “has had a definitive impact on evaluation quality.”

In a more classic practice note, Riccaro Polastro draws practical lessons from experiences with Real Time Evaluations (RTEs), defined as formative, utilization-focused evaluations that provide immediate feedback.

The book review section is rich in methodology. Readers will find helpful reviews of important recent volumes on general research design, indigenous research methodologies, and applied thematic analysis.

Robert Schwartz
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