Chapter 13 Rubin and Babbie (2008)
Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is the systematic process of providing useful information to decision makers.

There are two broad categories of evaluation

formative evaluation -- evaluation undertaken to determine the strengths and weaknesses of a program for the purposes of improving the program

summative evaluation -- evaluation undertaken to determine the worth of a program for the purpose of deciding whether or not to continue it

Program evaluation and accountability have become an integral part of the human services; managed care has created additional pressures for evaluation.

Information obtained from program evaluations are used to make decisions about the allocation of resources; **program evaluation is therefore an inherently political process**

Using in-house and/or external evaluators has advantages and disadvantages; logistical and administrative problems and promoting utilization evaluations are important issues.

There are a number of *purposes and types of program evaluations*.

- **evaluating outcome and efficiency** -- examining the outcomes that are being achieved

- **cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit** -- examining outcomes and benefits in terms of the costs

- **evaluating goal attainment** -- examining the extent to which the program has achieved its goals

- **monitoring program implementation** -- monitoring and measuring the independent variable -- is the program put into action as intended?

- **process evaluation**—identifying strengths and weaknesses of a program and recommending improvements

- **needs assessment** -- evaluation for program planning -- determining the nature and extent of a problem in a particular setting

  sources of data for needs assessments include:
  - key informants
  - community forums
  - rates under treatment
  - social indicators
  - surveys of service providers
  - surveys of community or target groups

Focus groups can be a useful process in program evaluation.

**Logic models** are graphic representations of program components that can be used as a basis for program planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Qualitative and quantitative approaches can be integrated in program evaluation.

**evaluability assessment** (not covered in Rubin and Babbie) -- is the program ready to be evaluated? three issues need to be addressed:

1. are the key concepts clearly defined?
2. are the objectives clearly defined?
3. is the program standardized?