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ASSESSING THE NEED FOR EVALUATOR CERTIFICATION

by

Steven C. Jones

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Psychology

Approved:

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

2001

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ABSTRACT

Assessing the Need for Evaluator Certification¹

by

Steven C. Jones, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2001

Major Professor: Dr. Karl White
Department: Psychology

Professional certification is arguably a means of validating a practitioner's competency within their trade. Certification can also be beneficial for enhancing a profession's prestige, improving academic programs, and helping to define the profession in question. However, certification can be considered not feasible, effective, or perhaps even necessary. Due to the likelihood of these conflicting viewpoints, it is essential for any profession to determine the support level from its members prior to implementing a certification process.

This thesis presents the results from a 1998 survey for the American Evaluation Association, whereby their members responded to items regarding the need, effectiveness, feasibility of enacting a certification system for professional evaluators. Respondents were mixed in their attitudes. A slight majority indicated a certification

¹ In addition to this thesis, the research findings were published in Jones & Worthen (1999), which can be found in Appendix A.

system could be feasible. However, more respondents were unconfident than confident that certification can be effective or is even necessary; additionally, many were undecided on these issues.

(121 pages)

DEDICATION

This milestone in my life is dedicated to my deceased father,

Robert Carroll Jones,

who gave so much to so many.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I thank Blaine R. Worthen, a highly distinguished member of the evaluation profession, for his guidance on this project. He is arguably the leading expert in the profession on the potential merits and limitations of evaluator certification. Blaine's research into this issue spans nearly three decades.

I also thank the American Evaluation Association (AEA) leadership for providing resources and support to my efforts to complete this research. Further, I thank the members of AEA, the AEA Task Force on Certification, and Utah State University who assisted in the pilot and/or participation in the survey itself. I give special acknowledgment to my committee members, Drs. Nick Eastmond, Karl White, and Blaine Worthen, for their unwavering assistance, support, and patience in this learning experience of mine.

Sincere appreciation is deserving for the following people – my assistants on this project, Kristen Fowles and Patsy Rockne, for their relief pitching; to the AEA leadership and the AEA Task Force, including chairperson Jim Altschuld of Ohio State University, for enabling me to see this project to fruition; and to my loving brother, C. Craig Jones, for his sincere assistance. Finally, to all remaining friends and family, (especially my dearest mother, Joyce A. Jones) for being so caring and supportive, thank you all!

Steven C. Jones

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Program evaluation (referred to as evaluation, hereafter) is a relatively new profession that has many functions, but whose primary purpose is to determine a program's merit or worth. More descriptively, evaluation is a means to identify, clarify, and apply defensible criteria to establish "an evaluation object's value, quality, utility, effectiveness, or significance in relation to those criteria" (Ives, Worthen, & Sanders, 1997). Although the evaluative function presumably emerged simultaneously with the onset of human thought, it emerged as an employment specialization only in the 1960s and has matured into a near profession only much more recently (Worthen, 1994, 1995). This maturation has resulted in an ongoing expansion of evaluation into new realms of possibilities including various methodological approaches, environmental contexts, and intended purposes or outcomes. This fact makes defining the parameters of evaluation as a profession challenging and the potential threat of losing its identity as a specialization (and the benefits it poses) realistic.

Two possible solutions for maintaining and further establishing the evaluation profession may be the accreditation of evaluator programs and the certification of evaluators. Accreditation validates the quality of evaluator training programs, but is not as able to provide assurances regarding the individual's skills and abilities. Metaphorically, accreditation focuses on the forest rather than the trees. Certification, on the other hand, is used as a measuring stick to ascertain an evaluator's competencies. As a result, certification is arguably a better credential that can be marketed to potential

consumers (i.e., recipients) of evaluation, and can provide them with a sense of security that they can expect professional services from the evaluator.

A certification system is a common feature found among many professions.

According to Galey (1979), professions develop certification systems to:

1. Increase the visibility of the field and the association.
2. Increase the recognition of qualified practitioners in the field.
3. Improve the performance and qualifications of the membership.
4. Enhance the prestige of the association and its members.

Coscarelli (1984) noted that certification can also help to define the profession. “The mere process of creating the certification procedures is an exercise in introspection. The time spent pondering, arguing, and compromising is valuable, for from this process emerges a clearer notion of what the field is and what it is not” (p. 22). The evaluation community could certainly benefit from such claims, but is it ready and willing?

There is debate about whether certification should be created for evaluators. For example, in the summer of 1996, 11 participants on EVALTALK, the American Evaluation Association’s (AEA) electronic bulletin board,² discussed the concept of evaluator certification. An informal assessment of the comments suggests that two participants were in favor of certification, five participants were opposed, and four participants seemed uncertain...or at least not adamant one way or the other.

In a 1985 white paper prepared by The Credentialing and Certification Subcommittee of the former Evaluation Network (one of two predecessors to AEA), the

² The certification-related dialogue took place between July 14-21, 1996.

authors concluded their summary of other professions' certification efforts by stating, "Let us as 'the new kid on the block' among the professions consider the question 'Do we really want to credential and certify our members?'" Unfortunately it does not appear that any large-scale attempts have ever been made to empirically investigate evaluation practitioners' opinions related to this question. Therefore, a study is needed to determine if the evaluation community is indeed ready and willing to embrace certifying its practitioners. Because the American Evaluation Association (AEA) is well established and perhaps most renowned among all evaluation practitioners, it is a logical population (that is also easily accessible and feasible) for making this determination.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature chapter includes defining what certification is, the benefits and limitations of certification, the history of credentialing in the evaluation profession, and the prerequisites necessary for an evaluation certification system to take place. It should be noted that the benefits and limitations cited are not all-inclusive, but rather only provided to give a feel of a thorny issue.

Definition of Certification

Galbraith and Gilley (1985) defined professional certification as “a voluntary process by which a professional association or organization measures the competencies of individual practitioners” (p. 12). Two alternative definitions that are more specific to certification of evaluation practitioners were proposed at an American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference (Ashburn, 1972; Worthen, 1972). Worthen suggested that evaluator certification is

a formal process which is used to determine an individual’s competencies (e.g., knowledge and skills) in educational evaluation and, for those who reach or exceed certain minimal levels, to issue credentials which certify that the person is competent to do evaluation work. (p. 4)

Similarly, Ashburn (1972) referred to evaluator certification as a “formalized procedure which provides the professional engaged in educational evaluation with a set of recognized credentials attesting to his training, experience, and competencies in the practice of educational evaluation” (p. 2). Although both Worthen and Ashburn are

referring specifically to certification of educational evaluators, their underlying conception of evaluator certification can be easily extended to describe certification of evaluators in general.

Even though a reasonably clear understanding of certification can be derived from these definitions, it is important to distinguish the process of certification from the related processes of accreditation and licensure. While all three processes attempt to regulate the measurement of competencies, they differ in terms of the methodology, population, and purposes of regulation. Bratton and Hildebrand (1980) summarized the differences between certification, accreditation, and licensure. According to them, certification measures competencies of individual practitioners, while accreditation is focused on the adequacy of institutional and/or instructional programs. Also, both of these processes are voluntary; institutions can function without accreditation and individuals can practice in their profession without certification. Furthermore, regulation of the two is administered either by professional associations, external agencies, or both. As for licensure, in some professions individuals cannot practice without a license. Licensure is typically a mandatory process administered by a political body with its primary purpose being to protect the public from incompetent individuals posing as practitioners. The similarity between licensure and certification is that the recipient of the credential is the individual, not the program.

Potential Benefits for an Evaluator
Certification System

There are three major potential advantages for establishing a certification system within the evaluation profession.

Benefit: Help Protect the Evaluation
Consumers

The primary purpose of certification is to protect the public. This is done by assessing the competencies that are deemed essential for a profession's practitioners (Gilley, Geis, & Seyfer, 1987). According to Coscarelli (1984), "Valid certification procedures would give an evaluator's employer or client one of the best possible estimates of a person's competence" (p. 22). Such estimates would aspire to be as free as possible of the subjectivity and imprecision that is typical in human judgment. It should be noted that while the risks associated with incompetent performance in evaluation are probably not as severe as those associated with incompetence in medicine or law, there are certainly significant economic and personal consequences associated with decisions based on evaluators' conclusions. Many important financial and/or political decisions are based on the findings of evaluations. An excerpt from Stufflebeam's (1994) remarks to a colleague's stance on empowerment evaluation nicely illustrates the point:

Many administrators caught in political conflicts over programs or needing to improve their public relations image likely would pay handsomely for such friendly, nonthreatening, empowering evaluation service. Unfortunately, there are many persons who call themselves

evaluators who would be glad to sell such service. Unhealthy alliances of this type can only delude those who engage in such pseudo evaluation practices, deceive those whom they are supposed to serve, and discredit the evaluation field as a legitimate field of professional practice. (p. 325)

Sechrest (1994) also believes “that most program evaluation currently is being done in an ad hoc way by persons with no particular training in, and perhaps not even much knowledge of, the field” (p. 359). But even those practitioners who do have some awareness of the field and truly mean well may not realize their potential weaknesses.

Former *Evaluation Practice* (*EP*) editor for six years, Midge Smith (1994) made the following observations regarding articles submitted to *EP* during her tenure:

I am worried about the quality of the product that some clients may be receiving.... Based on my last six years of reading about other evaluators' experiences, I believe that what the field of evaluation needs more than anything else is to increase the skills and competencies of those who perform evaluations. There is a field here requiring unique knowledge and skills; there are proper and improper ways of doing things; there are appropriate and inappropriate studies; and there are methodological and ethical standards for how we practice evaluation. (p. 227)

Newman and Brown (1992) also uncovered some disturbing findings. They administered a survey to a mixed sample of novice ($\underline{n} = 29$), intermediate ($\underline{n} = 57$), and experienced ($\underline{n} = 61$) evaluators to ascertain the perceived frequency and seriousness of violations of evaluation standards³ as established by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. According to the respondents, the issue of an evaluation practitioner conducting “an evaluation when he or she lacks sufficient skills or experience” was not only rated as the fourth most serious violation among the list of 30

³ An evaluation standard is “a principle commonly agreed to by experts in the conduct and use of evaluation for the measure of the value or quality of an evaluation” (Joint Committee, 1981).

provided, but was also perceived as being the fifth most frequently committed violation.

Benefit: Continuous Improvement of the Evaluation Profession

Not only would implementing a certification system provide a sense of assurance to evaluation consumers, but it would also place pressure on training programs to ensure that their curriculum encompasses the content assessed via certification. Because there are no formal curriculum guidelines⁴ to which training programs should adhere to, and because many of the faculty consider evaluation a mere second calling, Sechrest (1994) thought it “doubtful” that any guarantees of competence could be placed on recent program evaluator graduates. However as Altschuld (1999) characterizes, a certification process is not only about an exam one must pass, but it is a more holistic means for attaining professionalization of the field, involving the specification of prerequisites and training programs.

The process also helps define and distinguish the field. “The mere process of creating the certification procedures is an exercise in introspection. The time spent pondering, arguing, and compromising is valuable, for from this process emerges a clearer notion of what the field is and what it is not” (Coscarelli, 1984, p. 22).

Evaluators cannot expect the general public to understand what evaluation practice is if

⁴ Although the Joint Committee evaluation standards might appear to be suitable curriculum (and/or even certification) guidelines, “the document is written such that evaluators may use it to determine their responsibilities when conducting an evaluation...” (Newman & Brown, 1992, p. 220). These standards do not place emphasis on expected practitioner competencies (i.e., skills and abilities), but rather, they focus on expected ethical responsibilities.

practitioners wrestle with the concept themselves. If striving towards a certification process can provide clarity to the profession, then in conjunction, it could potentially result in increased, positive public recognition of the profession. Enhancing the image and credibility of the profession would undoubtedly be a plus for evaluation practitioners.

Benefit: Perceived Self-Worth of the Evaluation Professional

Certification may be advantageous to evaluators in other ways, too, such as invoking a need towards self-improvement.

Each professional has a basic responsibility to obtain and use creditable assessments of her/his competence and performance in order to be accountable for high quality services and to improve them. Such practice is the hallmark of what it means to be a professional. (Stufflebeam, 1994, p. 331)

The process would likely provide certification candidates with an incentive to improve themselves for the purpose of attaining or maintaining a certified status. One likely outgrowth of self-improvement is an individual's prestige as an evaluator. Prestige allows people to feel better about themselves. Coscarelli proclaimed, "As a means to an end, prestige allows us access to situations where we can affect change. It is nearly axiomatic that credible sources will be listened to before those judged less credible" (p. 22). Finally, along with self-improvement and prestige, certification may improve one's status in the workforce, increase his income potential, and even stabilize his job security (Gilley & Galbraith, 1986).

Potential Limitations for an Evaluator Certification System

Although evaluator certification has numerous positive implications, three primary negative consequences can also be cited.

Limitation: Potential Divisiveness of the Profession

Although well intended, certification may cause serious divisiveness among evaluation practitioners. According to Worthen (1995), around the late 1970s, “diversification, pluralism, and multiple conceptualizations of evaluation proliferated” in the profession. Morell (1990) provided further evidence that a melting pot of practitioners exists in the semblance of evaluation. He categorized the AEA membership into 14 separate disciplines, with only 6% of the members claiming evaluation as their primary discipline. In addition, he depicted the evaluation profession as “a loosely knit discipline characterized by part-time practitioners who have diverse professional needs” (p. 213). Because the field is so diverse, the task of identifying, defining, and assessing competencies for evaluators would be a major undertaking. Gilley et al. (1987) gave a vivid representation of what could be expected:

Early in the discussions, battlelines are drawn. People feel threatened (often properly so because the procedures and implications of certification have not been made explicit). It is difficult, therefore, to remain objective and conduct reasonable discussions and investigations. Options and variations are not likely to be examined when there is the threat that merely the appearance of the item on the agenda will lead to schisms among the membership. (p. 10)

Inferring from Bickman (1994), battlelines could very well be drawn between

academics and practitioners. He provided an example of how continuing demands toward professionalization was a major reason for the splintering of the American Psychological Association, leading to a rival organization, the American Psychological Society. "While it is debated whether this split is negative or positive for the field of psychology, I believe that such a division [will] not be positive for evaluation" (p. 257).

Determining who should establish the process by which to certify applicants increases the complexity. Selecting appropriate and comprehensive qualification criteria⁵ requires an awareness of the whole field of evaluation beyond that possessed by most evaluation practitioners (Gilley & Galbraith, 1986). As Patton (1990) suggested,

Current evaluation practice...is more than methods and techniques [emphasis added]. The evaluator's swag [i.e., capabilities] must include multiple and diverse methods as well as communication skills, conceptualization and program logic capabilities, consulting skills, interpersonal competence, political sophistication, knowledge of how organizations work, creativity, and verbal and written presentation skills. (p. 48)

Assessing these types of knowledge and skills could be difficult, even detrimental...assuming practitioners could even reach consensus as to the essential certification elements.

Limitation: Expenditure of Resources and Energy

A related disadvantage may be the expenditure of resources and energy necessary to develop a fair, appropriate, and acceptable certification process. Developing a

⁵ Caron's (1993) article discusses an extensive research project that identified competency elements for evaluation practitionering.

certification system can be costly. “These costs come with the recruitment and selection of qualified certification specialists, and with test construction and design, which includes reliability and validity studies, administrative costs, and maintenance costs” (Gilley & Galbraith, 1986, p. 61). It is very difficult to establish a set of criteria that are sufficiently comprehensive to separate individuals who are competent from those who are not. The establishment of such qualification criteria, which measure competency levels accurately, can be a very stringent and seemingly impossible task. In addition, often the means by which a set of criteria is measured may not be optimal. For example, paper-and-pencil tests are commonly used when some form of performance assessment might be more informative and relevant (Shrock & Foshay, 1984). This is especially true in evaluation. To illustrate, a person may correctly answer multiple-choice questions regarding how to conduct focus groups, but be ineffective in actually moderating focus groups. In short, developing a certification instrument can be expensive, wholly inadequate, or both.

Furthermore, many practitioners may perceive a sponsoring association’s effort to oversee a certification system as an act of self-protective gate keeping (Gilley et al., 1987). This is probably not the image AEA wants to portray. According to Smith (1999), gate keeping could be a catalyst to many consequences:

If tests are made too difficult or certification procedures are not wise and just, competent and deserving persons may be excluded from entering the field, and some of those already in the field may be targeted for exclusion. The result is an artificial restriction in the supply of practitioners, which could mean that the public will have to pay higher prices for evaluation services, that fewer high quality evaluations will be conducted, and that fewer young people will choose evaluation as a profession. (p. 530)

The possibility should also be considered that certification may spawn spurious lawsuits, which could be costly. Worthen (1996) claimed

there is little doubt that an AEA certification program will lead to increased liability insurance premiums and, not inconceivably, having to turn to the insurance to defray the legal costs would in turn escalate the premium costs enough to make them unaffordable to AEA or other professional associations for evaluators. (p. 5)

Furthermore, because the term “evaluation” holds different meaning according to which camp of thought one ascribes to (Newman, 1995 as cited by Smith, 1999), a good lawyer could probably make a convincing claim that a failure on a certification exam could be attributed to disagreement rather than incompetence (Scriven, 1998 as cited in Smith, 1999).

Limitation: No Guarantee of Certification's Effectiveness

Finally, the most disquieting argument against certification is that there is no guarantee that a certification system will improve the quality of the profession. It is plausible that practitioners could pass the requirements of a certification process, but fail miserably in their efforts to apply evaluation protocol...or worse yet, demonstrate a lack of personal integrity.

History of Credentialing Systems in the Evaluation Field

As of this date, the efforts to implement certification processes within the profession have been limited and have had little impact on the practice of evaluation. In

the early 1980s, a small-scale certification process was established by the Louisiana Department of Education (Triplett, 1982) and is still in effect today (Louisiana State Department of Education, 2000). Two levels of certification (or more accurately, licensure, according to the aforementioned definition) were created by the Department based on criteria of minimal education experience and training requirements, including the completion of an inservice training program. According to Triplett (1982), Louisiana is the first U.S. state to implement either a licensing or certification process. Triplett conveyed a positive message in her article about Louisiana's effort to implement a certification process. However, she dedicated a majority of her article to some of the concerns that the Louisiana Department of Education has faced regarding this process. She states, "Already we are being questioned. There are not ready answers for all of the questions and concerns that are raised" (p. 8). Triplett's statement affirms how enacting a certification process can be a major task that could potentially be problematic if it does not have the support of those for whom it is intended.

Later in the mid-1980s, the Evaluation Network, a predecessor to AEA, created the Credentialing and Certification Subcommittee. This committee was chartered with investigating if a need exists for "authenticating" (or certifying) its members. In their exploration, they considered the possibility of developing a registry system and whether evaluator authentication should be a prerequisite to inclusion on the registry. The registry system concept entails that a database would be "kept [for registered practitioners] by a central clearing house such as Evaluation Network, with standard information as to experience, type of evaluations specialized in, contract copies, all

recent evaluation reports, user reports, etc.” (Credentialing and Certification Subcommittee, 1985, p. 2). It is unclear what became of this initiative other than the position paper; however, Knott (personal communication, June 10, 1997) provided an interesting note on the American Evaluation Association’s EvalTalk listserve:

In the early days when the TIG [Topical Interest Group] for Independent Consultants was new and I chaired it for a time, I brought up this suggestion [of a registry] to be used within our own TIG. The cry of outrage at the mere thought of such a database was met with trepidation and, it seemed, abject fear. That experience puzzled me. If evaluators won’t allow their own work to be judged in a way that, to me, seems fair, what are we truly offering to our clients?

More recently, Love (1994) stated that an evaluator certification process has been instigated by the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES). According to Love, to become certified by the CES, participants must successfully complete an “Essential Skills” series of four 1-day courses termed the Essential Skills Series. The courses were (a) Understanding Program Evaluation, (b) Building an Evaluation Framework, (c) Improving Program Performance, and (d) Evaluating for Results. During the publication of Love’s summary, the CES efforts were still in piloting phase with many issues still unsettled. In an American Evaluation Association’s EvalTalk listserve post, Rowe (personal communication, July 16, 1996) stated, “As Past President of CES and as an Essential Skills instructor, I am very supportive of the initiative--but I also have strong reservations about ‘certifying’ on the basis of completing that program of four workshops and some work experience--which leads to ‘levels’ of certification.” Rowe’s statement supports the notion that evaluators will have concerns that must be carefully examined before any decisions are made by AEA regarding a certification process.

In summary, unlike many other well-established professions that have procedures for assessing the competencies of their respective members, the evaluation profession has no widely accepted method for determining the competencies of those who claim to be evaluators. Former AEA president Leonard Bickman stated on the American Evaluation Association's EvalTalk listserv:

Given that almost every professional field has a certification process where does this put evaluation? Are we smarter than others and know how difficult it is [to] do? Or are we lacking any consensus so that we wouldn't know a good evaluator if we fell over one? Certification would certainly be a direct way of assessing an evaluator's ability level. (personal communication, July 15, 1996)

Essential Prerequisites for an Evaluator

Certification System

To "promote evaluation as a profession" is one of the four elements identified in the AEA mission statement (Patton, 1990). Among the numerous professions, evaluation can be considered a relatively new one with its birth taking place during the 1960s (House, 1994; Worthen, 1994). And, "while evaluation is still a young and a small profession, the status and visibility of the field can be enhanced by a professionalization movement" (Bickman, 1994). But, has evaluation reached a point where it can and should consider certifying its members? Galey (1979) stated that "for new emerging professions, certification can be viewed as a rush for recognition and legitimization before the field has fully evolved. The result may be premature solidification of the profession's scope and the competencies of the practitioners," potentially leading to the fragmentation that Bickman (1994) had suggested. Love

(1994) commented that some events need to take place before a certification process can be considered. He stated:

Before we can seriously entertain the idea of certification for evaluators, the associations that represent the profession must demonstrate leadership by defining their expectations for the field and then working to create that future. The professional associations must have the collective will to make good on their strategic plans to strengthen the profession of evaluation and to develop standards of practice, code of ethics, and professional development programs for both new and experienced evaluators. Members of the associations, their employers and clients, and the public must all take part in this process. (p. 39)

According to Worthen (1994), many of the necessary conditions that Love mentioned have already been met. He indicated that evaluation is an important professional specialization, but that three criteria still need to be met before evaluation can arguably be considered a full-fledged profession. These are the (a) influence of evaluators' associations on preservice preparation programs for evaluators, (b) exclusion of unqualified persons from those associations,⁶ and (c) certification or licensure of evaluators. It is possible that if a certification system is ever established, then the first two criteria mentioned could eventually and naturally be met as a result. In conclusion, Worthen stated "until and unless we establish some feasible mechanism for ensuring that those who practice evaluation are competent to do so, evaluation cannot be considered a fully mature profession" (p. 10). Certification can be regarded as one possible solution.

Even if evaluation is a maturing profession that is ready for a certification

⁶ According to Gilley (1985), an attempt by a sponsoring agency (e.g., AEA) to deny nonmembers access to a certification process would be discriminating on the basis of membership status and, therefore, a violation of federal law. However, a certification process would be intended to serve essentially the same purpose that Worthen cited, in that competent evaluators could be distinguished from noncompetent evaluators.

process, it is important to determine whether evaluators would be supportive of such an effort. “Until such evidence is obtained, the future of evaluator certification will likely be determined by which of us evaluators can most persuasively present our data-free opinions and recommendations” (Worthen, 1996). Bickman (personal communication, July 15, 1996) voiced a similar belief on American Evaluation Association’s EvalTalk listserv. He stated, “Whether it is worth it [to create a certification process] will partly be determined by the volunteers who want to put their time into developing such a bureaucracy and the evaluators who want to support certification if it becomes available.” Currently, there is little information regarding evaluators’ viewpoints on the certification issue.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH INTENT

Purpose of Study

The primary purpose of this study is to establish if members of the evaluation profession perceive a need for a certification system and to assess which certification design issues/elements they would likely support. This determination is based on the data obtained from a mail survey conducted under the auspices of an AEA Certification Task Force during the summer of 1998.

Research Questions

This study is designed to answer the following research questions:

1. How favorable are evaluation practitioners toward different levels (of complexity) of certification?
2. How confident are evaluation practitioners that a certification process could be feasible?
3. How confident are evaluation practitioners that a certification process could be effective?
4. How confident are evaluation practitioners that a certification process is necessary?
5. What are evaluation practitioners' perception of benefits and limitations associated with an evaluator certification program?

6. What implementation and administrative criteria are perceived by evaluation practitioners to be important in structuring a possible evaluator certification program?

7. Are there any subgroups who noticeably differ in their responses to certification issues?⁷

⁷ Rather than specifically discussed within a devoted section, this research question is addressed periodically throughout the Results chapter as deemed appropriate.

CHAPTER IV

METHOD

Survey Design

The primary instrument used in this study was a mail-out survey (see Appendix B). The survey went through three phases of development. The initial survey development was a collaborative effort by five members of the AEA Certification Task Force. A list of research questions was generated collectively by the author, the head of the Task Force, and a distinguished member of the evaluation profession. Through several correspondences, research questions were elaborated, revised, and eventually framed into potential survey items. This preliminary draft was forwarded to the other Task Force members and the then-current AEA president for review, and changes were made accordingly. As a sidebar, concerns were raised at this point about the length of the survey and the potential effect of length on the response rate. As a result, efforts were made to eliminate apparently redundant items.

During the 1997 annual meeting of AEA, a discussion session⁸ took place regarding certification issues. Capitalizing on this opportunity, a conveniently accessible sample of 23 session attendees scrutinized a modified version of the questionnaire that was limited to the closed-ended items on the survey (Jones & Worthen, 1997).

⁸ The panel discussion was titled “Certification for Evaluators: Some Issues to Consider” and included Blaine Worthen as chairperson, Len Bickman and Molly Engle as discussants, and Steven C. Jones, Rosemary M. Lysaght, Joyce Keller, and Carol Codori as presenters.

Following revisions based on the feedback, a final round of pilot testing was conducted with four faculty and four graduate students from Utah State University who were current AEA members.

The final product was a six-page questionnaire titled “AEA Members’ Opinions Concerning Voluntary [emphasis included in original] Evaluator Certification.” In all, 16 items were used to obtain respondents’ opinions and seven items were used to focus on their relevant demographic characteristics. The survey instructions were scripted as follows: “For items #2-16, speculate that a voluntary [emphasis included in original] certification process is to be developed for evaluators. Denote the responses that best reflect your viewpoints.” With the first survey item, respondents were asked as to how many levels of certification they would favor. Included as part of the response choices, respondents could indicate that they do not favor certification. In succession, Likert-type items were used to gather respondents’ views on (a) the favorability to “grandparenting,”⁹ (b) the applicability of various criteria for awarding grandparenting, (c) the applicability of several qualification criteria for all other (nongrandparented) certification candidates, and (d) the suitability of various methods for measuring competencies required for being certified. Next, five closed-ended items were used to inquire about administrative issues for a certification system, followed by two “short-answer” items concerning respondents’ perceptions of the benefits and limitations of an

⁹ Historically referred to as “grandfathering” or “grandfather clause,” which means to exempt (one already involved in an activity or a business) from new regulations concerning that activity or business. (Source: American Heritage Dictionary, 3rd Edition)

evaluator certification process. This grouping of attitudinal and opinion questions concluded with Likert-type items concerning respondents' confidence that a certification process would be feasible, effective and necessary; and also could be successfully implemented within 5, 10, and 20 years. Lastly, respondents were queried about relevant background and demographic issues.

A cover letter (see Appendix C), printed on gold bond paper with AEA letterhead and signed by the then-AEA President and past President, was inserted inside the front cover of the survey in hopes of conveying the importance of the survey, and thus, increasing the response rate. An alternative "reminder" cover letter (see Appendix C) was included in the second mailing. Whereas the first cover letter was rather informative as to the intent and importance of the survey, the follow-up cover letter conveyed a "reminder" tone and emphasized the significance of their personal input.

The mail-out survey differed from traditional mail-out surveys in which the survey is printed on letter-size paper and mailed in an envelope with a return envelope inserted. Instead, the mail-out survey was printed in a booklet format (i.e., two 11"x17" sheets, printed front and back, saddle-stitched), folded-down to 5.5" x 8.5" and affixed shut. This format eliminated the necessity of envelopes, and also reduced the amount of paper required had the survey been printed in the common, single-sided format. Furthermore, this format enabled the recipient information, return-to-sender information, and all necessary postage to be preprinted directly onto the survey. In summary, this format was advantageous because it reduced material usage, mailing and printing costs, and administration and postal processing time.

A potential drawback of the selected approach is that it reduces the “personalization” effect found in the survey research literature, whereby surveys are presented with hand-written addresses and adhered postage stamps. However, it is speculated that this possible contributor for a reduced response rate was offset by the user-friendly appearance of the survey, and the resulting elimination of nonresponses that may exist due to recipients misplacing the customary return envelope.

Mailing address errors¹⁰ (and multiple addresses for some AEA members) found in the mailing list by the author also raised concern as to the validity of the address-list database, and consequently, its negative effect to the response rate. This validity issue was partially dealt with by cross-referencing the legitimacy of the addresses with United States Postal Service postal certification software, where a computer verifies the authenticity of the addresses. Those addresses that were not listed in the postal database were removed from the sample, thereby reducing the chance of a lowered response rate due to surveys not being received by the intended recipients. All members of the sampling pool identified as having a nonvalid address were replaced with (preselected) alternate individuals. For recipients with valid addresses, the addresses were automatically printed onto the mailpieces along with corresponding computer-generated bar codes, thus entitling the surveys to priority in postal processing (and therefore, possibly swifter delivery) over all other mail devoid of bar coding.

¹⁰ At the time that the mailing list was obtained, it was maintained by an external management agency. During the sampling process, recurring evidence of erroneous records and inadequate addresses raised serious questions about the accuracy of the AEA membership records at that time.

Survey Sampling Frame and Sample

Ideally, the target population for this study would have consisted of all those individuals who identify themselves as evaluation practitioners. However, sampling from or inferring to this target population was not possible for three reasons. First, the criteria individuals use in classifying themselves as evaluators could not be established with any degree of confidence. Second, there is tremendous diversity in the evaluation field. Possible work settings of evaluators include, but are not limited to, school systems, state agencies, federal agencies, private businesses, and nonprofit organizations. Finding all the practicing evaluators in these settings was not feasible under the constraints of this project. AEA appeared to comprise the most feasible, accessible sampling frame. Third, this was an unfunded study, except for a small subsidy approved by the AEA board of directors to pay a portion of the costs of printing and postage. Consequently, survey dissemination was restricted to AEA members of U.S. residency. Because of these sampling limitations, inferences cannot be confidently generalized outside of this accessible population. This may not be a serious limitation, however, because the data were collected with the primary intent of helping AEA leaders ascertain the feasibility of implementing and managing a certification system within U.S. confines.

Ultimately, 500 survey recipients were randomly selected from a list of approximately 1,900 AEA members who claimed U.S. residency.¹¹ The primary

¹¹ The restriction of U.S. residency is to keep the study feasible, due to high costs of international mailings; moreover, because such a small percentage of AEA members

reasoning for selecting 500 participants was due to the limited budget of the available funding. In addition, after consulting with others and perusing articles on similar studies, and also considering the topic's importance and the follow-up mailings, the researcher felt confident that the cumulative procedures would produce an approximate 50% response rate (i.e., 250 respondents). This percentage was deemed adequate, considering the nonresponse bias check described hereafter. Eventually, the sample size was reduced to 431 candidates due to nondeliverable mailings during the first mailing (also discussed in the Survey Procedures section).

Survey Procedures

The sampling frame was randomly pooled from a carefully scrutinized mailing-list database. Originally, two database lists were provided, consisting of some apparent erroneous or repeated listings, and numerous ineligible survey candidates (i.e., conflict-of-interest personnel, international and/or organization-designated members of AEA). It was not known how accurate and/or up-to-date these databases were at the time. Thus, some concern is warranted as to how representative the sample is of either the population of AEA members or the targeted sampling frame. Despite these issues, no superior alternative was apparent. The databases were merged, cleaned-up, and eventually converted into a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software file. SPSS enabled an automated and exact list of 500 recipients to be randomly selected.

are not U.S. residents, this did not significantly effect the degree to which this defined population is representative of all AEA members.

The survey was sent in early June 1998. Upon receiving the survey, recipients were instructed to unfold the survey into an 8.5" x 11" booklet that included the loosely enclosed cover letter inside the cover. After completing the survey, respondents were instructed to invert the outer fold of the survey so that the return-to-sender and preprovided postage was now exposed as the "new" outer-facing.

Of the 500 surveys mailed, 69 (or 14%) were returned as nondeliverable. This reduced the sample to 431 members. The first mail-out attempt (which coincided with the end of the academic year) produced 117 additional returns. Because of the low return rate (27% of the deliverable surveys), and because it appeared that a high percentage of members may work in academic settings, the planned second mailing (originally scheduled for an estimated three weeks later) of the questionnaire to all initial nonrespondents was postponed to correspond with the start of the following academic year. With the exception of revising the appeal within the cover letter, the questionnaire was identical for both mailings. No attempt was made to send second mailings to candidates for whom surveys were earlier designated nondeliverable by the postal service. The second mailing produced 57 returns, which accounts for one third of the total number of respondents. Cumulatively, both mailings produced a 40% ($n = 174$) return rate.

A nonresponse bias check, in the form of a phone survey, was designed to assess (a) whether the nonrespondents had received the questionnaire; (b) their educational and work background; (c) their opinions concerning the feasibility, effectiveness, and necessity of a certification process; (d) their perceived likelihood of successful

implementation of certification process in the next 5, 10, and 20 years; and (e) any additional comments they wished to provide. The phone-interview coding form (see Appendix D) and methodology for the telephone surveys was developed with the assistance of a thesis committee member, piloted, and then administered over a 3-week period with the help of a mentored research assistant. The telephone surveys were administered with the use of Utah State University department facilities and equipment.

After the two mailings were conducted, the telephone surveys were administered to 50 nonresponders. The phone respondents consisted of the first 50 of a random sample of 100 nonrespondents¹² who agreed to participate in the nonresponse bias check. Several runs through the list of selected nonresponders were necessary to complete this task.

Of nonrespondents who participated in the phone survey, 38% claimed that they had not received the survey, further raising suspicion as to the accuracy of the mailing list database. Most importantly, there were no statistically or practically significant differences between respondents and nonrespondents on most survey questions. Further discussion of how nonresponders differed from responders is included in the Results chapter.

Quantitative data from the mail respondents and participants in the nonresponse bias check were analyzed with SPSS version 7.0. Frequencies, means, standard

¹² Of the remaining 50 nonrespondents in this sample, 21 were classified as “located, but unreachable” (e.g., no answer, unreturned voicemail), 23 were “not located” (e.g., no phone number located, incorrect or disconnected phone number), five were “refusals,” and one was deceased.

deviations, correlations, cross-tabulations, and charts were computed as deemed appropriate. Qualitative data, including “short answer” responses as to the benefits and limitations, were inserted into a Microsoft Excel '95 spreadsheet. The spreadsheet methodology substantially reduced the time required to complete the difficult task of classifying, coding, and sorting the data for interpretation.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

Data were collected on respondents' primary work settings, primary evaluation settings, highest academic degree and when completed, and the percent of income-earning time devoted both to evaluation practice and consulting. These characteristics were collected not only for the purpose of understanding the backgrounds of respondents, but also to investigate how they correlate with the research questions.

Employment Background

Percentages are provided in Table 1 pertaining to respondents' primary work setting and primary evaluation setting. "Primary work setting" is concerned more with the occupational domain where one resides in general, regardless of their level of involvement in evaluation practicing. Separately, "primary evaluation setting" is targeted more specifically to the arena or context within which a respondent considers their evaluation specialty. On the surface, work setting and evaluation setting might appear similar; however, as cross-tabulations indicate (see Figure 1 in Appendix E), these two variables do tend to elicit different responses. The inclusion of these two similar, yet distinct variables is important for understanding what relationships might exist between respondents' occupational domain and evaluation specialty, and their attitudes to evaluator certification.

Table 1

Respondents' Primary Work and Evaluation Settings for the Last Three Years

Work setting ^a (<u>n</u> = 162)	%	Evaluation setting ^b (<u>n</u> = 167)	%
University/school system ^d	49	Academia	38
Federal ^e /state ^f /local agency ^g	14	Government	17
Self-employed	12	Consulting	16
Nonprofit	11	Nonprofit	0
Business	7	Business	2
Other	1	Health	4
Multiple responses	4	Multiple responses	7
Not applicable	2	Not applicable	1

^aEmployment setting. ^bArena of evaluation practitioner. ^c46%. ^d3%. ^e8%. ^f4%. ^g2%.

Interestingly, half (49%) of all respondents were employed in academia, greater than three times that of any other category of work setting. Also, academia was the predominant setting (38%) for evaluation practitioners, more than double any other category.

As shown in Table 2, there was a bimodal distribution regarding the amount of time respondents devote to evaluation practitioner. Thirty-eight percent claimed a minimal amount of their time is devoted to evaluation practice, 13% reported a moderate amount, and half (49%) reported a maximal amount. In other words, most respondents can be classified as either primarily evaluators or as devoting very little time towards

Table 2

Percent of Income-Earning Time Devoted to Evaluation Practice and Consulting Work^a

Amount of time	Evaluation practice	Consulting work
Minimal: 1/3 or less	38%	78%
Moderate: Between 1/3 and 2/3	13%	4%
Maximal: 2/3 or more	49%	18%
Total	100%	100%

^a The categories of evaluation practice and consulting work are not mutually exclusive.

evaluation work. For the 49% who spend “maximum time” as evaluation practitioners, a third (32%) of them do it primarily in a consulting capacity. As for consulting in general, 78% report a minimal amount of their time is devoted to consulting, while 4% report a moderate amount, and 18% report a maximal amount. A small, but statistically significant correlation exists between time devoted to evaluation practicing and consulting ($r = .34$, $p = .000$, $n = 159$).

Educational Background

Of the 174 respondents, the pool is predominantly comprised of highly educated people. Almost all (96%) have at least a masters degree, while nearly three fourths (73%) hold the doctorate. Of the 121 doctoral recipients, there is a fairly even distribution according to recency of completion; 35% prior to 1980, 31% during the 1980s, and 34% during (or anticipated in) the 1990s. The average year for their doctoral

completion is 1983 ($SD = 11$ years). Analysis of masters degree completion provided similar results (Average year = 1979, $SD = 10$ years).

Respondents were also asked the extent to which relevant evaluation coursework was emphasized within their academic degree program. Analysis of this item indicates there are no relevant correlations between types of coursework and the highest degree that respondents received; no correlation coefficients were larger than $r = .21$. Also, there is only one small correlation between when respondents received their highest degree and the various courses involved; only coursework in evaluation theory/models ($r = .33$) had a correlation greater than $r = .30$. A test of chi-square linearity (i.e., the part of the between groups' sum of squares that can be attributed to a linear relationship between the "coursework" dependent variable and the levels of the "decade when highest degree completed" factor variable), however, does indicate that trends exist. Also, when participants completed their degree is related statistically significantly with qualitative methodology ($\chi^2 = .001$), cost-benefit analysis ($\chi^2 = .018$), needs assessment ($\chi^2 < .001$), evaluation theory/models ($\chi^2 < .001$), evaluation research ($\chi^2 = .001$), and practicum experience ($\chi^2 = .002$). These findings suggest that evaluation-related coursework is becoming more commonplace over time.

Frequency percentages are provided in Table 3 for each evaluation course listed in the survey. The items are rank-ordered (using aggregate percent of "somewhat emphasized" and "mostly emphasized" responses) from most to least emphasis, overall. With the exception of cost-benefit analysis (37%) and practicum (49%), at least 60%

Table 3

Educational Background: Courses Offered for Academic Degree

Course	Mostly deemphasized	Somewhat deemphasized	Undecided	Somewhat emphasized	Mostly emphasized
Statistical methodology	2%	3%	1%	38%	56%
Measurement	3%	6%	6%	38%	47%
Evaluation theory/models	13%	9%	4%	38%	36%
Evaluation research	13%	11%	8%	41%	27%
Needs assessment	12%	20%	7%	43%	18%
Qualitative methodology	14%	20%	6%	39%	21%
Practicum experience	19%	23%	9%	19%	30%
Cost-benefit analysis	30%	24%	9%	30%	7%

of respondents indicated that their education (either “somewhat” or “mostly”) emphasized each of the listed evaluation-related topics.

Attitudes Toward Certification

Research question #1 pertained to evaluation practitioners preferences toward differing levels (of complexity) of certification. To address this question, respondents were asked, “Assuming that different ‘levels’ of certification could be operationally

defined by AEA members, how many levels of certification would you favor?" As shown in Table 4, 28% preferred evaluator certification not to exist. Of the 68% of respondents who did choose one of the three different types of certification systems (commonly found in other professions), nearly half (31% of the 68%) opted for a one-level system to measure core competencies. The other two options were chosen about the same; slightly more than a fourth (20% of the 68%) favor a two-level system to measure both core competencies and advanced competencies; while a fourth (17% of the 68%) favor a multiple-level system to measure not only core competencies, but also competencies within specialized evaluation domains.

Further cross-tabulations indicate that two thirds (65%) of the "no certification" respondents completed their highest degree prior to 1984, and one third (33%) completed their degree between 1984 and 1993; only 1 of 34 respondents who completed (or

Table 4

Levels of Certification Favored if Certification Were to Become a Reality

Levels of certification	%
Basic core competencies only	31
Core and advanced competencies	20
Core competencies and specialized domains	17
No certification process favored	28
Unsure	3
Other	1

anticipated completion) their degree since 1994 opted for no certification. Inferring from the data, evaluators with more experience are more likely to oppose certification.

An additional purpose for this question was to ascertain what percentage favor (and do not favor) certification. Despite many respondents selecting a certification system preference, results to a later question indicate some of these respondents believe the certification process is not necessary. In other words, some respondents apparently chose among the different certification systems from a hypothetical standpoint (as prompted) despite their likely discontentment towards evaluator certification. As a result, it turned out that the “levels of certification” question is not appropriate for inferring what proportion of AEA members favor evaluator certification (as had been intended). Instead, the data reported in Table 5 are considered more valid indicators of respondents’ attitudes toward certification, including its necessity.

Table 5

Confidence Level That a Certification Process Could Be Feasible and Effective, and Is Necessary^a

Method	Average ^b	Very unconfident	Somewhat unconfident	Undecided	Somewhat confident	Very confident
Feasible	3.1	16%	18%	14%	39%	13%
Effective	2.7	23%	23%	21%	27%	6%
Necessary	2.6	25%	22%	28%	19%	6%

^a The results in this table are based on the prompt, “...speculate that a voluntary certification process is to be developed for evaluators.” ^b On a 5-point scale, with 1 = very unconfident and 5 = very confident.

Research questions #2, 3, and 4 pertain to determining evaluation practitioners' beliefs about the necessity, effectiveness, and feasibility of a certification system. Whether evaluators' support moving forward with a certification system is likely dependent on these factors. The results are provided in Table 5 for these three beliefs, which respondents expressed in response to the questions, "How confident are you that a certification process would be feasible [also, effective and necessary]?" When asked about the necessity for a certification process, four times as many respondents indicated they are "very unconfident" (25%) compared to those who reported "very confident" (6%). A similar pattern held for the confidence level regarding the effectiveness of a certification process (23% "very unconfident" vs. 6% "very confident"). This disparity is not evident in respondents' perceptions regarding the feasibility of certification. Slightly more respondents are "very unconfident" (16%) relative to those who are "very confident" (13%) a certification system can be feasible. However, respondents are more confident overall (i.e., combining the "somewhat" and "very" responses) than are unconfident (52% vs. 34%) about its feasibility. This pattern is not found for the variables of effectiveness and necessity. Overall, not too many respondents are confident that evaluator certification is necessary or that it can be effective, and only a small majority are confident of its feasibility. On a final note, a sizable number of respondents are "undecided" on the feasibility, effectiveness, and necessity of a certification system, thus suggesting that more exploration and discussion should take place regarding the merit of implementing an evaluator certification system before further efforts are made to launch such a system.

Characteristics of respondents' background are related to their judgments about the necessity, effectiveness, and feasibility of a certification system. Doctorate-level respondents ($n = 120$) are collectively more skeptical (i.e., unconfident) than non-doctorate respondents ($n = 54$) about certification's necessity (unconfident: 51% PhD vs. 30% non-PhD.; $p = .28$) and effectiveness (53% PhD vs. 33% Non-PhD; $p = .02$). An opposite trend is found for the "feasibility" variable; doctoral respondents are collectively more confident regarding a certification system's feasibility (Confident: 53% PhD vs. 44% Non-PhD; $p = .43$). Despite these percentage differences, tests of practical significance suggest that these findings are of trivial practical importance; effect sizes were $\eta^2 = .03$ or less. (Note: Refer to Figure 2 in Appendix E for further statistical data pertaining to respondents' key characteristics and their responses to certification's feasibility, effectiveness, and necessity.)

As a group, new members to the profession perceive certification more favorably than their veteran counterparts. New members are defined as those respondents who are seeking or have received their highest degree since 1994 (i.e., within five years of when the survey was conducted), whereas veteran professionals are those respondents who obtained their highest degree before 1994. Half (50%) of new members (vs. 19% of veterans) believe a certification system is necessary, and 27% indicated it is not necessary (vs. 53% of veterans). These findings are statistically and practically significant ($\chi^2 = .005$; $\eta = .29$). Similarly, 46% of new members (vs. 28% of veterans) believe a certification system can be effective; 23% of new members (vs. 53% of veterans) believe it cannot be effective. Similar but less pronounced trends are evident

regarding the feasibility of a certification system. Perhaps veteran professionals perceive themselves as being well established within the profession and as a result, have no desire to burden themselves with certification expectations. Or, perhaps those newer to the field are more forward thinking and/or less timid. These and other possible explanations make for interesting speculation, but cannot be validated based on the present data alone.

There are numerous issues evaluators might consider when making judgments about the need, feasibility, and effectiveness of evaluator certification. Research question #5 sought to determine evaluators' perceived benefits and limitations of a certification system. Respondents provided short answers (see Figure 4 in Appendix G) reflecting what they "foresee as potential benefits [and in a subsequent question, "problems or limitations"] of an evaluator certification process." Respondents were also asked to indicate which one potential benefit, and which one potential problem or limitation they saw as most important. Various issues (classified under umbrella terms commonly seen in certification-related literature) identified as being the most important benefits and limitations are reported in Table 6 and expanded upon in Figure 3 (in the Appendices).

Respondents were also queried as to how long the implementation of a certification system might take. Specifically, they were asked "How confident are you that a certification process could be successfully implemented in the next 5 [also, 10 and 20] years." The results are presented in Table 7. When asked about the possibility of successful implementation in the next 5 years, more respondents indicated being confident (44%) than unconfident (37%), but few responded "very confident" (8%).

Table 6

Most Important Limitations and Benefits Perceived by Survey Respondents

Limitations	%	Benefits	%
Diversity of field	25	Improve profession's quality	23
Logistics	18	Standards/standardization	14
Gatekeeping	16	Consumer protection	14
Validity/reliability	13	Profession's image	12
Lack of support	7	Evaluator marketability	3
Other	3	Other	1
No limitations	1	No benefits	5
No response	17	No response	28

Note. Further illustrated clarifications of the categories in this table are available in Appendix F.

Respondents tend to be more optimistic when provided 10 or 20 years for implementation. Seventy-one percent of respondents are confident that a system can be successfully in place within 10 years, with 38% being very confident. A similar percentage (70%) is confident a system can be implemented within 20 years, with over half (54%) being very confident.

In summary, these data show a majority of respondents are not confident a certification system is necessary or can be effective, and many others are undecided. However, respondents tend to be more optimistic a certification system can be feasible.

Table 7

Confidence Level That a Certification Process Could Be Successfully Implemented in 5, 10, or 20 Years^a

Method	Very unconfident	Somewhat unconfident	Undecided	Somewhat confident	Very confident
5 years	19%	18%	19%	36%	8%
10 years	9%	7%	13%	33%	38%
20 years	10%	4%	16%	16%	54%

^aThe results in this table are based on the prompt, "...speculate that a voluntary certification process is to be developed for evaluators."

More than two thirds are at least somewhat confident a certification system can be successfully implemented within 10 years.

Administrative and Design Issues for a Certification System

Research question #6 pertains to determining evaluation practitioners' opinions toward criteria essential to potential implementation and administration of a certification system. Grandparenting (which has been historically labeled as the "grandfather clause") is arguably the most important administrative criteria to be considered. Grandparenting in an evaluation certification system would probably entail some form of phase-in period whereby qualified practitioners would be exempt from the ordinary

certification process. Instead, they would be certified based on specially established criteria for those already active in the field.

As reported in Table 8, advocates of grandparenting outnumber opponents by a six-to-one ratio. In addition, respondents without doctorates are more apt to favor a grandparenting clause than those with doctorates (with 89% vs. 75% of these two groups, respectively, somewhat or strongly favoring grandparenting). And the percentage of respondents who “mostly favor” grandparenting is highest among those who obtained their highest degree before 1980 (56%). One might interpret this latter finding as meaning that more seasoned evaluators may feel a little out of touch with subject matter they have not dealt with since their schooling.

Given that most U.S.-based AEA members appear to favor a grandparent clause, it may be informative to examine which criteria they consider most applicable for awarding that status. Respondents’ views on several possible criteria are provided in the nonparenthetical data reported in Table 9. Respondents indicated that minimal years of

Table 8^a

Respondents’ Favorability to a Phase-In Period in Which Experienced Evaluators Could Receive Certification by Fulfilling Special “Grandparent” Requirements for Certification

Mostly disfavor	Somewhat disfavor	Undecided	Somewhat favor	Mostly favor
8%	5%	9%	32%	46%

^aThe results in this table are based on the prompt, “...speculate that a voluntary certification process is to be developed for evaluators.”

evaluation work (84%), evidence of evaluation-related work (73%), continuing evaluation education (70%), and completion of evaluation coursework (67%) are all (somewhat or very) applicable criteria for a grandparenting clause. About half of the respondents feel that letters of recommendation (49%) and completion of an evaluation program (52%) would be applicable criteria, although, for the latter criterion, a strong minority (40%) of responses indicated that completion of an evaluation program was somewhat or very inapplicable. Additional open-ended responses included a variety of other criteria, including AEA awards, publications, portfolios, AEA membership,

Table 9^a

Prerequisite Criteria for New^b (N) and Grandparenting^c (G) Certification Candidates

Criteria	Very inapplicable	Somewhat inapplicable	Undecided	Somewhat applicable	Very applicable
	G% (N%)	G% (N%)	G% (N%)	G% (N%)	G% (N%)
Minimal years of evaluation work	1 (8)	8 (12)	7 (10)	35 (34)	49 (36)
Evidence of evaluation-related	7 (2)	12 (5)	8 (5)	36 (48)	37 (40)
Completion of an evaluation	24 (7)	16 (13)	8 (7)	21 (29)	31 (44)
Completion of evaluation	11 (3)	10 (8)	12 (8)	42 (45)	25 (36)
Continuing evaluation education	8 (7)	14 (12)	8 (15)	52 (49)	18 (17)
Letters of recommendations	12 (10)	21 (20)	18 (17)	30 (32)	19 (21)

^a The results in this table are based on the prompt, "...speculate that a voluntary certification process is to be developed for evaluators." ^b Rookie practitioners (e.g., recent graduates) seeking certification via additional qualification processes (e.g., examination). ^c Veteran practitioners seeking certification while being exempt from additional qualification processes.

presentations, related graduate degrees, related certification, evidence of evaluation project management, and evaluation reports.

Respondents were also asked which of the same set of criteria were important for the certification of candidates newly entering the field from preservice and inservice programs. Results are provided in parentheses in Table 9. For each criterion, at least half of the respondents felt it is somewhat or very applicable for the certification of new candidates: evidence of evaluation-related work (88%), completion of evaluation coursework (81%), completion of evaluation program (73%), minimal years of evaluation work (70%), continuing evaluation education (66%), and letters of recommendation (53%). Interestingly, whereas only 52% of respondents felt that completion of an evaluation program is somewhat or very applicable for granting a “grandparent” exemption, 73% indicated that completing an evaluation program is applicable for new candidates. Perhaps AEA members hold increasing expectations for budding evaluation professionals, or perhaps there is a sense that evaluation programs are more common than they used to be.

Respondents were also asked to rate the suitability of several alternative methods for determining competency via evaluation certification. Specifically, respondents were asked: “How suitable should each of the following methods be for measuring competency?” Results are provided in Table 10. Respondents indicated that a paper/pencil test or computer-based test would be the most suitable, with 67% seeing this option as somewhat or very suitable. A majority of respondents also consider

Table 10^aSuitability of Method for Measuring Competency

Method	Very unsuitable	Somewhat unsuitable	Undecided	Somewhat suitable	Very suitable
Paper/pencil or computer-based test	15%	8%	10%	47%	20%
Evaluation simulation	11%	10%	23%	38%	18%
Review from workshop instructor	12%	20%	15%	41%	12%
Feedback from former clients	15%	16%	17%	36%	16%
Oral examination	20%	23%	20%	28%	9%

^a The results in this table are based on the prompt, "...speculate that a voluntary certification process is to be developed for evaluators."

evaluation simulations (56%), review from workshop instructors (53%), and feedback from former clients (52%) suitable. The only method not considered suitable by at least half the respondents is an oral examination (37%). Other alternatives suggested by respondents include academic credentials, essay tests, recommendations, portfolios, evaluation products, and evaluation reports.

Along with establishing how a certification system should be designed to measure candidates' competencies, some administrative issues must be decided. Participants' views on several major administrative issues are presented in Table 11. A clear majority (73%) of the respondents favored AEA overseeing a certification program if it ever became a reality. Respondents also favor certification costs being covered by

Table 11^aAdministrative Issues for a Certification Program

Choices	Percentage
Who should be responsible for administrating the certification program?	
AEA	73%
An independent agency	22%
Other responses	5%
Who should cover the costs of administering the certification program?	
Certification candidates	39%
AEA via dues increase	2%
Combination of AEA and candidates	56%
Other responses	3%
Should an adjudication system be included to review activities that may not adhere to ethical or legal guidelines for the practice of evaluation?	
Yes	87%
No	13%
Should certification status be permanent or should certified evaluators be re-certified?	
Permanent	47%
Re-certified	53% ^b

^a The results in this table are based on the prompt, "...speculate that a voluntary certification process is to be developed for evaluators." ^b A bimodal distribution of responses was found with 35% of respondents specifying that re-certification should take place every 5 years and 35% specifying every 10 years.

either the certification candidates (39%) or by a combination of AEA and the candidates (56%). AEA members appear to strongly favor an adjudication system (87%) for reviewing instances of ethical or legal wrongdoing by (presumably certified) members.

On a final note, respondents are divided on the issue of whether certification should be permanent or require periodic renewal. A small majority favored recertification (53% vs. 47%). Among those favoring recertification, 5-year (35%) and 10-year (35%) intervals were the highest reported preferences.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Evaluator certification is and will likely continue to be a hotly debated topic. Of the 174 respondents in the sample, 28% specifically indicate that they do not favor certification. However, the survey results further show that more survey respondents are not confident (i.e., skeptical) than confident about the effectiveness and necessity of this type of credentialing procedure for evaluators. One anonymous respondent nicely illustrated some of the potential limitations:

A key element for me in my evaluation practice is the skill that I have in developing a relationship with the program and staff of the program I am evaluating. I feel I must rely a great deal on my interpersonal skills to gain the trust of the program staff. I also must rely on my communication skills to adequately interpret evaluation findings in a way that is useful to the program staff. These are skills that cannot be assessed by a certification process that are invaluable to the evaluator who works in the non-profit sector where many of the clients and programs are wary of being “evaluated.” I still believe, however, that certification can have many benefits for evaluation professionals. However, it should not be misconstrued as the total measure of an evaluator’s degree of skill or competence. We all know a lot of social workers, psychologists and doctors who have been certified by their profession via some exam process who are not very good at what they actually do in their profession. I don’t know an easy way around this issue but felt it needed to be raised.

On the other hand, many respondents believe certification is necessary as indicated by the following excerpt from an anonymous respondent:

I was a practicing chemist prior to entering evaluation field – and you could reasonably expect a certain standard of quality from a trained chemist. This I have not found to be true in evaluation. There is a lot of poor quality work being done for big money that also does not meet client needs. When evaluation is an investment – we ought to be doing our darndest as a profession to ensure our product is seen as a “bang-for-the-buck.” How can our clients learn from our work if we fail to answer even

the simplest of questions. Our personal interests be they methodological or conceptual, do not drive the system. It is the customer – always the customer, and what they need to know, not what we want to know. I really believe we need to certify ourselves and offer a higher quality consumer-oriented product or our customers will look elsewhere.

Finally, in addition to the supporters and opponents of evaluator certification, a considerable portion of the respondents is still uncertain to some extent. For example, 21% and 28%, respectively, are uncertain where they stand regarding an evaluator certification system's potential effectiveness and necessity. These uncertainties suggest that constructive discussions need to continue.

Certainly, certification should be seen as only one of several alternatives for enhancing and promoting the image of the evaluation profession. But the results presented here may be beneficial to those within the evaluation process that need to ponder both the potential and pitfalls that might be associated with a certification process. The two sincere excerpts within the preceding paragraphs are but a taste of some of the pro and con comments that can be found in Appendix G regarding certification.

Research Limitations

Unfortunately, the survey included no direct questions to ascertain respondents' attitudes, pro or con, toward certification. The AEA Task Force members who developed and finalized the survey assumed that respondents' opinions about certification, favorable or unfavorable, could be extracted from their response to the first question: "Assuming that different 'levels' of certification could be operationally defined

by AEA members...” (refer to survey item #1 in Appendix B). In retrospect, this was a poor assumption because it constrained respondents to answer within that framework. Respondents were not asked whether such an assumption is reasonable, or whether they think in general that certification is a good or a bad idea. In an effort to compensate for the omission from the survey of any direct query of whether or not the respondents favored the entire notion of certification, the 50 nonrespondents contacted by phone were asked directly, “Do you favor a ‘voluntary’ certification process?” A slight majority (54%) said “yes,” but it is possible that some gave this answer thinking the implied alternative to a voluntary certification system was a mandatory system rather than no certification at all. Thus, the best gauge of AEA members’ overall sentiments about certification is believed to be the question of whether certification is necessary (i.e., survey item #15c). Only one fourth of both the mail-respondents (25%) and the sample of nonrespondents (26%) said that they believe certification is necessary.

Recommendations for Future Research

Before considering evaluator certification more seriously, efforts need to be taken to establish parameters for defining the evaluation profession. It appears that a lot of uncertainty exists as to what content a potential evaluator certification system might include. Hence, this makes it difficult for evaluators to determine whether or not they favor certification. Perhaps the next step should be to establish a collaborative effort to develop a framework entailing what should and should not be included in an evaluation certification system. A logical starting point would be for evaluation graduate programs

(and other training programs) to collaborate, identify, and standardize a core evaluation curriculum. This could lead to an accreditation system for these programs, and eventually, to a corresponding certification system. Additionally, findings from the Canadian Evaluation Society's efforts to credential its members should be reviewed and discussed. These recommendations would provide a foundation conducive for garnering the necessary support from evaluation professionals on the certification issue.

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APPENDICES

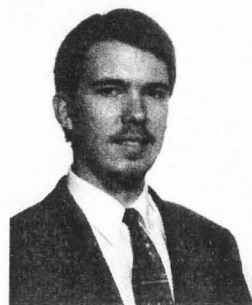
Appendix A:
Journal Publication: AEA Members'
Opinions Concerning Evaluator
Certification

AEA Members' Opinions Concerning Evaluator Certification¹

STEVEN C. JONES AND BLAINE R. WORTHEN

ABSTRACT

Professional certification is sometimes advocated as a means of assuring consumers that they are getting someone who is skilled and knowledgeable within their trade. Certification is also sometimes viewed as advantageous for enhancing professions' prestige, promoting professionalism, improving academic programs, and helping to define a profession. Without the acceptance by an organization's members, however, any efforts to implement a certification process are likely instead to be divisive and dysfunctional. This article presents the results of a survey carried out by a recent AEA Task Force on certification.



Steven C. Jones

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation can be considered a relatively new profession. Although the evaluative function presumably emerged simultaneously with the onset of human thought, it emerged as an employment specialization only in the 1960s and has matured into a near profession only much more recently (Worthen, 1994). In this paper, we report on a survey prompted by the question of whether the profession of evaluation has reached the point where it can and should consider certifying its members. Gale (1979) stated that, "for new emerging professions, certification can be viewed as a rush for recognition and legitimization before the field has fully evolved. The result may be premature solidification of the profession's scope and the competencies of the practitioners." Love (1994) suggested that several events need to take place before a certification process can be considered:

Before we can seriously entertain the idea of certification for evaluators, the associations that represent the profession must demonstrate leadership by defining their expectations

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for the field and then working to create that future. The professional associations must have the collective will to make good on their strategic plans to strengthen the profession of evaluation and to develop standards of practice, code of ethics, and professional development programs for both new and experienced evaluators. Members of the associations, their employers and clients, and the public must all take part in this process (p. 39).

If we can assume for the moment that evaluation is a maturing profession that may otherwise be ready for a certification process,² a determination still must be made concerning what evaluators think about such a certification process. Former American Evaluation Association (AEA) President, Len Bickman, echoed this belief in a Listserv dialogue about evaluator credentialing. He said, "Whether it is worth it [to create a certification process] will partly be determined by the volunteers who want to put their time into developing such a bureaucracy and the evaluators who want to support certification if it becomes available" (Bickman, personal communication, 1996). To determine whether AEA members perceive a need for a certification system, and to assess what issues or elements of a certification process they would likely support if such an effort came into existence, a survey on this topic was conducted under the auspices of an AEA Certification Task Force during the summer of 1998.

PROCEDURES

Survey Design

The survey development was a collaborative effort by five members of the AEA Certification Task Force. An initial list of research questions was generated jointly by the authors and Jim Altschuld, the Task Force chair. Through several conference calls, research questions were elaborated, revised, and eventually framed into potential survey items. This preliminary draft was forwarded to the other Task Force members for review. Concerns were raised about length, in an attempt to achieve a higher response rate. In the process of shortening the survey, one critical research question was merged with another survey item. This was to prove unfortunate, as explained in detail in the section on "Survey Limitations".

At the 1997 annual meeting of AEA, a panel discussion took place regarding certification issues. Capitalizing on this opportunity, the authors asked the conveniently accessible sample of session attendees to assist in a pilot test of the questionnaire. As a result, 23 people responded to the draft survey. In some cases, they also critiqued the close-ended items on the survey. Following revisions, a final round of pilot testing was conducted with four faculty and four graduate students from Utah State University, who were also current AEA members.

The final survey was a six-page questionnaire, with 16 items eliciting respondents' opinions and seven focusing on their relevant demographic characteristics. The survey was titled "AEA Members' Opinions Concerning *Voluntary* Evaluator Certification." The survey instructions instructed respondents, "For items #2-16, speculate that a *voluntary* certification process is to be developed for evaluators. Denote the responses that best reflect your viewpoints." Likert-type items followed, asking respondents to indicate their views on (1) the favorability to grandparenting; (2) the applicability of various criteria for awarding grandparenting; (3) the applicability of several qualification criteria for all other (non-grandparented) certification candidates; and (4) the suitability of various methods for mea-

Opinions Concerning Certification

asuring competencies required for being certified. Five closed-ended items then asked about several administrative issues for a certification system. These items were followed by two open-ended items concerning respondents' perceptions of the benefits and limitations of an evaluator certification process, and Likert-type items concerning respondents' confidence that a certification process would be feasible, effective and necessary. Respondents then reported their belief about the likelihood that certification could be successfully implemented within five, 10, and 20 years. The survey concluded with various background and demographic questions.

To increase the perceived importance of the survey, and, we hoped, to increase the likelihood that survey recipients would respond, a cover letter was inserted inside the front cover of the survey. It was on AEA letterhead and signed by the then AEA President and past President.

Participants

Ideally, the target population for this study would have consisted of all those individuals who identify themselves as evaluation practitioners. However, sampling from or inferring to this target population was not possible for three reasons. First, we could not establish with any degree of certainty what criteria individuals use in classifying themselves as evaluators. Second, there is tremendous diversity in work-settings in the evaluation field. Finding all the practicing evaluators in these settings was not feasible under the constraints of this project. It was therefore agreed that members of AEA comprised the most feasible, accessible sampling frame. Third, this was an unfunded study, except for a small subsidy approved by the AEA Board of Directors to pay a portion of the costs of printing and postage. Consequently, we restricted the survey to AEA members who were also U.S. residents. Because only a sample of AEA members who were U.S. residents was surveyed, inferences cannot be confidently generalized outside of this target population. This may not be a serious limitation, however, because the data were collected primarily to help AEA leaders ascertain the feasibility of implementing a certification system, which presumably would primarily impact evaluators in the U.S. Ultimately, 500 survey recipients were randomly selected from a list of approximately 1,900 AEA members with U.S. residency.³

Of the 500 surveys mailed, 69 (or 14%) were returned as non-deliverable. This reduced the sample to 431 members. The first mail-out attempt (which coincided with the end of the academic year) produced 117 returns. Because of the low return rate (27% of the deliverable surveys), and because it appeared that a high percentage of members may work in academic settings, the planned second mailing was postponed to correspond with the start of the following academic year. The second mailing produced 57 returns, which accounts for one-third of the total number of respondents. Cumulatively, both mailings produced a 40% ($n = 174$) return rate.

Non-response Bias Check

After the two mailings were completed, the senior author and a trained assistant conducted telephone surveys with 50 non-respondents. These were the first 50 respondents contacted during several attempts to reach each of a random sample of 100 non-respondents.⁴ This phone survey was limited to determining (1) whether these non-respondents had received the questionnaire, (2) their educational and work background, (3) their opinions

concerning the feasibility, effectiveness, and necessity of a certification process, (4) their perceived likelihood of successful implementation of certification process in the next five, 10, and 20 years, and (5) any additional comments they wished to provide.

Of non-respondents we contacted, 38% claimed that they had not received the survey (this may not be surprising; see note 3). Most importantly, there were no statistically or practically significant differences between respondents and non-respondents on most survey questions. It was found that, on average, the non-respondents devoted less of their income-earning time to evaluation work than did the survey respondents. Non-respondents outnumbered respondents by a 5 to 1 ratio (18% versus 3.6%) in terms of those who indicated that they spend none of their income-earning time in evaluation. This is not a startling result, however, for one might well expect fewer non-evaluators to reply to a survey on a topic not likely to impact them directly. This suggests that those who responded to the survey are more directly involved in evaluation practice than is true of AEA members in general.

The non-responders we contacted by phone also tended to be less confident than respondents to the mail survey about whether a certification system could be implemented within five, 10, or 20 years. There was a statistically significant ($p = .026$) small mean difference (standardized mean difference = .37) in terms of respondents' and non-respondents' judgments about the likelihood of implementation within 10 years. Thus, non-respondents seem more pessimistic about the possibility of bringing a certification process to fruition anytime soon. As for the other checks on non-response bias, non-respondents' attributes and attitudes appeared to be quite similar to those of respondents.

Limitations on the Survey

Unfortunately, the survey includes no general questions asking respondents for their attitudes, pro or con, toward certification. The AEA Task Force members who developed and finalized the survey assumed that respondents' opinions about certification, favorable or unfavorable, could be inferred from their responses to other questions that were asked. In retrospect, that was a poor assumption, for the context for the entire survey was framed by the first question's phrase: "Assuming that different 'levels' of certification could be operationally defined by AEA members, . . ." It was evident from survey responses that this constrained respondents to answer within that framework. Respondents were not asked whether such an assumption is reasonable, or whether they think in general that certification is a good or a bad idea. Thus, their answers to the question of whether certification is necessary may be the best available gauge of AEA members' overall sentiments about certification, and only a minority responded favorably.⁵

SURVEY RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

Table 1 provides the breakdown of respondent characteristics by primary work setting, highest academic degree, and the percent of income-earning time devoted both to evaluation practice and consulting. These characteristics were collected not only for the purpose of understanding the backgrounds of respondents, but also to investigate how those variables contribute to the primary results.

TABLE 1
Respondent Characteristics

<i>Primary work setting for the last three years</i>	
University	46%
Self-employed.....	12%
Non-profit	11%
Federal agency.....	8%
Business	7%
State agency.....	4%
School system.....	3%
Local agency.....	2%
Multiple responses.....	4%
Not applicable.....	2%
Other	1%
<i>Highest degree obtained</i>	
Doctorate.....	73%
Masters.....	24%
Bachelor.....	3%
<i>When highest degree was obtained</i>	
Prior to 1980.....	35%
1980s.....	31%
1990s.....	34%
<i>Percent of income-earning time devoted to evaluation practice</i>	
1/3 or less	38%
Between 1/3 and 2/3	13%
2/3 or more.....	49%
<i>Percent of income-earning time devoted to consulting work</i>	
1/3 or less	78%
Between 1/3 and 2/3	4%
2/3 or more.....	18%

Of the 174 respondents, nearly half indicated that they work in a higher education setting (46%). Almost all (96%) have at least a Masters degree, while nearly three-fourths (73%) hold the doctorate. Additional analysis suggests that the year when respondents received their highest degree approximates a normal distribution. This suggests (but does not prove, of course) that respondents also vary similarly in their years of evaluation-related experience. An interesting bimodal distribution was evident for the proportion of the respondents' income-earning time spent in evaluation practice; half of the respondents (49%) said they devote at least two-thirds of their incoming-earning time to evaluation work, while 38% devote no more than one-third. Fewer than one-fifth of the respondents (18%) indicated that they spend more than two-thirds of their time as consultants.

Attitudes Toward Certification

The survey asked about three different types of certification systems emphasized in the literature: one-level systems that only measure core competencies, two-level systems that

TABLE 2
Number of Levels of Certification Preferred If Certification Were to Become a Reality¹

<i>Basic Core Competencies Only</i>	<i>Core Competencies and Advanced Competencies</i>	<i>Core Competencies and Specialized Domains</i>	<i>No Certification Process Favored</i>	<i>Unsure</i>	<i>Other</i>
31%	20%	17%	28%	3%	1%

¹ Note that respondents' selections of particular certification levels (i.e., system) do not necessarily reflect that they favor certification implementation, but rather their preference *if* certification were to become a reality.

measure both core competencies and advanced competencies, and multiple-level systems that not only measure core or general competencies, but also competencies within specialized domains. Respondents were asked, "Assuming that different 'levels' of certification could be operationally defined by AEA members, how many levels of certification would you favor?" Table 2 summarizes their responses.

Respondents were presented with the option of indicating that they did not favor any certification process. In retrospect, the overall survey results do not necessarily suggest that respondents who selected any of the first three options (i.e., one-level, two-level, or multiple-level certification) favor certification. Instead, respondents may have been indicating what their preference would be between the three types of systems if certification were to occur. As a result, inferences cannot be confidently drawn about what proportion of AEA members favor AEA moving forward on certification as had been intended by the survey's developers, who had assumed that a respondent's choice of any one of the different types of certification systems would indicate that the respondent favors certification. Considering only those respondents who reported some preference for one of the three certification systems, a one-level system for measuring core competencies was most preferred (45%), with two-level systems and multiple-level systems being selected by 31% and 24%, respectively, of these respondents.

Evaluators' support of moving forward on a certification system may depend on their beliefs about the necessity, effectiveness, and feasibility of such a system. Table 3 provides the survey results on these three beliefs, which respondents expressed in response to three questions that asked: "How confident are you that a certification process would be feasible [or effective, or necessary]?"⁶ Overall, respondents were not very confident that evaluator

TABLE 3
Confidence that a Certification Process Would Be Feasible, Effective, and Necessary¹

	<i>Very Unconfident</i>	<i>Somewhat Unconfident</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Somewhat Confident</i>	<i>Very Confident</i>
Feasible	16%	18%	14%	39%	13%
Effective	23%	23%	21%	27%	6%
Necessary	25%	22%	28%	19%	6%

¹ The results in this and subsequent tables are based on the prompt, "speculate that a voluntary certification process is to be developed for evaluators."

certification is necessary or effective, and were moderately confident that it is feasible. When asked about the *necessity* of the certification process, about four times more respondents indicated they were very unconfident (25%) than reported they were very confident (6%) it is necessary. A similar pattern held for how confident respondents felt about the *effectiveness* of a certification process (23% very unconfident versus 6% very confident). This disparity is not evident in respondents' sentiments about the *feasibility* of certification. Although slightly more respondents were very unconfident that such a system is feasible (16%), relative to those who were very confident (13%), overall (i.e., combining "somewhat" and "very"), more respondents were confident (52%) than are unconfident (34%) about feasibility.

Aspects of respondents' background are related to their judgments about the necessity, reliability, and feasibility of certification. Doctorate-holding respondents were more likely to be skeptical (i.e., unconfident) than non-doctorate respondents about certification's necessity (51% vs. 30%) and effectiveness (53% vs. 33%). On the other hand, doctorate holders were more likely to be confident about certification's feasibility (53% vs. 44%). In addition, the more recently respondents received their highest degree, the more likely they were to be confident about the need, feasibility, and effectiveness of a certification system. Perhaps more experienced evaluators are more attuned to the difficulties in such an undertaking, or perhaps those newer to the field are more forward thinking and less timid. These and other possible explanations make for interesting speculation, but we cannot tell from the present data.

What are the reasons evaluators might consider when making their judgments about the need, feasibility, and effectiveness of evaluator certification? Respondents were asked to provide short, focused answers reflecting what they "Foresee as potential benefits [and, in a subsequent question, problems or limitations] of an evaluator certification process." Respondents were also asked to indicate which one potential benefit and which one potential problem or limitation they saw as most important. Table 4 summarizes some of the more representative comments, using umbrella terms commonly identified in the literature.

Respondents were also asked their views of how long the implementation of a certification system might take. Specifically, they were asked: "How confident are you that a certification process could be successfully implemented in the next 5 [10, 20] years." The results are presented in Table 5. When asked about the possibility of successful implementation in the next five years, more respondents indicated being confident (44%) than unconfident (37%), and few were very confident (8%). However, respondents were also asked their confidence that certification could be implemented in 10 and in 20 years. Most respondents (71%) were somewhat or very confident that a system could be successfully in place within 10 years, and 38% were very confident. Over half of the respondents were very confident that a system could be implemented within 20 years.

In summary, these data show that AEA members question the necessity and effectiveness of a certification system more so than its feasibility. A sizable proportion of the members (28%) are still undecided about whether certification is needed. It appears that certification remains a quite debatable issue (as the viewpoints expressed in companion articles in this issue show). Also, most members suggest that they expect it would take more than five years for any system to be successfully implemented.

In the remainder of this article, we examine AEA members' preferences about various developmental, operational, and administrative issues related to evaluator certification, whether certification will eventually be a reality or is forever an illusion.

TABLE 4
Most Important Limitations and Benefits Perceived by Survey Respondents

<i>% of Respondents</i>	<i>Limitations</i>
25%	Diversity of Field: How to cover breadth of field; defining core competencies; determining what is "quality"; establishing acceptable process; different skills needed in various arenas; variation in experience for those grandparented
18%	Logistics: Cost, time, resources, and labor needed for development, implementation, administration, and marketing; legality issues; bureaucracy; unforeseen problems; delayed financial rewards, if any
16%	Gatekeeping: Stifles innovation; develops hierarchy among evaluators; excludes non-orthodox practitioners; barrier for existing evaluators not eligible for grandparent clause; process dictates one's educational/experiential path
13%	Validity/Reliability: Potential focus on academic vs. application perspective; inability to measure quality; assessment via closed-ended response system; doesn't prevent unethical conduct; no assurance that prerequisites matter
7%	Lack of Support: Requires massive buy-in; market for traditionally trained evaluators is weak. .field survives via adaptability; agencies perceive certification meaningless due to variability in certification systems/standards
3%	Other: Takes focus off of more critical areas; discourages self-assessment
1%	No Limitation¹
17%	No Response²
<i>% of Respondents</i>	<i>Benefits</i>
23%	Improve Quality of Profession: Fewer sub-standard evaluators; assurance of competency; keep opportunists from cashing in on evaluation contracts; forces evaluators to keep up with current practices/methods
14%	Standards/Standardization: Standardization of basic/core skills and knowledge; focuses training programs; increased professional standard; encourages ethical practice; ensures a common "language" among evaluators
14%	Consumer Protection: Increases consumer confidence; objective indicator for selecting qualified/competent evaluators; provides a database to find specialists; distinguishes between evaluators and pseudo-evaluators
12%	Profession's Image: Adds credibility/legitimacy to the field; acceptance of role of evaluation in organizations; increases respect/prestige for AEA and its members; promotes evaluation's stature as a profession/separate discipline
3%	Evaluator Marketability: Increases consulting work opportunities; career enhancement/professional advancement; resumé builder; increases salary potential; portrays professionalism
1%	Other: Provides opportunity to have abilities reviewed by experts
5%	No Benefits³
28%	No Response

¹ Percent of respondents who answered that they believed certification would have no limitations.

² Percent of respondents who did not respond.

³ Percent of respondents who answered that they believed certification would have no benefits.

TABLE 5
Confidence that a Certification Process Could Be Successfully Implemented in the
Next 5, 10, or 20 Years

	<i>Very Unconfident</i>	<i>Somewhat Unconfident</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Somewhat Confident</i>	<i>Very Confident</i>
<i>5 years</i>	19%	18%	19%	36%	8%
<i>10 years</i>	9%	7%	13%	33%	38%
<i>20 years</i>	10%	4%	16%	16%	54%

Administrative and Design Issues for a Certification System

Grandparenting (which historically has been referred to in sexist terms, as a “grandfather clause”) in an evaluation certification system would probably entail some form of phase-in period whereby qualified practitioners would be exempt from the ordinary certification process. Instead, they would be certified based on specially established criteria for those already active in the field. Survey respondents were asked: “How favorable would you be to a phase-in period in which experienced evaluators could receive certification by fulfilling special ‘grandparent’ requirements for certification?” Table 6 reveals that advocates of grandparenting outnumber opponents among our respondents by a six to one ratio. In addition, respondents without doctorates are more apt to favor a grandparenting clause than those with doctorates (with 89% vs. 75% of these two groups, respectively, somewhat or strongly favoring grandfathering). And the percentage of respondents who “mostly favor” grandparenting is highest among those who obtained their highest degree before 1980 (56%). One might interpret the latter finding as meaning that more seasoned evaluators have less interest in going through formal certification.

Given that most U.S.-based AEA members appear to favor a grandparent clause, it may be informative to ask which criteria they consider most applicable for awarding that status. The shaded columns of Table 7 provide respondents’ views on several possible criteria.

Respondents indicated that minimal years of evaluation work (84%), evidence of evaluation-related work (73%), continuing evaluation education (70%), and completion of evaluation coursework (67%) are all (somewhat or very) applicable criteria. About half of the respondents feel that letters of recommendation (49%) and completion of an evaluation program (52%) would be applicable criteria, although, for the latter criterion, a strong minority (40%) of responses indicated that completion of an evaluation program was somewhat or very inapplicable. In open-ended responses, survey participants suggested a variety of other criteria, including AEA awards, publications, portfolios, AEA membership, presentations, related graduate degrees, related certification, evidence of evaluation project management, and evaluation reports.

TABLE 6
Favorability of Grandparenting

<i>Mostly Disfavor</i>	<i>Somewhat Disfavor</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Somewhat Favor</i>	<i>Mostly Favor</i>
8%	5%	9%	32%	46%

TABLE 7
Applicability of Criteria for Determining Certification Qualifications

	<i>Very Inapplicable</i>		<i>Somewhat Inapplicable</i>		<i>Undecided</i>		<i>Somewhat Applicable</i>		<i>Very Applicable</i>	
Minimal years of evaluation work	1%	8%	8%	12%	7%	10%	35%	34%	49%	36%
Evidence of evaluation-related work	7%	2%	12%	5%	8%	5%	36%	48%	37%	40%
Completion of an evaluation program	24%	7%	16%	13%	8%	7%	21%	29%	31%	44%
Completion of evaluation coursework	11%	3%	10%	8%	12%	8%	42%	45%	25%	36%
Continuing evaluation education	8%	7%	14%	12%	8%	15%	52%	49%	18%	17%
Letters of recommendation	12%	10%	21%	20%	18%	17%	30%	32%	19%	21%

□ = Criteria for determining qualifications for grandparenting eligibility.

□ = Prerequisites for people coming into the field from graduate school/training program.

Respondents were also asked which of the same set of criteria were important for the certification of candidates newly entering the field from preservice and inservice programs. For each criterion, at least half of the respondents felt it is somewhat or very applicable for the certification of new candidates: evidence of evaluation-related work (88%), completion of evaluation coursework (81%), completion of evaluation program (73%), minimal years of evaluation work (70%), continuing evaluation education (66%), and letters of recommendation (53%). Interestingly, whereas only 52% of respondents felt that completion of an evaluation program is somewhat or very applicable for granting a "grandparent" exemption, 73% indicated that completing an evaluation program is applicable for new candidates. Perhaps AEA members hold increasing expectations for budding evaluation professionals, or perhaps there is a sense that evaluation programs are more common than they used to be.

The survey also asked respondents to rate the suitability of several alternative assessment methods for evaluation certification. Specifically, respondents were asked: "How suitable should each of the following methods be for measuring competency?" Results are summarized in Table 8. Respondents indicated that a paper/pencil test or computer-based test would be the most suitable, with 67% seeing this option as somewhat or very suitable. Evaluation simulations (56%), workshop participation (53%), and feedback from former clients (52%) also are considered suitable by most respondents. The only method not considered suitable by at least half the respondents is an oral examination (37%). Other alternatives suggested by respondents are academic credentials, essay tests, recommendations, portfolios, evaluation products, and evaluation reports.

Along with establishing how a certification system is designed to measure candidates' competencies, when certification is instituted a number of administrative issues must be

TABLE 8
Suitability of Various Methods For Measuring Competency

	<i>Very Unsuitable</i>		<i>Somewhat Unsuitable</i>		<i>Undecided</i>		<i>Somewhat Suitable</i>		<i>Very Suitable</i>	
Paper/pencil or computer-based test	15%	8%	10%	47%	20%					
Oral examination	20%	23%	20%	28%	9%					
Evaluation simulation	11%	10%	23%	38%	18%					
Instructor's review in evaluation workshop	12%	20%	15%	41%	12%					
Feedback from former clients	15%	16%	17%	36%	16%					

TABLE 9
Administrative Issues for a Certification Program

<i>Who should be responsible for administering the certification program?</i>	
AEA	73%
An independent agency	22%
Other responses	5%
<i>Who should cover the costs of administering the certification program?</i>	
Certification candidates	39%
AEA via dues increase	2%
Combination of AEA and candidates	56%
Other responses	3%
<i>Should an adjudication system be included to review activities that may not adhere to ethical or legal guidelines for the practice of evaluation?</i>	
Yes	87%
No	13%
<i>Should certification status be permanent or should certified evaluators be recertified?</i>	
Permanent	47%
Recertified	53%

decided. Participants' views on several major administrative issues are presented in Table 9. A vast majority (73%) of the respondents favored AEA overseeing a certification program if it ever became a reality. Respondents also favor certification costs being covered by either the certification candidates (39%) or by a combination of AEA and the candidates (56%). AEA members appear to strongly favor an adjudication system (87%) for reviewing instances of ethical or legal wrongdoing by (presumably certified) members; at least they report this when asked to assume that a voluntary certification system is to be developed.

Finally, respondents are divided on the issue of whether certification should be permanent or require periodic renewal. A small majority favored recertification (53% vs. 47%). Among those favoring recertification, five year (35%) and ten year (35%) intervals were the highest reported preferences.

CONCLUSION

Evaluator certification is and will likely continue to be a hotly debated topic. Of the 174 respondents in the sample, 28% specifically indicate that they do not favor certification. However, there are substantive reasons to believe that this percentage is an underestimate. By how much is not clear. However, the survey results show that more survey respondents are unconfident (i.e., skeptical) than confident about the effectiveness and necessity of this type of credentialing procedure for evaluators. Additionally, 21% and 28%, respectively, are not sure where they stand regarding an evaluator certification system's potential effectiveness and necessity. These uncertainties suggest that constructive discussions need to continue.

Certainly, certification should be seen as only one of several alternatives for enhancing and promoting the image of the evaluation profession. But the results presented here may be beneficial to those who need to ponder the potential and the pitfalls that might be associated

with a certification process. Our hope is that reflection by the AEA membership on these survey results and on the viewpoints expressed elsewhere in this issue will help the Association leaders to steer AEA on a path that will correctly determine what, if any, role certification might play in advancing our profession.

NOTES

1. The authors acknowledge the contribution to the survey reported here of Jim Altschuld, Chair of the recent American Evaluation Association (AEA) Task Force on Certification, Kathleen Bolland, John Ory, Donna Mertens, and Will Shadish. Altschuld reviewed each draft of the survey and cover letters and is largely responsible for drafting several of the final survey items. The authors, however, take full responsibility for any academic crimes committed in the course of conducting the survey and preparing this report.

2. This assumption may or may not be tenable; see the separate but related articles by Altschuld, Bickman, Smith, and Worthen in this issue.

3. At the time that the mailing list was obtained, it was maintained by an external management agency. During the sampling process, recurring evidence of erroneous records and inadequate addresses raised serious questions about the accuracy of the AEA membership records at that time.

4. Of the remaining 50 non-respondents in this sample, 21 were classified as "located, but unreachable" (e.g., no answer, unreturned voicemail), 23 were "not located" (e.g., no number, incorrect number, disconnected number), five were "refusals," and one was deceased.

5. In an effort to compensate for the omission from the survey of any direct query of whether or not the respondents favored the entire notion of certification, the 50 non-respondents contacted by phone were asked directly: "Do you favor a 'voluntary' certification process?" A slight majority (54%) said "yes," but other responses suggest that many gave this answer thinking that the implied alternative to a voluntary certificate was a mandatory certification system, rather than no certification at all. This interpretation is bolstered by the finding that, parallel to the mail survey respondents, only one-fourth of the non-respondents (26%) said that they believe certification is necessary.

6. The term "unconfident" was used in the response alternatives for these three questions. The term (found only in archaic dictionaries) is, in retrospect, awkward, as evident here. Readers may find it easier to mentally substitute near synonyms, such as "skeptical" or "unconvinced," in place of "unconfident." However, we will not take such liberties in our text—we're simply too unconfident to do so!

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Appendix B:
Survey Instrument

Utah State University
c/o Steve Jones (*AEA Certification Task Force*)
Department of Psychology
2810 Old Main Hill
Logan, UT 84322-2810

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AEA Certification Task Force

AEA Members' Opinions Concerning *Voluntary* Evaluator Certification

Dear fellow AEA member, your opinions are very important to us, so please take a few minutes right now to complete this survey. It only requires a short amount of time. Specific instructions are provided for each item. Directions for returning the survey are on the last page. I can assure you that the time you take to complete this survey will be time well spent. Thanks for your help.

Jim Altschuld, *AEA Certification Task Force Coordinator*

If you have questions about the questionnaire, please contact either —

Jim Altschuld, *AEA Task Force Coordinator*
telephone number (614) 292-7741
e-mail *altschuld.1@osu.edu*

Steve Jones, *Project Assistant*
telephone number (435) 797-3871
e-mail *sdfd2@cc.usu.edu*

1. Assuming that different “levels” of certification could be operationally defined by AEA members, how many levels of certification would you favor? (*Check one response only.*)
- Only one level to certify practitioners’ understanding of basic core competencies of evaluation practice.
 - Two levels, one to certify practitioners’ understanding of basic core competencies, and the other to certify advanced competencies.
 - Multiple levels that would include certification in basic core competencies and also include certification of specialized domains of evaluation.
 - I am not in favor of certification. (*Even if you do not favor certification, please complete the survey. Questions 13, 14 and 15, in particular, offer an opportunity for you to provide comments regarding the problems/limitations of certification.*)
 - Other (Please specify) _____

For items #2-16, speculate that a *voluntary* certification process is to be developed for evaluators. Denote the responses that best reflect your viewpoints.

2. How favorable would you be to a phase-in period in which experienced evaluators could receive certification by fulfilling special “grandparent”* requirements for certification? (*Circle only one response.*)

mostly disfavor	somewhat disfavor	undecided	somewhat favor	mostly favor
1	2	3	4	5

* Historically referred to as “grandfather clause.”

3. How applicable should the following criteria be in determining qualifications for **grandparenting eligibility**? (Circle one response for each item.)

Possible criteria for prerequisites:	very inapplicable	somewhat inapplicable	undecided	somewhat applicable	very applicable
a. Completion of a program that is designated as an evaluation program.	1	2	3	4	5
b. Completion of some specialized courses in evaluation, but not necessarily completing a program that is designated as an evaluation program.	1	2	3	4	5
c. Continuing education (e.g., workshops) in evaluation-related courses.	1	2	3	4	5
d. Evidence of applying evaluation procedures as demonstrated via internships, field experiences, supervisor's review of "quality" of evaluation-related work, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
e. Attainment of some minimal years of evaluation work experience.	1	2	3	4	5
f. Letters of recommendations from teachers of evaluation courses, evaluation practitioners, or evaluation clients.	1	2	3	4	5
g. Other (Please specify) _____	1	2	3	4	5

4. How applicable should the following criteria be as prerequisites for certifying people coming into the field directly from (or soon after) graduate school or from various other forms of training (i.e., **people who are not eligible for grandparenting**)? (Circle one response for each item.)

Possible criteria for prerequisites:	very inapplicable	somewhat inapplicable	undecided	somewhat applicable	very applicable
a. Completion of a program that is designated as an evaluation program.	1	2	3	4	5
b. Completion of some specialized courses in evaluation, but not necessarily completing a program that is designated as an evaluation program.	1	2	3	4	5
c. Continuing education (e.g., workshops) in evaluation-related courses.	1	2	3	4	5
d. Evidence of applying evaluation procedures as demonstrated via internships, field experiences, supervisor's review of "quality" of evaluation-related work, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
e. Attainment of some minimal years of evaluation work experience.	1	2	3	4	5
f. Letters of recommendations from teachers of evaluation courses, evaluation practitioners, or evaluation clients.	1	2	3	4	5
g. Other (Please specify) _____	1	2	3	4	5

5. How suitable should each of the following methods be for measuring competency?
(Circle one response for each item.)

Possible methods for measuring competencies:	very unsuitable	somewhat unsuitable	undecided	somewhat suitable	very suitable
a. Either a paper/pencil or computer based test to determine knowledge of core evaluation competencies.	1	2	3	4	5
b. An oral examination to determine knowledge of core evaluation competencies.	1	2	3	4	5
c. Performance in a simulated evaluation situation.	1	2	3	4	5
d. Review of competency by instructor(s) in evaluation training workshop(s).	1	2	3	4	5
e. Review of competency by former client(s) for whom evaluator has conducted evaluation work.	1	2	3	4	5
f. Other (Please specify) _____	1	2	3	4	5

6. How often should the certification process itself be evaluated and modified if necessary? (Fill-in the blank.)

Every ____ years.

7. Who should be responsible for administering the certification program? (Check one of the following.)

AEA An independent agency Other (Please explain below.)

8. Who should cover the costs of administering the certification program? (Check one of the following.)

Certification Candidates AEA via dues increase Combination of Candidates and AEA Other (Please explain below.)

9. Should an adjudication system (e.g., revocation, appeals, and reapplication of certification status) be included to review activities that may not adhere to ethical or legal guidelines for the practice of evaluation? (Check one of the following.)

Yes No

10. Should certification status be permanent or should certified evaluators be re-certified and how often? (Check one of the following and fill-in the blank if necessary.)

Permanent certification status Re-certified every ____ years

11. What do you foresee as potential **BENEFITS** of an evaluator certification process? Please try to provide at least 3 short, focused answers.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

12. Of the positive attributes that you listed above, which one you consider to be the most important? Write the letter of that selection here: _____

13. What do you foresee as potential **PROBLEMS** or **LIMITATIONS** of an evaluator certification process? Please try to provide at least 3 short, focused answers.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

14. Of the negative attributes that you listed above, which one you consider to be the most important? Write the letter of that selection here: _____

15. How confident are you that a certification process would be _____? (Circle one response for each descriptor.)

	very unconfident	somewhat unconfident	undecided	somewhat confident	very confident
a. feasible	1	2	3	4	5
b. effective	1	2	3	4	5
c. necessary	1	2	3	4	5

16. How confident are you that a certification process could be successfully implemented _____? (Circle one response for each item.)

	very unconfident	somewhat unconfident	undecided	somewhat confident	very confident
a. in the next 5 years	1	2	3	4	5
b. in the next 10 years	1	2	3	4	5
c. in the next 20 years	1	2	3	4	5

BACKGROUND AND DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS:

17. To what extent does/did the courses of your academic degree emphasize each of the aspects of evaluation practice listed below? (Circle one response for each row.)

Courses offered for your academic degree:	mostly deemphasized	somewhat deemphasized	undecided	somewhat emphasized	mostly emphasized
a. Statistical Methodology	1	2	3	4	5
b. Qualitative Methodology	1	2	3	4	5
c. Cost-Benefit Analysis	1	2	3	4	5
d. Needs Assessment	1	2	3	4	5
e. Measurement	1	2	3	4	5
f. Evaluation Theory/Models	1	2	3	4	5
g. Evaluation Research	1	2	3	4	5
h. Evaluation Practicum Experiences	1	2	3	4	5

18. For all academia degrees you have completed, please indicate the **year of completion**.

19___ Bachelor 19___ Masters 19___ Doctorate 19___ Other (Please specify) _____

19. Within the last 3 years, what has been your primary **work setting**? (Please respond by placing a "1" next to that item in the list below. If you have additional work settings in which you work at least 10% of your time, place a "2", "3", etc. next to them also. If necessary, place the same number in all boxes that apply.)

College/University Local Agency Business
 School System State Agency Self-employed
 Non-profit Organization Federal Agency Not applicable
 Other (Please specify) _____

20. Within the last 3 years, what has been your primary **evaluation setting**? (Please respond by placing a "1" next to that item in the list below. If you have additional work settings in which you work at least 10% of your time, place a "2", "3", etc. next to them also. If necessary, place the same number in all boxes that apply.)

Academic/Education Non-profit organization
 Government Independent consultant/private contractor
 Business Not applicable
 Health Other (Please specify) _____

21. For the last 3 years, estimate what percentage of your income-earning time has been devoted to **evaluation practice**.

_____ %

22. For the last 3 years, estimate what percentage of your income-earning time has been devoted to **independent consulting** or **private contracting** as an evaluator.

_____ %

23. For the background and demographic questions (i.e., items 17-22), do you feel that options were provided which adequately described you and your particular situation/experiences?

Yes No (If "no", please explain your rationale in the margins of the respective questions.)

THANK YOU for taking the time to complete this survey! We hope it was worth your time. Feel free to add comments below.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

If you would like a summary of the findings e-mailed to you, provide your e-mail address in the line below. (Note: if you do not have e-mail access then please print "mail" and indicate where you would like the findings mailed.)

E-mail address: _____

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MAILING INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Invert the fold so that the business reply information on this page is displayed for the purpose of return mailing.
2. Tape or staple the survey shut for postal acceptance. Ensure that the survey is secured in a way similar to the way that you received the survey.
3. Postage has been provided.

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Appendix C:
Survey Cover Letters

A Letter From the AEA Presidents

AEA is currently striving to advance the recognition of evaluation as a respected profession. Efforts are underway to review possible alternatives to help us reach that end. Among these efforts, two AEA task forces have been created to examine the feasibility, costs, and benefits of (1) accreditation of evaluation training programs and (2) certification of evaluators. The task forces are carefully considering whether such endeavors to improve our profession are feasible, effective, or even necessary. Regardless of the path that AEA decides to take, the process of examining the issues forces serious introspection and the time spent reflecting on them will help define what our profession is and what it is not.

Our Task Force on Certification, chaired by Jim Altschuld, has prepared a survey for obtaining the opinions of AEA members concerning possible procedures and issues for certification of evaluation practitioners. In other professions, primary reasons for enacting certification have been to measure one's competency, promote professionalism, enhance the profession's prestige, and to act as a catalyst for improving academic programs. As advantageous as these reasons may be, there are also challenges. Numerous controversial issues such as "grandparenting", costs, and legal implications of certification need to be scrutinized. Even though this AEA task force is exploring the merits and problems of certification as a voluntary process (unlike licensure, which is obligatory), any certification system would obviously have implications for evaluation practitioners.

The task force has randomly drawn a sample of AEA members whom they are asking to provide opinions about evaluator certification. You have been randomly selected as one of that sample. Your input will assist the task force in portraying accurately the viewpoints of AEA members that will be considered prior to the task force making recommendations on behalf of all AEA members. We urge you to help by completing and returning the enclosed questionnaire to the address given (Steve Jones, who is serving as an assistant to the task force, will oversee the data analysis and provide a full summary of your responses). It is estimated that the survey should take 15 minutes to complete.

The survey includes your name only for purposes of tracking responses. After checking you off as having completed the survey, your name will not be associated with any of your responses which will be entered anonymously into a database. Your responses will be confidential and only reported in group summaries, so feel free to answer each question candidly.

We cannot stress enough how important it is that you share your insights and opinions on this matter. Thank you for your participation in AEA and we look forward to learning how you and other AEA members feel about evaluator certification.

Donna M. Mertens, AEA President

Will Shadish, Immediate Past President of AEA

A Letter From AEA Presidents

Dear fellow AEA member,

As you may recall, you have been randomly selected as one of a small sample of AEA members whom we are surveying on the issue of evaluator certification. A survey was originally mailed to you back in early June. As of July 15th, our records indicate that we have not received a reply from you. We are confident that you have interest in responding to the survey, but perhaps due to your workload or some oversight, the survey was overlooked. So we are enclosing another copy of the survey, and asking that you complete and return it to us right away.

As before, the survey includes your name only for purposes of tracking responses. After checking you off as having completed the survey, your name will not be associated with any of your responses, which will be entered anonymously into a database. Your responses will be confidential and only reported in group summaries, so please answer each question candidly.

This is a crucial issue for the field. As you know, the results of a random sample survey are only as good as the response rate, so we need your response! We estimate that the survey should take only about 15 minutes to complete. Please help us out with this.

We thank you in advance for your participation in this survey, and we look forward to learning how you and other AEA members feel about evaluator certification.

Donna M. Mertens, AEA President

Will Shadish, Immediate Past President of AEA

Appendix D:
Telephone Interview Coding Sheet

Non-Response Bias Check – Interview Script

Interviewee # _____

Date	Time	Result

- Did they receive the survey? Yes No
- Do you favor a “voluntary” (as opposed to licensure) certification process? (Note: Elaborate “voluntary”) No Yes
- Within the last 3 years, what has been your primary work setting (ie, area of employment)? (Note: try to determine via feedback they provide).
 College/Univ. Local Agency Business
 School System State Agency Self-Employed
 Non-profit Org. Federal Agency Not Applicable
 Other (Please Specify) _____

- For the last 3 years, estimate what percentage of your income-earning time has been devoted to evaluation practice. _____%
- For the last 3 years, estimate what percentage of your income-earning time has been devoted to independent consulting or private contracting as an evaluator. _____%
- What is your highest academic degree and what year did you complete that degree? .
19__ Bachelor 19__ Masters 19__ Doctorate 19__ Other: _____

- How confident are you that a certification process would be _____?
(Circle one response for each descriptor.)
 - feasible
 - effective
 - necessary
- How confident are you that a certification process could be successfully implemented _____?
(Circle one response for each item.)
 - in the next 5 years
 - in the next 10 years
 - in the next 20 years

	very unconfident	somewhat unconfident	undecided	somewhat confident	very confident
a. feasible	1	2	3	4	5
b. effective	1	2	3	4	5
c. necessary	1	2	3	4	5
	very unconfident	somewhat unconfident	undecided	somewhat confident	very confident
a. in the next 5 years	1	2	3	4	5
b. in the next 10 years	1	2	3	4	5
c. in the next 20 years	1	2	3	4	5

Comments/Remarks:

Appendix E:
Additional Analyses

FREQUENCY COUNTS		PRIMARY EVALUATION SETTING								
		Academia	Govt.	Business	Consult.	Nonprofit	N/A	Other	Multiple	Total
PRIMARY WORK SETTING	University	59	4		5	3	1	3	2	77
	Local Agency		20			3				23
	Business		1	4	7					12
	Self-Employed	1	1		13	2			2	19
	Non-Profit	1				14		2	1	18
	N/A	1					1		1	3
	Other							1		1
	Multiple	1			1				4	6
	Total	63	26	4	26	22	2	6	10	159

Figure 1. Frequency cross-tabulations: Primary work setting by primary evaluation setting.

How confident are you that a certification process could be ___?			FEASIBLE		EFFECTIVE		NECESSARY				
			Ave.	SD	Ave.	SD	Ave.	SD			
DECADE OF DEGREE	>80s	(n=55)	2.9	1.4	2.4	1.2	2.4	1.2			
	80s	(n=51)	3.1	1.3	2.5	1.2	2.4	1.2			
	90s	(n=55)	3.4	1.2	3.1	1.2	3.0	1.2			
HIGHEST DEGREE	Doctoral	(n=118)	3.1	1.3	2.6	1.2	2.5	1.2			
	Non-Doctoral	(n=53)	3.3	1.3	3.0	1.3	2.7	1.2			
EVALUATION TIME	1/3 or less	(n=62)	3.4	1.3	2.9	1.3	2.9	1.3			
	Between 1/3 & 2/3	(n=22)	3.0	1.4	2.4	1.0	2.2	1.1			
	2/3 or more	(n=81)	3.1	1.3	2.7	1.3	2.6	1.2			
CONSULTING TIME	1/3 or less	(n=124)	3.1	1.2	2.7	1.3	2.6	1.2			
	Between 1/3 & 2/3	(n= 7)	4.0	1.4	2.6	1.0	2.6	0.8			
	2/3 or more	(n=28)	3.4	1.4	3.0	1.2	2.8	1.3			
How confident are you that a certification process could be ___ ?			FEASIBLE			EFFECTIVE			NECESSARY		
			F	p	η^2	F	p	η^2	F	p	η^2
DECADE OF DEGREE F(2,158)			1.97	0.14	0.02	4.9	0.01	0.06	4.3	0.02	0.05
HIGHEST DEGREE F(1,169)			0.63	0.43	0	5.65	0.02	0.03	1.18	0.28	0.01
EVALUATION TIME F(2,163)			0.75	0.47	0.01	1.34	0.26	0.02	2.4	0.09	0.03
CONSULTING TIME F(2,156)			1.7	0.19	0.02	0.91	0.4	0.01	0.23	0.79	0

Figure 2. Descriptive and inferential analyses for subgroupings of respondents pertaining to their level of confidence that a certification process could be feasible, effective, and necessary.

Appendix F:
Most Important Limitations and Benefits
Perceived By Survey Respondents

% of respond -ents	LIMITATIONS
25%	Diversity of Field: <i>How to cover breadth of field; defining core competencies; determining what is "quality"; establishing acceptable process; different skills needed in various arenas; variation in experience for those grandparented</i>
18%	Logistics: <i>Cost, time, resources, and labor needed for development, implementation, administration, and marketing; legality issues; bureaucracy; unforeseen problems; delayed financial rewards, if any</i>
16%	Gatekeeping: <i>Stifles innovation; develops hierarchy among evaluators; excludes non-orthodox practitioners; barrier for existing evaluators not eligible for grandparent clause; process dictates one's educational/experiential path</i>
13%	Validity/Reliability: <i>Potential focus on academic vs. application perspective; inability to measure quality; assessment via closed-ended response system; doesn't prevent unethical conduct; no assurance that prerequisites matter</i>
7%	Lack of Support: <i>Requires massive buy-in; market for traditionally trained evaluators is weak...field survives via adaptability; agencies perceive certification meaningless due to variability in certification systems/standards</i>
3%	Other: <i>Takes focus off of more critical areas; discourages self-assessment</i>
1%	No Limitations
17%	No Response
% of respond -ents	BENEFITS
23%	Improve Quality of Profession: <i>Less sub-standard evaluators; assurance of competency; keep opportunists from cashing in on evaluation contracts; forces evaluators to keep up with current practices/methods</i>
14%	Standards/Standardization: <i>Standardization of basic/core skills and knowledge; focuses training programs; increased professional standards; encourages ethical practice; ensures a common "language" among evaluators</i>
14%	Consumer Protection: <i>Increases consumer confidence; objective indicator for selecting qualified/competent evaluators; provides a database to find specialists; distinguishes between evaluators and pseudo-evaluators</i>
12%	Profession's Image: <i>Adds credibility/legitimacy to the field; acceptance of role of evaluation in organizations; increases respect/prestige for AEA and its members; promotes evaluation's stature as a profession/separate discipline</i>
3%	Evaluator Marketability: <i>Increases consulting work opportunities; career enhancement/professional advancement; resume builder; increases salary potential; portrays professionalism</i>
1%	Other: <i>Provides opportunity to have abilities reviewed by experts</i>
5%	No Benefits
28%	No Response

Figure 3. Most important limitations and benefits perceived by survey respondents.

Appendix G:
Open-Ended Comments Pertaining to the
Pros and Cons of Evaluator Certification

case	Question 11 Pros of Certification	Question 13 Cons of Certification	Miscellaneous Comments
1	None	A•Disagreement over core competencies b•Disagreement over approaches to evaluation c•Resistance from traditional academic disciplines	
2	a•Looks good on a resume B•Helps (potentially) potential clients identify "qualified" evaluators	A•Given the breadth and complexity of evaluation work, and the diversity of what constitutes "good" evaluation practice, coming up with a standard set of questions and answers seems like a very difficult problem: a = breadth & complexity of evaluation work b = diversity of good evaluation practice c = difficulty of setting uniform standards	
3	A•Set basic standards for an evaluator b•Client would have way of comparing evaluators	a•No legal requirements for hiring of certified evaluator b•How would this relate to international evaluators c•No minimum standard in training programs exists now D•Evaluators have backgrounds from variety of programs – education, public policy, etc, human services	Accreditation of programs may be difficult because of the various programs in which they are housed. This will only work if some legislative requirement at federal & maybe state to hire only certified evaluators. Is there a degree requirement for the care requirements – how will this relate to years of experience. Could be levels of certification – temporary, permanent – renewable after – # of years or could be moved to permanent.
4	A•Promotes evaluation as a separate discipline b•Applies minimum standards c•Increases stature of the profession and legitimize	a•Expensive to develop B•Unwieldy to administer c•Some competent individuals may not qualify	
5	A•Protect unknowing clients from incompetent evaluators b•May assist us in obtaining liability insurance in the future, if needed c•Standardize – somewhat – the training & education of students	a•Defining basic core competencies B•Measuring basic core competencies in a cost-effective manner c•Excluding people who are qualified through unusual means d•May not be meaningful to clients who currently use personal recommendations	

(table continues)

Figure 4. Open-ended comments pertaining to the pros and cons of evaluator certification.¹³

¹³ For each respondent (i.e., case), the Benefits and Limitations they perceived as being the most important, respectively, are indicated using upper-case letters in the "a, b, c, etc." listings. For example, respondent #1, stated that "Disagreement over core competencies" (as indicated with an upper-case letter A) is foreseen as the most important limitation of an evaluation certification process.

6		A•Very qualified evaluators not meeting criteria because of uncreative, inflexible standards b•Not a credible credential c•No uniform definition of evaluation	
7		a•Normative criteria b•Seen as self-serving C•Closed system response	
8	a•Assures some consistency in field B•Assures clients will get assistance they need	a•Getting agreement on measurements/requirements b•Assuring process is fair c•Assuring requirements enforced consistently D•Assuring requirements really make a difference	
9	A•Provides an operational definition of the profession b•Would help clients select qualified evaluators c•Faces an assessment of key evaluator competencies	a•Cost & time B•Bureautization of the profession	
10	A•Distinction between evaluators and others, such as researchers b•Increase my fees?	A•Criteria used – what if I don't agree with them? b•Cost in time and money c•More paperwork d•Finding space on my office wall e•If I don't do it, will it harm me at some point?	I don't feel I have enough knowledge of possible process to adequately evaluate this proposal. The biggest concern is who the heck thinks they can evaluate me as an evaluator? We can't even all agree on what evaluation is. Would I give this quest a passing grade?
11	A•Maintain level of quality	a•Paperwork B•Person power needed	
12	A•Some designated minimal standards being met to call oneself an evaluator b•Higher quality of evaluations c•Some criteria on which to base selection of an evaluator	a•Setting of specific standards (criteria) B•Uniformity of application of criteria	

(table continues)

13		<p>a•Development of academically-based cliques b•Subjectiveness of competency review subject to bias/collusion c•Certifications are only as good as the ethics of those possessing the credential d•Limitations may be placed on individuals/degrees coming from specific schools or "values" (x is better than y, because is on AEA board, etc)</p>	<p>Personally, I do not believe that certification, in and of itself is a desirous outcome. If "evaluation" is attempting to 'grow up' by credentialing itself as a profession, I believe it is misleading itself. I have worked with a wide range of individuals who either are or purpose to be, evaluators of one form or another. Because I work for the federal government, and am in Washington, D.C., I am most familiar with "beltway bandit" firms that bid on evaluation contracts. Although I've spent 15 years in the evaluation business (with GAO and as a member of an evaluation group (consumer of services), I am of the opinion that the bottom line (money, politics, other contracts, etc.) drives many, if not the majority, of evaluators to force fit the design of their evaluations to the sponsor's needs. I may be cynical, but I've not seem many publicly funded programs evaluated w/o external influence (unless it was by a foundation – which raises entirely different questions of "approach" and funding ethics and sources)</p>
14	<p>A•Consumer protection b•Conflict resolution c•Advancement of the field</p>	<p>A•How would consumers know? How would certification be sold? b•No teeth c•Liability of the certifying body</p>	
15	<p>a•Increase levels of competence B•Increase ethical standards c•Ability to weed out incompetent evaluators</p>	<p>a•May restrict opportunities for ethnic minorities b•Too "cookie cutter" approach to evaluation – lose creative approaches C•Too focused on quantitative approach</p>	
16	<p>A•Professional legitimacy b•Evidence of competency c•Peer recognition</p>	<p>a•Organizations (private, public, non-profit) not valuing certification B•Organizations not hiring/selecting those who are certified over others c•Clients and practitioners not able to distinguish between "certification" and "licensure"</p>	
17	<p>A•Accountability: to encourage ethical practice b•Demonstrates competency – whether minimal or advanced c•Provides standard for hiring d•Provides standard for practice</p>	<p>a•Difficulty in devising measure of competency B•Difficulty in providing training necessary to become certified</p>	Excellent survey construction
18	<p>A•Quality of evaluators b•Appropriate training c•Increased awareness in the field</p>	<p>A•Logistics, governance</p>	

(table continues)

19	<p>A•Consumer protection – allows clients to sort out competent from another evaluator</p> <p>b•Raise the bar as far as what evaluators recognize they need to learn to be good evaluators</p> <p>c•Potentially, certification could validate some of the more progressive perspectives in the role of evaluation</p>	<p>A•There is only minimal agreement when AEA (and within the profession) about purpose and evaluation (learning vs. accountability vs. research)</p> <p>b•The skills required by an evaluator are highly dependent upon topic and use – “core skills” would be too small to be useful</p> <p>c•Certification could become a means of artificially “resolving” the qualitative-quantitative debate</p> <p>d•Potential for abuse in determining what needs to be know and practiced if one is to do “competent” evaluation</p>	<p>As I tried to spell out in Q13, I don't think evaluation is a ripe “discipline” for certification. It is nothing like accounting in terms of standard practices – and it would be scary to think that AEA was pushing the field in that direction. As a consumer of evaluation (in \$2 million/year), I am concerned that the researchers who are most effective in helping us learn and document programmatic outcomes are not the ones that AEA would necessarily capture in a certification process. Evaluation is a disputed field; we should allow at least a few more years of diversification, creativity and learning before getting so presumptuous to think that we can delineate and assess the competencies that promote “good” evaluation across such a wide spectrum of users.</p>
20		<p>a•Verification</p> <p>b•Who is qualified to certify the certifiers?</p>	<p>Q14 Certification does not address ethical issues – the most important ones</p> <p>I direct a Program Evaluation Group within a university. We have \$10⁶ annual contracts, train doctoral students and employ 10-15 academic staff (part time teaching, part time evaluation work). We have an excellent national reputation, publish, present papers, etc. I have no formal training in social science and have no interest in certification.</p>
21	<p>a•Adds professional stature to the profession</p> <p>B•Minimum standard of competence</p> <p>c•Creates benchmarks professional programs should train towards</p>	<p>a•If it's too easy to obtain, it becomes meaningless</p> <p>B•Objective standards of professional competence may be difficult to create.</p> <p>c•The process of accreditation will be labor-intensive, and potentially burdensome</p>	<p>Q17 Assumes an “evaluation” degree. I was trained as a sociologist.</p>
22	<p>A•List would be an objective indicator of capability in field for managers without significant experience – in contracting for services</p>	<p>A•“Evaluation” work is much to different to have a “one-size-fits-all” cert. system</p>	<p>Most of my evaluation work is in the field of education. The evaluation tasks (and my work) range from pro bono services to particular schools to national studies leading to reports to Congress. The range of needs for services are so great that a one-size-fits-all certification probably would be inappropriate. Furthermore, “evaluation” is a field of practice that has many areas of specializations – design, field processes, measurement, data analysis, interpretation, presentation, etc. Large scale projects should use teams of specialists – not assuming that all are equally good in all those task areas. Furthermore, I as many of my professional colleagues, “slid into” evaluation and became a specialist over time through my own work to help develop my skills and the field of practice.</p>

(table continues)

23		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a•Self-serving b•Keep evaluation separate from other functional areas: planning/OD, etc. C•Will never be able to cover the different kinds of practice/theory. The common denominator approach will make it meaningless 	<p>Q23 I did not major in evaluation – but took courses as part of a ?/planning major – where does this issue come out for respondents? Q20 Not clear – is this my affiliation or my clients?</p>
24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A•Certification: help keep con artists out of the picture b•Provide some assurance as to source for reliability: directory c•Raise standards (potentially possible) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a•Political aspects of who/which/etc. B•Authentication procedures fair/non-biased/valid/reliable 	Q7 But AEA should hold/retain policy/oversight
25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A•Database to find specialist b•Notoriety c•Personal achievement 		
26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A•Professionalism b•Referral listing c•Quality assurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A•Logistics of implementation b•Cost c•Legal issues 	
27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a•Helps clients select among potential evaluation consultants B•Codifies what evaluators are expected to know and be able to do c•Promotes professional image 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A•Securing agreement on measures of competency b•Separates "evaluators" from other professionals who conduct evaluations but also do other things c•Channels energy into bureaucracy building 	
28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A•Standardization of procedures b•Viability vis-a-vis public, esp. clients c•Raise standards to acceptable level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A•Bureaucracy tends to gain weight b•Accountability 	Q6 Once after 2 years; less frequently thereafter
29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a•Standards for professional evaluation practice b•Self-regulation of the profession C•Greater understanding/use of evaluation products d•Public education of evaluator work/worth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A•Increasing segmentation of professional programs b•Cost c•Administrative difficulties 	
30	I do not see this as beneficial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A•Takes focus off of more critical areas b•Serves as attempt to limit access (for wrong reasons) c•Criteria for evaluation credentials distorts need d•Approach is discriminatory 	
31	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a•No need for it b•Would be mishandled, mismanaged C•Criteria would be trivialized d•Lowers the status of the field 	

(table continues)

32	None	a•The lack of agreement regarding what are core competencies B•The continuing qualitative/quantitative debate that dictates what are core competencies and what constitutes a "skilled" evaluator	This is a very tough issue for me. On the one hand you would think that I should support certification; however I have very little confidence that those involved in this could come up with a "fair" system for "grandfathering" in those who should be recognized as skilled evaluators. I understand the philosophical underpinnings of quantitative and qualitative methodology & do not see how these can be reconciled. I am afraid one philosophy will dominate and to hell with the rest of the field. Q6 Once—Oh my lord! You've got to be kidding! Q9 How can there be when we don't have true standards. Lawyers I have talked with stated that neither the Guiding Principles nor the Program Evaluation Standards can be viewed as "legal standards." Q15 How about "fair"
33	a•Marketing b•Professional standards C•Higher quality for clients	a•Feasibility b•Cost C•Potential focus on academic vs. application perspective	
34	A•Professionalism b•Reliability		
35	a•Recognition of evaluation as a distinct set of skills		
36	A•More prestige for AEA b•Somewhat increased reliability in identifying competent evaluators c•Mechanism for punishing unethical behavior d•Clarified training objectives	A•Validity of certification virtually impossible to ascertain b•Narrowing of definition of competence c•Costly process d•Certification can work for technicians but not for professionals	Q14 Clinical psychology certification is highly questionable at present (no validity evidence beyond "content validity" of exam and that's highly political). New idea: specified research justified competencies – has its own serious problems Q17 Because I trained a long time ago it's relevant that I completed an NSF-sponsored post-doc in evaluation research
37	A•Provides credibility to field b•Assures competency of individual	A•Field too diverse to define core requirements b•Knowledge of program content nearly as important as eval. methodology c•Subjectivity in judging competency	
38			
39	a•Single certification guarantees all customers basic core competencies	a•Multiple certifications might be confusing to the customer	Q21 Unclear what this question wants. All my work could be interpreted as having an evaluation component to it but AEA may not recognize my work as evaluation.
40	A•Ensure clients can hire true evaluators, not "technical assistance" folks who say they can also do evaluation. b•Better define the profession for practitioners & potential practitioners c•Bringing together skills and tools of evaluation practitioners from different fields	A•Different skills are needed to evaluate in various arenas. b•Differences of opinion among professionals about what skills are minimal c•Logistics and costs of administration	

(table continues)

41	A•Increase awareness of criteria for evaluation quality b•Introduces minimal qualifications	A•Invalid b•Expensive	
42	a•it could provide a short statement of what an evaluator is and does B•It might remove the mystery of how to interpret the applicability of experiences to a job one applies to do c•Well, heck, barbers and hair stylists are licensed, but we aren't even certified	a•It appears that the cost will be very high per person B•It is not yet clear that this "solution" will solve a problem – or just what the problem is c•Some clients don't like the term "evaluator"; the certification might put people (possible clients) off.	I would have guessed that the content of one's grad training might have been requested. Q16 I'm puzzled by the question. Are you asking whether I expect members of support this?
43	a•Quality assurance b•Improved professional status c•Mandatory continuing education D•Improved skill sets	a•Volunteer effort B•Costs vs. delayed financial rewards, if any c•Apathy	You might call Dr. Jill Varnes, college of Health & Human Performance at the Univ. of Florida where she is an assistant dean. She did a state-level professional certification program and was involved in starting one nationally.
44	a•Tool for universities to evaluate faculty competence b•Tool to evaluate quality of evaluation training programs C•Resume enhancement for evaluator	a•Lawsuits from people who fail to achieve certification B•Internal divisions in AEA between certified & uncertified c•Standards too low	
45	a•Aid to clients in assessing evaluators B•Clarification of standards of practice c•Clarification of goals for training programs	A•Substitutes "process" standards of "product quality" standards b•Doesn't apply well to the most skilled evaluators – Rand, MDRC, etc. c•Raises the floor, not the ceiling (focuses on minimum performance, not optimal performance)	Q19 & Q20 are hopelessly redundant – a real failure for the evaluators!!
46		A•Problem of how to measure/test for competencies b•Problem of who would administer such a test c•What time period would certification be good for?	
47	none	a•Little connection between certification & actual work b•Exclude appropriate persons from our work C•This is not a profession	It is a mistake to take on the symbols of 'profession.' Certification will do little to change acceptance of our collective work & will not assist individuals in their quest for money, status, or acceptance
48	A•Increased consulting work b•Better publicity for evaluators c•Development of standards for the field	A•Take time b•Limited financial impact on consulting fees c•Expense for candidates	
49	A•Assurance of competency	A•Defining the common set of competencies that all evaluators must exhibit b•Cost c•Reliable assessment	
50	A•Provide some assurance to clients that they are having a competent evaluator b•Increase the credibility of the profession	a•Difficult to implement, monitor	
51	A•Better quality evaluations b•More qualified practitioners c•Increased professional standing d•Hopefully more useful (and used) reports/findings	a•Hassle (who doesn't already have too much paperwork?) b•Cost c•Games people play D•Finding common ground/agreement	Good effort – keep us posted on the program!

(table continues)

52		a•Regulating body more academic than practice focused B•Some of the best students who have worked with me had strong research but no evaluation so they would be left out of the field	
53	a•Some may think it professionalizes the work b•Some degree of credibility	a•Administration cost & difficulties b•Poor ability to make a difference – so what? c•No assurance of professional ethics	
54	A•Career enhancement	A•Those who do not go through the ? will be "lesser qualified" though they may be great	
55	a•Limiting the supply of qualified evaluators increases market value of being certified (doubt this will happen) b•Minimum qualifying entry standards set	a•I don't trust AEA or others to get the definition/concepts for evaluation right – I don't agree with many of my colleagues b•Good people will be kept out by arbitrary procedures/standards C•Poor evaluators will gain greater shelter from criticism of poor work	Professional certification just to increase status and clout (such as teacher certification movements) is a bad idea
56		a•Expense b•Access to quality/appropriate training C•Creating unnecessary barriers to professional practice	
57			
58	A•Credentially b•Minimum standards of competency & ethical behavior c•"Professionalization" of the field	A•Many methodologies practiced (qual/quant) b•Different skills needed for different types of eval. work c•Certification would set a <u>minimum</u> standard for competency	
59	A•Increased public stature of profession b•Definition of standards that are assessable/measurable c•guidelines for maintaining professional competence if re-certification every x years is required	a•Process doesn't really differentiate among competent and non-competent B•Individual's time and cost to prepare for certification process c•It doesn't add value to professionals in real world	
60	a•Elimination of untrained practitioners B•Increased professional standards	A•Academic coursework alone is insufficient, must have field experience	
61			
62	A•Respect as a professional discipline b•Better definition of the discipline c•Marketability of the discipline	a•Development of standards b•"Meaning" of certification outside the field C•Will only work if there is massive buy-in	

(table continues)

<p>63</p>	<p>A•Promotes evaluation as a profession b•Provides "some" basis for evaluation consumers to select potential evaluators c•Provides some mechanisms for "quality control" in the profession d•Codifies a common body of knowledge and skills for those individuals who call themselves evaluators</p>	<p>A•Defining evaluation "competence" b•Developing standards for measuring competence c•Monitoring those who have been "certified" to assure continued competence and adherence to ethical principles and guidelines for evaluation practice</p>	<p>A key element for me in my evaluation practice is the skill that I have in developing a relationship with the program and staff of the program I am evaluating. I tend I must rely a great deal on my interpersonal skills to a great extent to gain the trust of the program staff. I also must rely on my communication skills to adequately interpret evaluation findings in a way that is useful to the program staff. These are skills that cannot be assessed by a certification process that are invaluable to the evaluator who works in the non-profit sector where many of the clients and programs are wary of being "evaluated." I still believe, however, that certification can have many benefits for evaluation professionals. However, it should not be misconstrued as the total measure of an evaluator's degree of skill or competence. We all know a lot of social workers, psychologists and doctors who have been certified by their profession via some exam process who are not very good at what they actually do in their profession. I don't know an easy way around this issue but felt it needed to be raised.</p>
<p>64</p>	<p>A•Minimize amount of poor work being done in the name of "evaluation" b•Increase respect for evaluation as a profession c•Help focus attention & efforts of students of evaluation on important stuff d•Encourage practitioners to continually revisit the questions of what are "core" competencies for eval, and what constitutes "good" professional practice</p>	<p>a•Finding the money & manpower needed to implement it well over the long run B•Allowing the process to dictate one educational/experiential path to competency C•Letting criteria be opinion polls of clients/instructors/peers rather than objective measures of competency B & C equally</p>	<p>1)In answering Q2 & 3, I assume a two level (say, provisional & permanent) certification process. The lower level could test for basic level competency in "core" knowledge base, analytic techniques, etc., and could be taken right out of school. The upper level would test for more advanced competencies, likely to be developed through work experience, such as developing complex evaluation plans, dealing with client issues, etc. "Grandfathered" practitioners might skip directly to the 2nd-level exam (...similar to licencing exam structure in engineering...), or in some other way be required to demonstrate competency in conducting evaluations, from initial planning, through analysis, through reporting back. 2)...and this is critical... be sure to offer an opportunity to all evaluation practitioners who are part of AEA (probably your biggest batch of stakeholders with clout enough to make this effort fail) to provide input on what the "core competencies" of eval. practice are, from their perspective. If left solely to a select, "insider" committee, to decide this, it will never fly Q10 Revokable if poor/unethical practice Q16 answer c – If you wait this long, it will never happen!</p>
<p>65</p>	<p>A•Identity as a profession b•Some common understanding of what evaluators do (& don't do) c•Reduction of evaluation misunderstandings</p>	<p>A•Disagreement among evaluators as to competencies that count b•Over-standardization c•Possible narrowing the definition of evaluation</p>	

(table continues)

66	A•Client confidence	A•It creates a hierarchy among evaluators	
67	a•Improved practice & resultant assurance of competence to clients b•Generation of professional conversation and reflection	a•Politicization b•Appeals for adjudication or decertification by unhappy but wrong clients c•Imposition of certifiers' models, persuasions, ethics d•Creation of yet more bureaucracy	Q7 Well, here's the conundrum. This move to improve & certify competency also politicizes an already over-politicized profession.
68		A•Difficulties in agreeing on core competencies – not only within program evaluation, but also within types of programs (e.g., health, education) and across evaluation specialties – e.g., personnel, products, etc.	What provisions will be made to adjudicate among opposing ideological camps (e.g., Yvonna Lincoln vs. Lee Sechrest)? I am not an expert in certification. I would want to be assured that the process, if developed and implemented, adequately addressed some well-recognized and widely accepted set of standards for establishing the process. Because of my present low level of expertise, I am not a good evaluator of a certification system. The results you got on here will likely ensure that respondents would be certified. Does this make for a good certification system. Certification and licensure are often used to limit membership and thereby ensure the financial well-being of members. Is this part of the reason for the surge toward certification? Q5 My responses assume that the profession can arrive at a set of competencies agreeable to the various ideological camps. This assumption might be inaccurate.
69	a•Uniform standards for evaluators b•Control of unqualified persons/organizations c•Excellent for image of the profession d•If we don't do it, someone (thing) will do it to us down the road	a•Hard to test in such an eclectic & diverse area b•Hard to nail down specializations beyond "quant-qual" distinctions c•Validation will be difficult	It's a good idea but would be a nightmare to operationalize. Good luck Q7 Consortium of AEA, evaluators, & clients Q20 Not clear – work on grants & contracts with govt, business, health, non-profits, etc.
70	A•I would like to have my abilities reviewed by experts b•Improvement of my skills c•Marketing potential for me as a consultant	a•Inequality of applying standards B•Using "easy" methods of determine qualifications that are of questionable validity	
71	A•Provide some standard for evaluators & clients b•To promote the status of practicing evaluators c•To provide guidelines for curricula/training/development of evaluators	A•It is difficult to make improvement by legislation (certification) mandatory b•Many capable evaluators not in AEA might ignore certification c•During transition many veteran evaluators might be offended by the idea	This is a very ambition but worthy pursuit. I remember the beginning of evaluation standards discussion, which seemed an almost insurmountable task. But thanks to Dan Stufflebeam (and others in APA) the task was accomplished, better than most believed possible. Certification may work – it's a long, difficult journey, but probably an important one – good luck Q17 Evaluation was not a respectable academic study in the early 1960s (Except for a very few [Ralph Tyler, etc.])
72	A•Helps evaluation to be seen as a profession b•Provides credibility to professional evaluators	A•Restricts evaluation training to a few b•Inhibits the efforts of part-time evaluators c•Unnecessary paperwork d•Bureaucratic procedures	

(table continues)

73	A•Establish minimum competencies	A•Agreement on what skills satisfy certification b•Problems of implementation	
74	a•Consistent application of theory & concepts B•Acceptance of role of evaluation in organizations c•Credibility for profession	a•Not all evaluators come from same educational background B•Diversity of field--testing that is fair & equitable c•Enough people becoming certified to give credibility to process	Please look at American Institute of Certified Planners – very similar situation with diversity of occupations & backgrounds of planners I am a certified planner, come into evaluation process as a necessity of job functions. No formal training, on-the-job, reading, etc. net working
75	a•A core of knowledge based practices B•A specific standard (minimum) c•Credibility to the discipline/field	a•Defining those core practices or knowledge base B•"Policing" certification reviews, etc.	
76	a•Can't think of any	a•Confusion among consumers B•People will conduct "evaluation" as "research" & not require certification c•Impossible to monitor	Most, if not all, of my colleagues see no need for certification; they believe (rightly or wrongly) their content/method graduate training & experience qualifies them to "evaluate" in their speciality areas. Q17 c. Cost-benefit analysis – Had to learn on my own post graduate school f. Evaluation theory/models – g. Evaluation research – h. Evaluation practicum experiences –These were not options available when I was in graduate school
77	A•Improves level of competency for the profession as a whole b•More recognition of the profession c•Attract more talented individuals to the profession d•Increase in resources devoted to evaluation	a•Determining what actually constitutes the "core" competencies B•Obtaining sufficient financial resources to support the certification process and to properly administer it c•Judging whether certification has or is achieving the objectives	
78	A•Advancement of the field by improved quality of evaluations b•Increased interest in the study of evaluation c•Increased demand for certified evaluators d•Increased salaries for evaluators	a•Consumption of time & money designing & implementing the process B•Fundors of evaluations won't care	Nice survey
79	a•Providing a cadre of trained practitioners B•Increasing confidence in evaluation profession c•Increasing respect for evaluation profession	a•Devising certification process that really works b•Persuading all evaluators to participate C•Devising requirements that are meaningful	I sense that many people "fall into" evaluation in unpredictable ways, & they may have no formal training in evaluation. Even people who work as "evaluators" may do many other things (data-collecting, proposal-writing) & their "evaluation" work may be "masked" as "assessment" or "mere descriptive work." Q17 My academic degree was totally apart from evaluation (probably many people "fall into" evaluation).
80	a•This would, in part, begin to inform consumers of evaluation that quality is an important issue b•Eliminate untrained evaluators doing unacceptable work C•Improve the quality all around	a•Disagreement among evaluators about which paradigm is acceptable B•Disagreement about "what is quality"	
81	a•Professional evaluators will have basic knowledge about evaluation theory and processes b•Clients will have assurances that an evaluator has basic skills	a•The cost of a certification process and its maintenance b•Measuring competencies in an accurate and just manner	Q10 May just need some assurances that the evaluator is learning new evaluation concepts. Could use workshops, AEA annual meetins, other conferences, etc., as acceptable criteria.

(table continues)

82	A•Enforcement of standards of performance b•Greater recognition/prestige of the profession c•Impetus for educational progress	a•Artificial exclusivity of the profession B•Limiting users of evaluation services c•Increased costs	
83		a•Cost b•Exclusion of budding professionals C•Most recently the Home Economics profession moved toward certification – now not one seems to pay any attention to it – a waste of time and money	
84	A•Adherence to standards in evaluations b•Better understand of roles of evaluators c•Differentiation of research & evaluation (this would help solve the human subjects review conundrum on some campuses).	None	
85	A•Eliminate "evaluators" with no training or experience b•Formalize core competencies c•Improve content & quality of evaluation training programs d•Improve CE opportunities for evaluators	a•Training opportunities currently may not meet needs of those seeking certicator. B•Very difficult to initially establish – expensive, time-consuming, lots of unforeseen problems to be worked out c•May be unjust initially in some instances d•Needs to be implemented very carefully & thoughtfully	1) Great job on this survey! Thanks for all your work in our behalf!
86		a•It freezes the profession to current state of the art B•It stifles innovation c•It excludes non-mainstream viewpoints & demographics d•No empirical evidence that Standards would be enforced on current members (evidence from man other fields).	
87	A•Enhanced quality of evaluations b•Protection of customers (assurance of minimal quality) c•Higher status of evaluators	a•Complexity b•Bureaucracy c•Inequity D•Inability to measure quality/competency with validity	
88	a•Marketing (of evaluators who work as consultants B•Professionalism & profession status of AEA c•Establishment of basic competencies (to be reflected in eval. curriculum) d•Feedback re: preparation of evaluators & program that prepare evaluation	A•Agreement on credentialing & preparation (e.g., many evaluator come from a variety of professional programs, such as clinical psychology)	
89	A•Minimizing of work by incompetent "evaluators" b•Appropriate recognition of competent evaluators c•Facilitation of selection of evaluator by project person	a•Cost in terms of time b•Cost in terms of money c•Possibility of low reliability D•Possibility of low validity	
90	a•Increased definition of field b•Increased commonality of evaluation language/methods	A•How to cover breadth of field b•How to keep up to date c•Cost	
91	a•I can think of no benefits	a•I think "certification" means little or nothing to people b•Paper/pencil or computer tests are bogus c•How can core competencies be defined? D•This seems exclusionary and protectionist – very offensive to me	

(table continues)

92	a•Nothing	A•One model/paradigm controlling the process and locking out non-"orthodox" practitioners	
93	a•Better information for clients regarding competencies of evaluator B•Control over profession c•Agreement over standards for quality evaluations	a•Grandfathering "evaluators" with little formal training yet are considered evaluators in their field b•No "B" C•Need to be inclusive of all evaluation methodologies & theories	It would be helpful to coordinate certification efforts with local chapters of AEA. The Southeast Evaluation Association would be a resource for AEA and may be able to play a role in the certification of evaluators
94	a•Better understanding by society of what evaluators do b•Convergence on definitions of practice C•Higher quality work-reduction of second rate research being labeled evaluation	A•Resistance by colleagues who do not consider evaluation a profession b•Needs high level of organization around these processes c•Existing higher ed. programs will have to change somewhat	If you need help doing this, please contact me!!!
95	A•Credibility in government agency	A•Excludes excellent specialized evaluators: evaluators who have divergent views	1) Voluntary certification is fine 2) Grandfather folks in – reduces objection for a good part of population 3) This process/certification can be useful to a part of the membership but irrelevant to the majority of evaluators who are not even associated with AEA, etc. 4) Danger – a) excluding high quality evaluators because of divergent views; b) is used to sanction instead or ensure quality
96	A•Professional advancement b•Potential financial rewards c•Personal satisfaction	a•Not recognized outside the field B•Perception that certification by an agency is somewhat meaningless (i.e., certification standards vary greatly) c•Certification standards may be less achievable in some regions of the country (e.g., access to academic programs, internships, etc.)	
97	a•More credibility for evaluation profession B•Forces evaluators to keep up with current practices and methods through continuing ed., etc. c•Encourages students to examine & explore evaluation profession	a•Might limit the profession – keep people out because of expenses, etc. b•No staff to handle certification process and individual reviews C•Lack of support from current evaluators	Please keep me advised of the direction of certification! I am very interested and would like to get involved in any way I can
98	A•More competent evaluators b•Less bias due to conflict of interest with in-house intrained evaluators c•Standard of selection of evaluators	A•Lack of recognition of certification b•Resistance of unqualified, yet practicing evaluators c•Establishment of certified programs in colleges	
99	A•Qualified evaluators identified b•Field would be accountable c•Clients would have a resource for evaluators d•Move field toward a profession	a•"Policing" the practice b•Keeping certifications current C•Gaining acceptance of certification	
100	a•Common definitions of terminology b•Minimum competencies of evaluators C•More informed utilization of evaluation	a•Challenge to "grandfather" people in b•Implementing professional standards/certification c•Reaching agreement on adequate combination of education & experience necessary to be "certifiable" as an evaluator	

(table continues)

101	<p>a•Increase the visibility of evaluation B•Enhance the quality of evaluations performed c•Provide a way for clients to select competent evaluators d•Provide evaluators with a marketable professional credential</p>	<p>a•Developing "core evaluation competencies" in a field with many diverse views, methodologies and philosophies b•Turning away some who have much to offer but who don't want to pursue the effort of certification c• No "c" D•Narrowing the field to the most widely accepted practices, thereby stifling creative thinking and the use of innovative ideas</p>	<p>1) While I can see many benefits to certification of evaluators, I am concerned about how "core competencies" will be defined – and by whom. There are many approaches to evaluation currently in use – and of use in a wide range of evaluation settings. Will certification limit these approaches and the continuing evolution of the field? I'm not sure, but I do believe it is very important to consider this when considering certification. 2) If "a certified professional evaluator" should come to denote someone with very specific skills, where will the creativity and innovation come from that are vital to the development of new ways to evaluate new kinds of programs and help advance not only the evaluation field but social programming as well?</p>
102	<p>A•Credibility to the evaluation field b•Credibility for evaluators c•Performance guidelines & standards</p>	<p>A•Labor intensive initially b•Agreeing on policies & procedures c•Getting the word out</p>	
103	<p>a•Identify persons with formal training or demonstrated experience B•Improve the practice of evaluation and its contribution to policy and programs c•Gives the field status as a profession</p>	<p>a•Could be ignored as relevant if key persons in the field do not participate b•Could become as exclusive club to limit access to the field C•Could be screening out device & not improve practice</p>	
104	<p>a•Evaluators seen as professionals in evaluation b•Assures integrity C•Protects consumer</p>	<p>A•Must be a valid process b•Some skills hard to measure</p>	
105	<p>a•More responsible evaluation b•Better performance & increased satisfaction on part of clients c•No "C" D•Less sub-standard evaluators</p>	<p>a•Monitoring the system B•Possible loss of creative methods c•Need to educate clients on what is "good" d•Need to develop a way to include the expanding knowledge base</p>	
106	<p>A•Evaluation clients could be better served if they use certified professional b•Certified evaluators could market self as such c•Universities would offer more eval. programs or contin. ed. in evaluation</p>	<p>A•Very cumbersome because of large numbers of practitioners in very diverse areas of evaluation b•Would require much, much more time by AEA</p>	<p>Why was no return deadline given on the survey or the cover letters?</p>
107	<p>A•Standardization of evaluation knowledge and, possible, practice b•Up-to-date knowledge or current theory & best practices</p>	<p>A•Exclusionary and elitist b•Availability of certified educational programs c•Dependent on measurements that might not reflect reality</p>	
108	<p>a•Weed out those not in practice B•Add some validity to practice c•Gain added acceptance for recommendations & possible change</p>	<p>A•Evaluation will become "theoretical" and academic b•Could limit those in our organization now & we'd lose diversity</p>	<p>Do not presuppose that everyone has a theoretical based evaluation background</p>

(table continues)

109	<p>a•Prestige in the field b•Accountability c•Reliability & credibility d•Keeping abreast of current trends –1) forcing folks to keep abreast on their own, 2) forcing colleges & universities to have grad. evaluation programs, 3) forcing programs to differ from research</p>	<p>a•Snobbishness and keeping folks out of the “loop” (define “loop” anyway you want) b•Elitism among the more well known evaluators in the field c•It means nothing to the outside world d•Field “wars” between researchers/statisticians/psychometricians/measurement experts/ and evaluators.</p>	<p>1) I’m tired of researchers & measurement folk feeling that just because they are good at statistics and some at computer programming (e.g., SAS & SPSS) they are better evaluators. 2) I also feel that universities and colleges should demand that evaluation students take a stats core of: STATS I & II and Regression and Factor Analysis. They should take another core in: Qualitative Research including: Case Studies, Ethnography, Focus Groups, Interviews, Surveys, Field Research. 3) A practicum should be done in schools, agencies, organizations, businesses, etc. In order to know the climate and do an effective evaluation, it helps to know the arena you’re working in 4) I also feel that Qualitative Research is extremely important and should be emphasized as a dual partnership with Quantitative. The qualitative part puts the “clothes on the skeletons” of the numbers.</p>
110	<p>A•Quality of evaluators b•Help contractors (employer) evaluate the contractee (employee) c•Evaluators should have a standard base of knowledge</p>	<p>a•Educating consumers about the meaning of the certification b•Monitoring the abuses of certification c•Determining competency d•Determining what is the most general knowledge base all certified should possess</p>	
111	<p>A•Clients may have a better idea of who to hire and what to expect b•Standardization and better definition of the field c•Whatever the criteria are, these areas would get more emphasis and become more developed (e.g., If grading from an “evaluation program” is a criteria, more and better developed “evaluation programs” would likely come into being.) d•A more recognized profession</p>	<p>a•Standardization (This is both a benefit and a drawback. I hope the certification would allow for a lot of diversity) b•Administering the certification process would likely be cumbersome c•Assessing competency accurately and fairly would be difficult, especially for evaluators in many different fields. d•Cost</p>	
112		<p>A•Creation of another elite group, either certifiers or certified evaluators b•Students or practicing evaluators would pay for certification c•Establishing criteria for certification with non-AEA members d•Another level of bureaucracy added</p>	
113	<p>A•Demonstrate competence b•Forced to stay abreast of developments c•Assurance to employers that they are getting what they pay for</p>	<p>a•May keep folks out who would otherwise enter the field B•Core exam would have to be very general c•Area competencies may be very difficult to demonstrate</p>	
114	<p>a•Employment for university based “evaluators” b•Focus/purpose/direction for univ-based “evaluation programs”</p>	<p>a•Limits growth/dev. of field. Not convinced costs of developing and implementing a certification program would yield any benefits</p>	

(table continues)

115	a•Marketing and hiring: identification of acceptable kinds of competence B•Focus for training programs c•Generation of expanded training opportunities for experienced evaluators	A•Potential for exclusion of non-evaluators, but related social at policy scientists from evaluation projects (problems reading) b•Too narrowly defined criteria as to what is acceptable evaluation c•Stifling of creative ways to evaluate challenging issues & programs	AEA might wish to consider consulting with the Council on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children, Inc. Based in NYC. COA has lots of experience in helping groups set and administer accreditation.
116		A•Methodical limitations B•Philosophical limitations c•Limits to people who gain training by experience	This survey presupposes that one is in favor of certification with little/no allowance for opinions that do not favor certification. Items 19 & 20 are vague as are several other items, where "undecided" seems inappropriate. I am mainly concerned that certification would over-standardize the practice and reduce freedom of methodology.
117		a•Waste of time, money and attention of the field	I do evaluations as part of an effort to conduct social research. It's not a "practice" in the sense that social work, medicine, or psychotherapy are practices. Thus, I found the questions difficult to answer. Credentialing is a dead-end art, if the evaluation community moves in their direction, a new field (evaluation science) will need to be created
118	A•Standardization of basic/core skills b•Increased professionalization c•Incentive to keep abreast of methods & theories	a•Increased bureaucratization b•Limiting valid, but varied practices C•Poor measurement of competencies	The cover letter from AEA Presidents indicated this was suppose to be a second mailing for me. However, I did not receive the previous mailing.
119	A•Exclusion of non-qualified persons from certification	A•Inappropriate imposition of a single definition of what is "evaluation" on a diverse field b•Like certification or licensing in other fields it would be a way for incumbents to keep out competitors	Evaluation is too diverse a field for certification to be fair and meaningful. AEA only represents some of the many disciplines that are practicing evaluations. Under-represented are those trained in economics, business, marketing, political science, etc.
120	A•Increase the professional status of evaluators b•Increase marketability of certified evaluators c•Discriminate between evaluators. Those who have training experience, those who do not.	A•Additional costs both economic/personal to monitor certification process/maintenance b•AEA involvement in monitoring certification status of its members. (May need more staff)	
121		a•Diverse types of evaluation (program vs. policy, National vs. local initiatives) make certification across all somewhat meaningless	
122	A•More competent evaluators b•Higher quality evaluations c•Increased professional stature of evaluators	A•Implementation of certification process b•Participation by practicing evaluators c•Reaching agreement within the progression on competencies	
123			I am not a practitioner, so I do not have the depth of knowledge to answer these questions
124	A•Reduction of poor evaluations	A•Time -- for candidators & certifier evaluators	
125			
126	a•More recognition for profession B•Increased competence of practitioners c•Increased visibility for evaluation profession	a•Will be difficult to administer b•Will be difficult to monitor C•I don't think it is very practical/doable	

(table continues)

127	<p>A•Clients would have a way of knowing a potential evaluator's at least minimum skill b•By formalizing our standards in a way that hold practitioners accountable– advances the field c•May lend more credibility to our work d•May help young evaluators progress more smoothly & get opportunity for work experience</p>	<p>a•Clients may not know enough to select "certified" evaluators b•Process may be pro forms & not mean anything about quality C•Deciding on criterial may fracture the membership too early in our development d•Measurement issue in performance based assessments such as good certification – how good is good enough?</p>	<p>I was a practicing chemist prior to entering evaluation field – and you could reasonably expect a certain standard of quality from a trained chemist. This I have not found to be true in evaluation. These is a lot of poor quality work being done for big money that also does not meet client needs. When evaluation is an investment – we ought to be doing our damdest as a profession to ensure our product is seen as a "bang-for-the-buck." How can our clients learn from our work if we fail to answer even the simplest of questions. Our personal interests be they methodological or contritoriented(?), do not drive the system. It is the customer – always the customer, and what they need to know, not what we want to know. I really believe we need to certify ourselves & offer a higher quality consumer-oriented product or our customers will look elsewhere.</p>
128		<p>A•Clarity of evaluation criteria b•Consistency of "judgment" – who says X is good? c•Paper, paper, paper</p>	<p>I think that certification is too computer and time-consuming to be of value. I have serious doubts that criteria can be established and implemented nationally without there being locally differing standards. The usual problem with diffuse program implementation.</p>
129			
130	<p>a•May improve professional status & compensation b•May help clients & others in hiring</p>	<p>a•How could a certification process take into account the many types of evaluation, esp. those such as empowerment, advocacy? b•May exclude talented people from some evaluations c•Would have to be a decentralized process</p>	
131	<p>A•Ensure quality of evaluators b•Help clients choose evaluators c•Help evaluators learn more</p>	<p>a•Time consuming b•Costly C•Agreeing to standards is difficult</p>	

(table continues)

132	<p>A•More personal credibility to clients b•More credibility for the field c•Better monitoring of the quality of evaluators</p>	<p>A•May overtly represent some subgroup(s) within evaluation field & some good evaluators may not receive certification if the cert. process is biased. b•If too costly, it will prohibit many from getting certified</p>	<p>As far as the prerequisites for receiving certification, I think there needs to be some flexibility. I don't think that everyone needs to graduate from an evaluation program to become certified, I think courses in evaluation (at the graduate level & ongoing) should be considered, as well as work experience. I also don't think that someone should receive certification solely based on completing an evaluation graduate program – I think they also need to demonstrate experience. Maybe there can be some sort of scoring or weighting system – in order to be certified, you need a particular score, and you receive a score for each of the certification categories – such as a score for # of years experience, a score for graduating from an evaluation program, a score for evaluation courses taken if you did not graduate from an evaluation program. The field of evaluation is interdisciplinary and must remain so. I believe that evaluators do need to be experts in a specific content area, as well as adept in the range of evaluation methods.</p>
133	<p>A•Establish standards for practice b•Consumer protection</p>	<p>A•Establishing an acceptable process/resistance b•Paperwork</p>	<p>I think the certification of evaluators is a necessary process. With the increasing demands for evaluation there should be criteria for identifying evaluators with a specific level of skill and competence. Currently, anyone with an interest can call themselves a consultant.</p>
134		<p>A•The market for traditionally trained evaluators is weak. The field has been able to survive by being very adaptive. b•Fields such as education that are driven by certification have been disasters.</p>	
135	<p>a•Recognized authenticity brought to the field B•Application of common standards c•Keeping abreast of evaluation techniques & developments will be a necessity</p>	<p>a•If not properly monitored potential to limit innovative persons who may have different approach b•The uniqueness of programs particular "grassroots" programs may not allow always the textbook approach to evaluation & hence rejection of approach c•Limitation on funding may determine projects evaluators demonstrate of projects worked on as not truly "experiential."</p>	
136	<p>A•Quality control b•Pricing</p>	<p>a•Can't see how you'd monitor #9 previous page B•Cost c•Finding time to meet requirements of continuing ed d•Availability of continuing ed (unless annual conference qualifies; then cost becomes an issue)</p>	
137	<p>A•Accountability b•Consensus on standards c•Gatekeeping</p>	<p>A•Reaching agreement on standard for certifying b•Administering the program C•Lack of interest on part of evaluators to do</p>	

(table continues)

138			
139	A•Credibility to field b•Incentive to practice	A•Unworthy certification holders – lose value	
140	A•Assurance to clients of a basic knowledge base b•Bridging of divers "schools of thought" in evaluation c•Professionalization – demonstration that evaluation is a specific field, not equivalent to an MPA	a•Who will decide appropriate content? B•Biases introduced by diverse conflicting schools of thought c•Need to give credit for intensive graduate school work when programs provide several years of experience before degree	I have substantial doubts whether this will be feasible given the enormous differences among our membership in orientation (qualitative/quantitative; theoretical/blackbox; advocacy, empowerment/empirical reporting) however, it has definitely cost us to not have some type of certification equivalent to the CPA for accountants. It might have helped save the evaluation unit at GAO if this had been in existence.
141	A•I believe that people who call themselves 'evaluators' should have completed education/training in evaluation	a•Misapplication of "criteria" is likely, unless criteria very simple B•Exclusionary – limits people if too many criteria should only be graduate of education program in 'evaluation' c•Difficult to set up 'education' or training criteria	I think the certification process should be very simple – I don't think it will be of much benefit to develop hierarchies of competence – I feel it will hurt or limit evaluation work in the short and long run. Proof is in the pudding – if evaluator helps with evaluation data/analyses – it will be seen as valid
142		A•Time/expense of certification b•Adoption of standards for certification c•Making certification meaningful d•Varied backgrounds of evaluators	
143	A•Quality control	a•Finding time for people to participate/do it b•Developing standards of performance c•Developing procedures D•Cost	
144	A•There will be accepted standards b•People will be encouraged to attain the standards c•People hiring evaluators will have a guide d•Standard will be kept high	a•There are different domains of evaluation b•There is the quantitative/qualitative debate C•Unless carefully stated, standards can kill innovations	
145	A•Brings competency to field b•Eliminates "borderline" or poor evaluators	A•Barrier to evaluators currently in field (but not long enough to 'grandfather' out b•Elitism situation for haves/have nots	
146		A•AEA is primarily focused on academicians (i.e., college professors) the org. is not sufficiently linked to professional practice to pass judgment b•No problem has been defined for which certification is the answer c•In my context (business) no one will care, by no one I mean employers, the focus will continue to be ability not credentials d•AEA has demonstrated in the past poor organization (e.g., late conference announcements, lost dues, and so on), until the AEA organization is better organized and managed, it has NO business trying to control the professional lives of myself or others	

(table continues)

147	a•Raising the floor – limiting the less-than-competent B•Ensuring a common "language"	a•Developing/enhancing a "guild" mentality B•Creating barriers to competent folks trained in other disciplines – e.g., social psychology c•Tempting state legislatures to impose occupation taxes d•Limiting eligibility for state/municipal contracts, based on credentials rather than true knowledge, capabilities	
148			
149		a•Currently it's so multidisciplinary as to be impossible to assess. B•There is no standardized curriculum, degree or even agreement on basic methods	
150	a•Ensure common knowledge base among practitioners		I am new to the field of evaluation. I'm from a non-traditional background re: evaluation (human geography) and have data mgmt work experience in a medical setting (epidemiology) – this includes research. I feel people with a longer history of evaluation study/practice would be better equipped to answer this survey. Also have been in great transition the last 3 years with regard to employment
151	a•AEA can feel more confident in its membership B•It can make it easier for 'customers' when looking for an evaluator c•There is a standard everyone must meet	a•Proven evaluators who do not meet traditional requirements b•Method of certification if it is a test/exam C•Cost	
152		a•Provide a unwarranted sense of confidence in evaluator's ability b•Get a better sense by interview, review of past work and recommendations from others who have worked with the evaluator	
153	A•Increases competency of evaluators b•Increases comparability of evaluations c•Increases appearance of professionalism	A•Difficulty of defining competency/standards b•Difficulty of applying standards fairly c•Lack of comparability in training/field experience	
154			
155	a•Some standardization in the field B•Some assurances for clients c•Helpful for preparation of new evaluators d•Increased professionalization of the field	a•May be too focused on traditional approaches b•May be too dependent on academic rather than practical training c•Equivalency between grandfathering & new certifications D•Managing/administering the process	
156	A•Give clients assurance of quality of work that will be done b•Hold practitioners accountable/some enforcement possible c•Give cleaner identity to the field	a•Equity/fairness of procedures B•Blocking some of the paths individuals follow to become evaluators c•How to encompass the range of evaluation activities & perspectives d•How to grandfather in existing practitioners	

(table continues)

157	a•Greater professionalization b•Greater awareness of evaluation basics c•Some control over unethical practice	a•Cost of such a process b•Lack of perceived need by evaluation clients c•Diversity of professional practice in evaluation	
158			
159		a•Evaluators do very different tasks – some specialize in large, quantitative studies, some in qualitative studies etc. Clients need to assess the "fit" of the evaluator to the task. Certification won't be helpful to that.	
160	a•Minimal qualifying criteria b•Professional enhancement c•Assurance of competency	a•Expensive continuing education courses B•Discourage self-assessment by stakeholders c•Development of "professional" core of evaluators	
161	a•Provides credentialing b•Can be used as basis for billing for services c•Helps employers and contractors with hiring suitable candidates	a•May be used as sole reason for selecting personnel B•Variation in experience for those who are grandfathered c•Too much reliance on credential, not education or experience	
162	a•Reference list for clients B•Quality control – standards c•Professional credentials	a•Freezing out some evaluators – professional guild b•Confusion for clients C•Costs & hurdles for new evaluators	I hope this is implemented in a way which takes into account that there are a number of effective approaches to evaluation – one size does not fit all
163	A•Extent of standardization of knowledge & skills needed	A•If voluntary, then may not have impact expected for successful system	
164	a•Identification of qualified practitioners to public B•Improvement of skills of candidate c•Increased status of evaluators	A•Administration difficulties in conducting process b•Biased, invalid exams c•Costs of process	
165		a•Field is not sufficiently clear	
166	a•Benefit to the client: Client knows that potential evaluator has met certain standards B•Establish credibility as a profession that crosses disciplines c•Profession must articulate what is important as a discipline	A•Evaluation is done in myriad ways, contexts, & answers very specific needs. Would be difficult to pinpoint a "standard" for all levels, methods & objectives of such a fast discipline/profession	
167	A•Desired level of competency determined for certification	A•Requirement of a specific degree – don't want to limit the skills/talents of many varied disciplines	
168	a•Assurances for clients about minimum awareness b•enhance AEA's role C•Improve quality of evaluations	A•Gatekeeper to good practitioners b•Corruption of process used to decide cert. procedures c•Meaningless hoops to jump through	
169		a•Loss of AEA members b•Infringing on other professions C•Legally indefensible d•Costly	
170	A•Setting of minimum competency standards	A•In-fighting between the qualitative vs. the quantitative practitioners over what is "real" evaluation	
171		a•The demands of evaluation have changed & continue to change very dramatically & thus there would be a need for constant recertification	Also need "Communication techniques," "leadership techniques," "politics of evaluation," "writing & interpreting results" for item #17

(table continues)

172	<p>A•Keep opportunists from cashing in on evaluation contracts.</p> <p>b•Contribute to ongoing clarification of field for contractors/lay people</p> <p>c•More research/data-based decision making in organizations</p>	<p>a•Overstandardization/restriction of creativity</p> <p>B•Danger of epistemological control by elites/bureaucrats</p> <p>c•Unreliable application of guidelines/processes</p>	
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