Research on Evaluation Use

A Review of the Empirical Literature From 1986 to 2005

Kelli Johnson
Lija O. Greenseid
Stacie A. Toal
Jean A. King
Frances Lawrenz
University of Minnesota
Boris Volkov
University of North Dakota

This paper reviews empirical research on the use of evaluation from 1986 to 2005 using Cousins and Leithwood's 1986 framework for categorizing empirical studies of evaluation use conducted since that time. The literature review located 41 empirical studies of evaluation use conducted between 1986 and 2005 that met minimum quality standards. The Cousins and Leithwood framework allowed a comparison over time. After initially grouping these studies according to Cousins and Leithwood's two categories and twelve characteristics, one additional category and one new characteristic were added to their framework. The new category is stakeholder involvement, and the new characteristic is evaluator competence (under the category of evaluation implementation). Findings point to the importance of stakeholder involvement in facilitating evaluation use and suggest that engagement, interaction, and communication between evaluation clients and evaluators is critical to the meaningful use of evaluations.

Keywords: evaluation use; evaluation influence; stakeholder involvement; literature review; research on evaluation

In recent years, scholars have advanced calls for research on program evaluation and especially on the impact of evaluations (e.g., Henry & Mark, 2003b; Scriven, 2007). As Henry and Mark state, there is "a serious shortage of rigorous, systematic evidence that can guide evaluation or that evaluators can use for self-reflection or for improving their next evaluation" (2003b, p. 69). A time-honored method for providing guidance entails synthesizing existing research to identify what is known about evaluations and what remains to be investigated. This is the approach taken in the current review of evaluation use, one of the few

topics in evaluation on which numerous empirical studies exist. Christie (2007, p. 8) notes, "Evaluation utilization is arguably the most researched area of evaluation and it also receives substantial attention in the theoretical literature." We define evaluation use or utilization—evaluation scholars use the terms interchangeably—as the application of evaluation processes, products, or findings to produce an effect.

Since the 1970s, naming the types of evaluation use has been the subject of continuing discussion. In reviewing this discussion to date, Alkin and Taut (2003) label two distinct aspects of use: process use and use of evaluation findings. Process use is the newer concept, defined by Patton (1997, p. 90) as "individual changes in thinking and behavior and program or organizational changes in procedures and culture that occur among those involved in evaluation as a result of the learning that occurs during the evaluation process." The use of findings is traditionally divided into three types: instrumental, conceptual, or symbolic (King & Pechman, 1984; Leviton & Hughes, 1981). Instrumental use refers to instances where someone has used evaluation knowledge directly. Conceptual use refers to cases when no direct action has been taken but where people's understanding has been affected. Symbolic use refers to examples when a person uses the mere existence of the evaluation, rather than any aspect of its results, to persuade or to convince.

Moving beyond the first quarter century of use research, the new millennium has witnessed theoretical activity that has reconceptualized the field's understanding of its impact. Scholars now view evaluations as having intangible influence on individuals, programs, and communities. Focusing solely on the direct use of either evaluation results or processes has not adequately captured broader level influences (Alkin & Taut, 2003; Henry & Mark, 2003a, 2003b; Kirkhart, 2000; Mark & Henry, 2004). What has potentially emerged from this activity is a more nuanced understanding of evaluation's consequences using evaluation influence as a unifying construct. Kirkhart's "integrated theory" defines influence as "the capacity or power of persons or things to produce effects on others by intangible or indirect means" (2000, p. 7). Kirkhart envisions three dimensions of evaluation influence, represented as a cube-like figure: source (evaluation process or results), intention (intended or unintended), and time (immediate, end-of-cycle, long-term).

Mark and Henry (Henry & Mark, 2003a, 2003b; Mark & Henry, 2004; Mark, Henry, & Julnes, 1999) have also pushed for broadening the way evaluators conceptualize the consequences of their work. They argue that the goal of evaluation is social betterment and suggest the need to identify the mechanisms through which evaluations lead to this ultimate goal along differing paths of influence and at different levels (i.e., individual, interpersonal, and collective). Mark and Henry map out a logic model for evaluation, focusing on evaluation consequences related to the improvement of social conditions. Just as program theory connects program activities with outcomes while also explaining the processes through which the outcomes are achieved, program theory of evaluation by Mark and Henry identifies evaluation as an intervention with social betterment as its ultimate outcome. They label traditional notions of instrumental, conceptual, and persuasive use more specifically as, for example, skill acquisition, persuasion, or standard setting. These, then, would be the mechanisms through which social betterment can be achieved.

Building on these ideas, Alkin and Taut (2003) carefully distinguish between evaluation use and influence. To them, evaluation use "refers to the way in which an evaluation and information from the evaluation impacts the program that is being evaluated" (Alkin & Taut, 2003, p. 1). In their view, evaluators are aware of these evaluation impacts, both intended and unintended. By contrast, "the concept of influence adds to the concept of use in instances in which an evaluation has *unaware/unintended* impacts" (p. 9, emphasis in original).

Structuring the Present Review

In structuring this literature review, we considered several options. Cousins (2003) draws a logic model for program evaluation that builds on the knowledge utilization literature, but its focus on participatory evaluation made it inappropriate for a review of evaluation use research. Cousins, Goh, Clark, and Lee (2004) present a comprehensive framework of evaluative inquiry as an organizational learning system, but, again, it includes many concepts other than evaluation use.

Given the emergence of influence as a construct, another possibility was to apply the new concept to analyze the existing literature. This proved impractical for three reasons. First, some of the research we reviewed was conducted before Kirkhart's (2000) work was published. Second, given the newness of the term, there was little empirical research on influence, although we did include it in our searches. Indeed, even studies conducted in the 5 years since the term emerged (2000–2005) did not necessarily examine evaluation influence; moreover, examining use through the lens of influence was not necessarily helpful because influence is indirect and we were examining direct use. Third, and perhaps most important, the concept of influence presented in Henry and Mark (2003a, 2003b) and Mark and Henry (2004) was not defined, and the discussion of pathways, processes, and mechanisms did not provide sufficient clarity to structure the review (Nunneley, 2008; Weiss, Murphy-Graham, & Birkeland, 2005).

We decided, therefore, to use the seminal study that Cousins and Leithwood conducted in 1986—one of the most ambitious and rigorous reviews of empirical research on evaluation use ever conducted—as the underlying structure for this review, as well as more recent work by Shulha and Cousins (1997). Although Cousins' own conceptualizations of the topic have evolved since this point, the taxonomy of evaluation use presented in the 1986 model was the most comprehensive, well defined, and concrete.

Cousins and Leithwood Framework

Cousins and Leithwood (1986) identified 65 empirical studies of evaluation use conducted between 1971 and 1985 through computerized searches of keywords including "evaluation utilization," "data use," "decision making," and "knowledge utilization." They supplemented this process with manual searches of relevant journals and other literature reviews. After establishing their sample, Cousins and Leithwood coded each study according to its orientation toward dependent variables (i.e., the type of use examined: use as decision making, use as education, use as the processing of information, or "potential" use) and its orientation toward independent variables.

The aspects of evaluation use examined in the 65 empirical studies were clustered into two categories of factors related to evaluation use: (a) characteristics of evaluation implementation, and (b) characteristics of the decision or policy setting. Each of these categories contained six characteristics. The six evaluation implementation characteristics were (a) evaluation quality, (b) credibility, (c) relevance, (d) communication quality, (e) findings, and (f) timeliness. The six decision- or policy-setting characteristics were (a) information needs, (b) decision characteristics, (c) political climate, (d) competing information, (e) personal characteristics, and (f) commitment or receptiveness to evaluation. Using a "prevalence of relationship" index, Cousins and Leithwood (1986) identified evaluation quality as the most important characteristic, followed by decision characteristics, receptiveness to evaluation, findings, and relevance.

Shulha and Cousins (1997) described developments that had occurred since the review by Cousins and Leithwood, including the following:

> The rise of considerations of context as critical to understanding and explaining use; identification of process use as a significant consequence of evaluation activity; expansion of conceptions of use from the individual to the organization level; and diversification of the role of the evaluator to facilitator, planner and educator/trainer (p. 195).

The present review incorporates these developments as well.

Importantly, these two major reviews of the use literature (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Shulha & Cousins, 1997) differ in that the first considered only empirical research whereas the more recent included theoretical or reflective case narratives in addition to empirical studies. Yet, many potentially instructive studies were excluded from the 1997 review, either because they were conducted as doctoral dissertations or because they were not published in journals. Neither review took into account the quality of the evidence gathered in the individual studies when synthesizing the results. Consequently, the findings from studies in which there could be serious methodological flaws potentially were presented alongside higher quality, rigorously conducted studies. To rectify these concerns, the current review included empirical studies of evaluation use; examined journal articles, dissertations, reports, and book chapters; and screened each study according to a predetermined set of criteria related to methodological quality. In this review, we employ the term "use" rather than "influence," although we view use broadly. We attempt to identify it as "process use" or "use of findings" and classify it as instrumental, conceptual, or symbolic.

Method

The research team collected relevant publications by conducting electronic searches for the terms "evaluation utilization," "evaluation use," and "evaluation influence" in PsycINFO, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Education (Sage), Social Services Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, and Digital Dissertations in keywords, titles, descriptors, and abstracts. Additionally, the team consulted other published literature reviews, including Hofstetter and Alkin (2003). Finally, the team conducted a manual review (looking for relevant research based on titles) of the following evaluation-related journals: *American Journal of Evaluation, Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, Evaluation, Evaluation Practice, Evaluation and Program Planning, Evaluation Review, New Directions for Evaluation*, and *Studies in Educational Evaluation*. The searches examined only the literature written in English, although the authors did not exclude research conducted outside the United States.

The searches returned over 600 journal articles, reports, and book chapters and 48 dissertations. After scanning publication titles and abstracts, the team eliminated clearly irrelevant publications. Then, the team closely reviewed 321 abstracts to assess whether the publication met the following criteria: (a) an empirical research study (to be considered an empirical study the article had to present information about the data collection methods used to inform the claims made); (b) a focus on program or policy evaluation or needs assessment (not personnel evaluation, accountability/student assessment studies, data-driven decision making, etc.); (c) a published journal article, book, publicly accessible evaluation report, or dissertation (not a conference presentation or other nonpublished work); (d) the inclusion of evaluation use or influence as at least one of the variables under study; and (e) a publication date between January 1, 1986 and December 31, 2005.

After the abstract review, the team identified 98 publications that warranted a full-text review; these were subsequently screened again on all five criteria. This process yielded 47 articles that initially comprised the basis for this analysis. At least two trained screeners categorized and critiqued each study using a standardized review form developed and refined with the input of several evaluation experts.

The rating form contained questions about each study's methodology, choice of theory, operationalization of dependent variable (measures of use), and independent variables (characteristics affecting use). In addition, as noted, a quality rating was assigned to each study. The quality rating was based on criteria adapted from Guarino, Santibañez, Daley, and Brewer (2004) and Guba and Lincoln (1989). It considered aspects such as the clarity of the problem statement, soundness of research design, strength of the link between evidence presented and conclusions, and the extent to which bias was addressed. The team also assessed the sample size and selection, measurement of variables, and statistical interpretation of the quantitative studies, as well as the methodological appropriateness, transparency, descriptive richness, and statement of researcher biases of the qualitative studies.

The reviewers independently assigned quality ratings across five levels: poor, adequate-low, adequate-solid, adequate-high, and excellent. If the screeners did not agree on any particular aspect of the review, the article was brought to a team meeting during which it was discussed and consensus among the six researchers was reached regarding the rating. Although this consensus-driven process for reviewing and assigning quality ratings was time-consuming, the resulting judgments represent the agreement of two professors of evaluation and then four evaluation doctoral students. We believe our process was both representative and fair.

On completion of this in-depth screening process, 41 of 47 studies (87.2%) were found to be adequate or above. Six of the studies (12.8%) were rated as poor and eliminated from our sample. These "poor" studies suffered from a cursory description of the methods, weak sampling or data analysis methods, poor measurements of use (e.g., not providing definitions of use and/or using only one question as a measure of use), poorly supported generalizations, and/or inadequate attention to likely researcher biases. The 41 studies that exceeded the minimum quality criteria were used in the analyses presented below and are described in detail in the Appendix. Six of these studies were published outside the United States.

Findings

Findings from the 41 studies are presented following the framework of 2 categories—evaluation implementation and decision or policy setting—and 12 characteristics by Cousins and Leithwood (1986). These two categories were helpful for organizing the majority of the studies found in this recent literature. Nearly half of the articles (20 of 41) looked at the evaluation implementation category, and an equal number (20 of 41) examined the decision- or policy-setting category. The characteristics under each of these categories were all examined in at least one article, with the most prevalent characteristic, communication quality, of Cousins and Leithwood appearing in 11.

However, as suggested by Shulha and Cousins (1997), changes in the conceptualizations about use have occurred, so new characteristics might be expected to emerge. In fact, 25 of the 41 studies in this review examined elements that were not covered by the 1986 framework. Consequently, we added one characteristic—evaluator competence—to the evaluation implementation category. In addition, we created an entirely new category—stakeholder involvement—to accommodate the categorization of the 25 studies that examined aspects of evaluation use that were not represented in the original Cousins and Leithwood framework.

Evaluator competence. This is a new characteristic under evaluation implementation that has emerged since the development of the Cousins and Leithwood framework. Of the 41 studies in this review, six addressed the characteristics of evaluators, suggesting that evaluation professionals play an important role in conducting evaluations that get used, albeit for different reasons. Although the characteristic of credibility by Cousins and Leithwood gave some consideration to the evaluator's title or reputation, the definition did not extend to the influential nature of the evaluator's personal competence or leadership as a means of affecting the level of evaluation use. Moreover, whereas the credibility characteristic addresses what the evaluator does (e.g., methods selected, criteria used), the new evaluator competence characteristic focuses more on who the evaluator is.

Stakeholder involvement. This is a new category that has been added to the original Cousins and Leithwood framework to account for more recent research. The addition of this category reflects the increased research focused on participatory evaluation approaches, stakeholder or decision-maker participation, and/or stakeholder or decision-maker involvement since 1985. Under the rubric of stakeholder involvement, we have identified nine characteristics. Eight of them mirror those identified by Cousins and Leithwood but with the addition of involvement to each. The original framework included research on the impact of direct decision-maker involvement on use under commitment or receptiveness to evaluation. However, in the current review, over half (23 of 41) of the studies addressed involvement, and the bulk of these suggested that it was related to other category characteristics in their relationship with use.

Using the resulting modified Cousins and Leithwood framework, we classified the 41 studies of evaluation use from 1986 to 2005 according to 3 categories and 22 specific characteristics. The most frequently studied characteristics were ''involvement and commitment/receptiveness to evaluation'' (14 studies), followed by communication quality (11 studies) and personal characteristics of users (9 studies). The least frequently studied characteristics were ''involvement and information needs'' and ''involvement and decision characteristics,'' each appearing in a single study. About 40% of the studies (16 of 41) examined only a single characteristic, with half of that group (8 of 16) studying a characteristic under the stakeholder involvement category. The remainder of the studies examined multiple characteristics, ranging from two to nine characteristics per study.

Table 1 defines each category, presents its related characteristics, and lists the studies that examined each. Because the variables described in the studies did not always allow for obvious categorization into the framework, this represents the authors' best effort at accurately interpreting and deciding where the studies fit. The Appendix provides a summary of each study's focus, types of use, sample, categories, and findings. In terms of the types of evaluation use, the information presented in the Appendix shows that the clear majority of the studies focused on use of findings rather than process use. Only three studies examined process use, perhaps because the concept of explicit process use is fairly recent. Within the use of findings, instrumental use was studied more frequently than conceptual use, which was typically linked to instrumental use when researchers asked respondents whether actions were likely to be taken. There were only a few studies that examined symbolic use.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to review empirical research on evaluation use for the 25-year period between 1986 and 2005. Basing the review on the framework of Cousins and Leithwood allowed a comparison over time, and including other types of research (e.g.,

Table 1

Studies Examining Use by Category and Characteristics of Variables

Category	Characteristic	Description of Characteristic	# of Studies	Relationship to Evaluation Use	Articles that Studied Characteristic
Evaluation implementation	Communication quality	Clarity and frequency of reporting results, evaluator advocacy for results, breadth of dissemination. Also includes the type of recommendations in the report and the process of communication between evaluators and clients	11	Frequently among the most important elements related to evaluation use. Detailed, actionable, evidence-based recommendations increased use. By contrast, two studies found no relationship with use	Bober and Bartlett (2004) Boyer and Langbein (1991) Chin (2003) Eisendrath (1988) Johnston (1986) Malen, Murphy, and Geary (1988) Marra (2003) Marsh and Glassick (1988) Rockwell, Dickey, and Jasa (1990) Shea (1991) Sleezer (1987)
	Timeliness	Timing of the evaluation in larger context; timeliness of reporting when evaluation is completed; timing of dissemination to decision makers	7	Most found positive relationship between timing and evaluation use. One study found that timeliness was not important in determining use	Bamberger (2004) Barrios (1986) Bober and Bartlett (2004) Boyer and Langbein (1991) Eisendrath (1988) Rockwell et al. (1990) Shea (1991)
	Evaluator competence[a]	Personal characteristics of the evaluator outside the evaluation process, level of cultural competence, leadership style of evaluator	6	Most studies suggest that evaluator competence is important to evaluation use	Barrios (1986) Boyer and Langbein (1991) Callahan, Tomlinson, Hunsaker, Bland, and Moon (1995) Cousins (1996) Greene (1987) Shea (1991)
	Evaluation quality	Characteristics of the evaluation process, sophistication of methods, rigor, type of evaluation model	6	Some studies found a link between quality and use, although less important than recommendations and communication. One study did not find relationship between quality and use	Bamberger (2004) Bober and Bartlett (2004) Johnston (1986) Rockwell et al. (1990) Shea (1991) Potts (1998)

Table 1. (continued)

Category	Characteristic	Description of Characteristic	# of Studies	Relationship to Evaluation Use	Articles that Studied Characteristic
	Findings	Nature of findings (e.g., positive or negative), extent of congruence with audience expectations, value of findings for decision making	6	Mixed conclusions. In two studies findings were important to use, though less so than communication, timeliness, and evaluation quality	Barrios (1986) Bober and Bartlett (2004) Boyer and Langbein (1991) Johnson (1993) Malen et al. (1988) Weiss, Murphy-Graham, and Birkeland (2005)
	Relevance	Extent to which the information provided in the evaluation is relevant to the decision maker, and the organizational location of the evaluator	6	Mixed conclusions. Two studies did not find relevance to be important to use, but two studies found stronger relationships between information relevance and use	Barrios (1986) Bober and Bartlett (2004) Boyer and Langbein (1991) Cousins (1995) Greene (1987) Shea (1991)
	Credibility	The objectivity, believability, and appropriateness of the evaluation process and/or of the activities of the evaluator	4	Split findings. Two studies found strong relationship with evaluation use; two studies found no such relationship	Barrios (1986) Bober and Bartlett (2004) Boyer and Langbein (1991) Johnson (1993)
Decision or policy setting	Personal characteristics	Characteristics of the evaluation user, for example, organizational role of decision maker, information processing style, social characteristics, and so on	9	Differences in users' learning styles, job positions, administrative level, and experience level influence the use of evaluations	Bober and Bartlett (2004) Boyer and Langbein (1991) Carpinello (1989) Combs (1999) Crotti (1993) Earl (1995) Hopstock, Young, and Zehler (1993) Marra (2003) Santhiveeran (1995)
	Commitment and/ or receptiveness to evaluation	User attitudes toward the evaluation and commitment to conducting evaluation; the extent to which the organization is resistant to evaluation; the open-mindedness of evaluation stakeholders	8	Some studies found that commitment, active organizing efforts, and supportive backers increased use. One study found that attitude toward evaluation did not affect use	Boyer and Langbein (1991) Crotti (1993) Johnson (1993) Malen et al. (1988) Marra (2003) McCormick (1997) Rinne (1994) Santhiveeran (1995)

(continued)

Political climate	The political orientation of the people who commissioned the evaluation, the extent to which decision maker is dependent on external sponsors, internal rivalries, budget fights, and power struggles	6	Generally, attending to political climate was found to increase use	Eisendrath (1988) Haddock (1998) Johnston (1986) Malen et al. (1988) Santhiveeran (1995) Weiss et al. (2005)
Decision characteristics	The significance of the decision or evaluation problem, the type of decision to be made, the novelty of the program area	5	Each of the five studies reported connections between decision characteristics and evaluation use	Barrios (1986) Brown-McGowan (1992) Eisendrath (1988) Malen et al. (1988) Newman, Brown, and Rivers (1987)
Competing information	Information related to the subject of the evaluation and available to stakeholders from outside the evaluation process, that is, through personal observation, that competes with evaluation data	3	Contradictory findings. One study found that a large amount of competing information did not affect instrumental use, whereas another found that high-level policy officials used the evaluation results only when they were supported by other sources of information	Eisendrath (1988) Johnson (1993) Weiss et al. (2005)
Information needs of the evaluation audiences	Information needs of the evaluation audience, the types of information, the number of audiences with differing information needs, time pressure, and perceived need for evaluation	2	Both studies found that attending to the audience's information needs positively influenced the use of evaluation results	Hopstock et al. (1993) Rinne (1994)

Table 1. (continued)

Category	Characteristic	Description of Characteristic	# of Studies	Relationship to Evaluation Use	Articles that Studied Characteristic
Stakeholder involvement	Involvement with commitment or receptiveness to evaluation	Involving evaluation stakeholders creates a commitment or receptiveness to evaluation	14	For the most part, commitment that was strengthened by involvement in the evaluation was found to positively influence evaluation use. In one study, the involvement of a committed executive officer was essential to the implementation of evaluation findings	Altschuld, Yoon, and Cullen (1993) Ayers (1987) Barrios (1986) Brown-McGowan (1992) Callahan et al. (1995) Earl (1995) Eisendrath (1988) Greene (1987) Greene (1988) Haddock (1998) Lafleur (1995) Lee and Cousins (1995) Rockwell et al. (1990) Shea (1991)
	Involvement with communication quality	Stakeholder involvement promotes improved communication	5	All five studies identified ways in which stakeholder involvement led to greater use	Bamberger (2004) Cousins (1995) Forss, Cracknell, and Samset (1994) Greene (1988) Lafleur (1995)
	Direct stakeholder involvement	The direct relationship between involvement and evaluation use	4	All studies reported involvement's positive influence on various types of use	Cai (1996) Preskill and Caracelli (1997) Sperlazza (1995) Turnbull (1999)
	Involvement with credibility	Stakeholder involvement led to increased credibility of the evaluation process and/or the evaluator	4	Three of the four studies observed a strong relationship with use	Cousins (1995) Greene (1987) Lafleur (1995) Shea (1991)
	Involvement with findings	Involving evaluation stakeholders in knowing and understanding the evaluation findings	4	Three studies emphasized that involvement related to the findings was important to evaluation use	Cousins (1995) Greene (1987) Lafleur (1995) Shea (1991)

Involvement with relevance	Stakeholder participation to integrate important organizational concerns into the evaluation design	4	For the most part, increased contact with stakeholders fostered increased relevance that resulted in increased evaluation use	Cousins (1995) Greene (1987) Lafleur (1995) Shea (1991)
Involvement with personal characteristics	Involvement of evaluation stakeholders at different organizational levels	2	Findings of one study suggest that involvement of managers affects use more extensively than involving other staff	Cousins (1995) McCormick (1997)
Involvement with decision characteristics	Involving of a range of stakeholders in different settings depending on the characteristics of the decision that needs to be made	1	This study found a positive relationship between evaluation use and involvement by individuals in nontraditional bureaucracies where decision making involves input from people at all levels in the organization	Johnson (1993)
Involvement with information needs	The involvement of stakeholders facilitated the introduction of their information needs	1	Involved stakeholders' desire for information and the timeliness of the evaluation fostered information ownership, which was positively related to use	Rockwell et al. (1990)

[a] Evaluator competence was not a category in the Cousins and Leithwood framework, but authors propose it as a new characteristic in the evaluation implementation category.

dissertations) broadened its scope. This literature review located 41 empirical studies of evaluation use conducted between 1986 and 2005 that met minimum quality standards.

Most of the studies (38 of 41) examined the use of findings rather than process use; only three studies examined process use. The lack of attention to process use in the articles included in this review might have resulted from the fact that the concept of explicit process use is fairly recent, and the field is still more focused on outcomes and results. Alternatively, it might be that empirical studies are more likely to focus on the use of results because measuring process use is less well defined. Finally, the limited attention to process use might have resulted from our search strategy, which excluded evaluation capacity building studies, many of which measured organizational learning through the evaluation process. These studies are not included in this review but are synthesized in a publication by Cousins et al. (2004). After the findings were categorized according to the Cousins and Leithwood framework, one additional category (stakeholder involvement) and one new characteristic (evaluator competence) emerged. These additions align with the comments of Shulha and Cousins (1997) made more than 10 years ago about changes in the field, especially the diversification of the evaluator's role.

The stakeholder involvement category reflects the expansion of participatory evaluation methods. The framework of Cousins and Leithwood included stakeholder involvement under the ''commitment and/or receptiveness to evaluation'' characteristic within the decision- and policy-setting category. This was sufficient in the mid-1980s because only 10% of the studies in their review included involvement, and these were all related to the effects of involvement on stakeholders' commitment or receptiveness to evaluation. In addition, four of the studies in the current review directly examined the relationship between stakeholder involvement and evaluation. This dynamic was not present in any of the studies examined by Cousins and Leithwood. The emergence of this new category suggests that evaluators may want to focus on involving stakeholders as a way to enhance evaluation use. The addition of the evaluator competence characteristic indicates a growing acknowledgment of the importance of the competence of individual evaluators, both professionally and culturally—and the value of these characteristics in efforts to increase evaluation use.

Some studies—Shea (1991), Bober and Bartlett (2004), Boyer and Langbein (1991), and Malen, Murphy, and Geary (1988)—examined multiple characteristics. It seemed possible that these studies might help us think about evaluation influence by identifying important variables in a sequence suggestive of a pathway, at least at the individual level. This effort failed because the studies examined variables related to use, not pathways leading to it. Identifying pathways was a creative activity rather than a way to summarize the research. As Weiss et al. (2005) found when they sought influence pathways after the fact in their drug abuse resistance education (DARE) study, ''We became bogged down in unique tangles of strings [of pathways] . . . . We are on less sure ground trying to reconstruct individual and interpersonal processes that were reported to us some 2 to 8 years after the events.'' In other words, the existing empirical research on evaluation use has identified a collection of important variables, but research on influence pathways will necessitate a different strategy. In settings that have specific outcome variables and sufficient interval data on other variables, path analysis might be one potential method. Future research might focus on developing quantitative outcome and process measures that could then be used to gather enough data to conduct path analyses and determine models displaying the relationships among the process measures and the outcomes.

It is impossible, finally, to answer the question of which characteristics are most related to increasing the use of evaluations in a straightforward manner. A meta-analysis of the studies is not possible because the studies do not operationalize or measure the variables in the same manner. Cousins and Leithwood compensated for this problem by creating a quantitative index that weighed the number of positive, negative, and nonsignificant findings for each characteristic to create a ''prevalence of relationship'' index. Based on this index, they concluded that evaluation

quality and decision characteristics were most highly related to use, followed by evaluation findings, users' commitment or receptiveness to evaluation, and evaluation relevance.

This index provides a means of comparing findings across a variety of studies. Unfortunately, drawing conclusions about which characteristics are related to use remains problematic because this type of meta-synthesis is highly affected by the components that researchers chose to include, and it may not include what is actually occurring. In addition, the publication process may exclude studies with inconclusive or negative findings. Instead, the current study discusses those elements that appear to be most "empirically supported"—meaning those elements that are both highly studied and supported by strong evidence of a positive relationship to evaluation use. Reframing the conversation to discuss "empirically supported" characteristics also allows the suggestion of evidence-based practices that evaluators can employ to increase the use of their evaluations.

Framed with these cautions in mind, we identified the following empirically supported factors that promote the use of evaluation. Findings highlight the importance of stakeholder involvement in facilitating evaluation use. In several studies, involvement was found to facilitate an evaluation process that, in turn, improved the evaluation implementation characteristics. In other studies, stakeholder involvement supported decision making or policy setting that fostered greater capacity for using evaluation information. Stated differently, stakeholder involvement is a mechanism that facilitates those aspects of an evaluation's process or setting that lead to greater use. More than just involvement by stakeholders or decision makers alone, however, the findings from this literature review suggest that engagement, interaction, and communication between evaluation clients and evaluators is key to maximizing the use of the evaluation in the long run.

Limitations

Features of the research method used in this study, particularly the choice to limit the review to empirical studies of evaluation use conducted between 1986 and 2005, precluded consideration of any theoretical articles on evaluation produced during that time period. This fact is not intended to detract from the positive contributions to the understanding of evaluation use made by the authors of these articles. In addition, the research design included a decision to limit the search terms to "evaluation utilization," "evaluation use," and "evaluation influence." This decision resulted in the exclusion of "evaluation capacity building" studies that examined organizational learning through the evaluation process—one form of use—but did not include the keywords "use" or "utilization." Finally, the sample sizes of some of the studies included in this review are rather small. Of the 41 studies included in the review, approximately 65% (19 of 41) have sample sizes of 12 or fewer. The remaining studies ranged in sample size from 26 to 540.

Conclusion

In summary, the findings from this literature review support Cousins' (2003) conceptual framework that outlines dimensions of "evaluation context" (similar to evaluation implementation characteristics) and "decision/policy setting." Additionally, the findings support the addition of one new category—stakeholder involvement—and one new characteristic—evaluator competence (under the category of evaluation implementation). Findings point to the importance of stakeholder involvement in facilitating evaluation use and suggest that engagement, interaction, and communication between evaluation clients and evaluators is critical to the meaningful use of evaluations.

Appendix
Summary of Empirical Studies of Evaluation Use and Influence (1986–2005)

Study	Type of Use — Findings Use			Process Use	Focus of Study	Sample	Category of Use	Key Findings
	Symbolic	Conceptual	Instrument	Process Use				
Altschuld et al. (1993)		√	√		Relationship between attitudes toward needs assessment, involvement in process, background characteristics, and reporting characteristics and the conceptual and instrumental utilization of needs assessment conclusions	Higher education administrators (*n* = 62)	Decision or policy setting; stakeholder involvement	Use of needs assessments were influenced by college administrators' attitudes and levels of involvement. The administrators' background/training and characteristics of the needs assessment reports were not found to be related to use
Ayers (1987)		√	√		Relationship between use of a "stakeholder collaborative" evaluation approach and instrumental and conceptual use	Guam public school district (*n* = 1)	Decision or policy setting; stakeholder involvement	Ayers interviewed four of the stakeholders who participated in all phases of the evaluation, as well as two major users of the evaluation, to solicit perceptions of the process and of subsequent use. Participants reported positive attitudes toward the process, but direct use of the report was low. However, although use, as measured by implementation of recommendations, was low, the findings triggered planning discussions and negotiations between union and agency administration

(continued)

Author				Description	Context	Categories	Findings
Bamberger (2004)	√	√		Characteristics of highly cost-effective evaluations of international development projects	Development project evaluations (n = 8)	Evaluation implementation; decision or policy setting; stakeholder involvement	Identified five factors that increased the impact of an evaluation: (a) a conducive policy environment—evaluation addresses current concerns and there is a commitment by decision makers to use results; (b) timing of evaluation—evaluation launched when there are clearly defined information needs; (c) role of evaluation—evaluator must understand evaluation is one source of data within a decision-making context; (d) building a relationship with the client and effectively communicating findings; and (e) evaluation conducted by either the evaluation unit of the managing or funding agency or by outside agency, or jointly, as the context dictates
Barrios (1986)	√	√	√	Relationship between technical and organizational variables and instrumental, conceptual, and persuasive use of evaluation information	State-level social service agency (n = 1)	Evaluation implementation; decision or policy setting; stakeholder involvement	Recommendations requiring policy changes or interprogram or interagency action were more influential in terms of the decisions to implement them in comparison with recommendations that suggested only action by program managers. The following variables are also related to utilization: user involvement in the formulation of the study and evaluator credibility in terms of program knowledge

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Author (year)			Purpose	Sample	Categories	Findings
Bober and Bartlett (2004)	√	√	Evaluation implementation factors and decision and policy setting factors affecting the use of training evaluation results at corporate universities	Corporate universities ($n = 4$)	Evaluation implementation; decision or policy setting	Corporate university managers used evaluation findings in a variety of ways with instrumental uses dominating. Evaluation implementation factors were more important than decision- or policy-setting factors in impacting use. The most highly ranked factor was communication quality. Use of multiple methods of reporting data was effective for increasing use
Boyer and Langbein (1991)		√	Factors related to the use of health-related evaluation research results by members of congress and congressional staffers	Congressional health and health-related staff members ($n = 100$)	Evaluation implementation; decision or policy setting; evaluator competence	Congressional members and staffers believed evaluation reports to be relevant, timely, clear, methodologically rigorous, and produced by reputable practitioners. The relative importance of factors affecting use varied depending on what type of report (General Accounting Office [GAO] vs. non-GAO) and user (member of congress vs. staffer). Overall, timeliness of GAO reports was the strongest factor, with credibility of methodology, and clarity of reporting also being important. Presence of an advocate or absence of a detractor of the evaluator also played a role in use
Brown-McGowan (1992)		√	Effect of knowledge use system (KUS) on use of evaluation findings; relationship between evaluation process, significance of the decision, perceived impacts of the decision, and preferences toward evaluation outcomes and utilization of evaluation results	Senior higher education administrators ($n = 8$)	Decision or policy setting; stakeholder involvement	Decision makers reported some increase in their participation and interest in the evaluation process because of using the KUS. The utilization of evaluation findings was improved. The evaluation quality and utilization of results were also enhanced by decision makers' personal stakes in the evaluation

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Study				Purpose/Description	Sample	Focus	Findings
Cai (1996)	√	√	√	Relationship between teachers' perceptions of their involvement in program evaluation and reported levels of instrumental, conceptual, and symbolic use	New York state K-12 public school teachers ($n = 207$)	Stakeholder involvement	Current opportunity for involvement is related to willingness to participate in future implementation. Level and phase of involvement in evaluation is related to perceived benefits to individual and to organization. The benefits of such involvement include: enhanced utilization and willingness to be involved in future evaluations, increased knowledge and skills related to evaluation, and improved communication process within organizations
Callahan et al. (1995)	√			Factors and practices related to evaluation utilization in gifted education programs; examination of exemplary and nonexemplary evaluations and extent of implementation of evaluation recommendations	Evaluation reports from district gifted education programs ($n = 12$)	Decision or policy setting; evaluator competence; stakeholder involvement	All 12 districts used evaluation information to enact some change in gifted education programming. The "will and skill" of key personnel to evaluate affected the use of the evaluation results. Key conditions affecting use: (a) district-wide evaluation policy; (b) written plans on how to implement findings; (c) multiple stakeholders were consistently involved in planning, monitoring, and reviewing evaluation process and findings; (d) stakeholders played role of advocating for program change based on findings; and (e) key personnel were aware of relationship between gifted ed, evaluation, and political processes

Author (year)			Description	Sample	Setting	Findings
Carpinello (1989)	√	√	Examines the effect of the power base of the evaluator (legitimate, referent, or expert), perceptions of decision-making consequences, and evaluation user experiences on evaluation use in terms of agreement with recommendations, perceptions of evaluation credibility, needs for information, and instrumental decisions	Gerontology nurses from New York (n = 282)	Decision or policy setting	Consequence, power, and experience were found to affect how evaluation information is used and processed by nurse decision makers. Experienced decision makers indicated a need for information when influenced by economic consequences and referent power bases, whereas less experienced decision makers were affected by affective consequences and expert power bases
Chin (2003)	√	√	Impact of using cartoons and poetry in evaluation reports on prompt discussion of findings and increased understanding of results by evaluation stakeholders	School district evaluation stakeholders (n = 26)	Evaluation implementation	Although cartoons and poetry were well received by evaluation stakeholders, evaluators were not as supportive of their inclusion. The poetry and cartoons conveyed an emotional and/or visual representation of findings; however, this did not increase discussion of the findings among stakeholders nor did it ensure that report readers clearly perceived the author's intended messages
Combs (1999)	√ √ √		Relationship between preexisting positive attitudes toward inclusive education and the persuasiveness of program evaluation findings as measured by Russon and Koehly (1995) persuasion scale	General and special education elementary teachers in North Carolina (n = 76)	Decision or policy setting	Although the study found that teachers' attitudes toward inclusion were predictive of the persuasiveness of the summary evaluation report, conclusions from the study are limited by the peculiarities of the data (untreated outliers in the data set)

Study				Purpose	Setting	Variable	Findings
Cousins (1995)	√	√		Examination of the impact of participatory approaches used in one marginally successful and one highly successful educational evaluation	Canadian education field centers (n = 2)	Evaluation implementation; stakeholder involvement	The participatory process enhanced credibility of the report and made the findings more relevant, which in turn increased the reported usefulness of the evaluation
Cousins (1996)	√			Effects of researcher involvement levels on extent and type of recommendation implementation	Canadian school districts (n = 3)	Evaluator competence	Despite the varying levels of researcher involvement, documented use was relatively stable. Use appeared to be more affected by time pressures and administrative support than by level of researcher involvement. In the lowest involvement case, potential for use was higher than actual use, given the timeframe of the evaluation
Crotti (1993)	√	√	√	Use of process and end products of Pennsylvania's long-range plans, as perceived by school administrators; relationship between human and context characteristics and perceptions of usefulness	Pennsylvania school districts (n = 11)	Decision or policy setting	Different administrative levels emphasized different forms of evaluation use. Local constraints had minimal influence on the evaluation utilization process. The active organizing efforts of school administrators reportedly promoted long-range plan utilization. Factor clusters comprising human and evaluation variables received higher overall importance than context variables

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Study			Purpose	Setting/Sample	Framework	Findings
Earl (1995)	✓	✓	Examination of the impact of two participatory evaluations on the increased understanding, commitment, and utilization of the evaluation by the evaluator and clients	Schools in a Canadian school district (*n* = 93)	Decision or policy setting; stakeholder involvement	Two participatory evaluations focused on school improvement in a large suburban school district. Participants could have been involved on three levels. The least involved teams were interviewed for the evaluation. The moderately involved teams had members who served as interviewers. The most involved teams planned the interview process and protocols. Teams that were the least involved (interviewees) were slightly less likely than the moderately or most involved team members to report positive feelings about the process. Overall, high use and potential for use was found for all groups
Eisendrath (1988)	✓	✓	Relationship between internal and external administrative factors and direct implementation and perceptions of usefulness	Governmental agencies in Rajasthan State, India (*n* = 16)	Evaluation implementation; decision or policy setting; stakeholder involvement	Policy makers often rejected recommendations of evaluations because they were not politically, technically, or financially viable. High levels of use were related to the involvement of high-level executives in the review of findings, formulation, and follow-up of recommendations for action. Both formal and informal administrative arrangements were important for evaluation use. The level of use was positively associated with the salience of a program for top level policy makers. By and large, high-level policy makers considered the evaluation findings credible only if they are supported by other sources of information

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Reference			Purpose	Setting	Focus	Findings
Forss et al. (1994)	√	√	Explore role of evaluator in organizational learning; relationship between quality of report and evaluation attitudes with cognitive and instrumental utilization	Norwegian Aid Administration Agency ($n = 1$)	Evaluation implementation; stakeholder involvement	Although aid administrators read the vast majority of the evaluations that are relevant to their positions, the majority only learn a little from the reports. Successful learning occurs through two processes: learning through involvement and learning through communication. Involving administrators in the conduct of evaluations and improving communication of evaluation information will maximize organizational learning through evaluations
Greene (1987)	√	√	Examines relationship between type and meaningfulness of stakeholder participation and use	Human service agencies ($n = 2$)	Evaluation implementation; evaluator competence; stakeholder involvement	Two participatory evaluations in local human service agencies encouraged stakeholder participation in planning the evaluation. Stakeholders reported both conceptual and instrumental use of the evaluation. In addition, stakeholders also found symbolic ways in which the process was useful

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Author (year)				Purpose	Setting	Focus	Findings
Greene (1988)	✓	✓	✓	Investigate the relationship between communication of results (process, content, and participation as shared decision making) and utilization (conceptual, instrumental, and symbolic)	Human service agencies ($n = 2$)	Evaluation implementation; decision or policy setting; stakeholder involvement	Stakeholder team members reported occurrence of instrumental, conceptual, and symbolic uses arising from both the evaluation process and results. The following characteristics of the evaluation reporting process were believed to have facilitated use, the process was: ongoing and iterative; included both written reports and stakeholder group discussions; presented the results comprehensively and in a variety of formats; was open and pluralistic; and was tailored to the audiences. Additionally, stakeholders were actively engaged in the evaluation and communication of results, and the evaluator functioned as an advocate for use during and after the evaluation was conducted
Haddock (1998)	✓			Relationship between legislative evaluation characteristics (committee type, type of follow-up, mandated use, relationship with budgetary committees, and "fire-alarm vs. police-patrol"-type evaluations) and instrumental use	State legislative program evaluation offices ($n = 28$)	Decision or policy setting; stakeholder involvement	Utilization differences apparently exist between the federal and state levels. Evaluation offices in states with policies and procedures mandating recommendation are slightly more likely to have higher implementation rates than are offices in states with no such policies.Participation of the budget committee in the selection of topics for program evaluations does not necessarily increase the probability of evaluation use in the budget decision-making process

Study			Purpose	Sample	Focus	Findings
Hopstock et al. (1993)	√		Perceived usefulness of evaluation findings of Title VII bilingual education programs	Title VII-funded education programs ($n = 18$)	Decision or policy setting	Few Title VII evaluation reports were federally used for the following reasons. The purposes and audiences for Title VII evaluations, as well as the evaluation needs of the U.S. Department of Education and of local Title VII were not clearly described by the U.S. Department of Education. Because of their lack of formal training in evaluation and statistics and because of the large number of projects for which they are responsible, the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs Project Officers were not able to perform overall program analyses or to provide detailed feedback to projects about their evaluations
Johnson (1993)	√	√	Create and test a theoretical process model related to use; relationship between levels of participation, competing information, truth and utility tests, and interests and ideology and expected level of utilization	Evaluation users and producers affiliated with the Georgia Innovation Program ($n = 75$)	Evaluation implementation; decision or policy setting; stakeholder involvement	Participation in evaluation was most likely in organic organizations, composed of change-oriented individuals, with a person-focused evaluator. Instrumental utilization was considered most likely in situations characterized by high participation, affirmative truth, and utility testing, and when interests and ideology were supported. Competing information was not found to be related to instrumental utilization

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Author			Description	Category	Findings
Johnston (1986)	√	√	Examined relationships between type of evaluation recommendations and acceptance/use or likelihood of implementation of recommendations	GAO reports ($n = 176$)	Evaluation implementation; decision or policy setting	Acceptance of GAO recommendation is high. Factors associated with the high acceptance rate includes that the recommendations are generally of the low-level behavioral compliance–type and the status of the GAO as a formal, federally mandated outside evaluation organization. Additionally, the methodological quality of the studies contributes to their utilization
Lafleur (1995)	√	√	Retrospective examination of one school district's participatory program evaluation approach and the utilization of evaluation results	Canadian school district ($n = 1$)	Evaluation implementation; decision or policy setting; stakeholder involvement	Being involved in the evaluation resulted in the primary users feeling more empowered and having improved evaluation skills. Quicker turnaround time on results would improve use. Also important is a supportive organizational culture and ongoing, high-quality communication
Lee and Cousins (1995)	√	√	Examined the effects of involvement in a participatory evaluation on implementing externally funded, school-directed change including the impact of the evaluation consultant	Canadian schools ($n = 4$)	Decision or policy setting; stakeholder involvement	A foundation provided access to an evaluation consultant to four schools who had received a program-development grant. Each school was at a different stage in the evaluation but none had yet produced any reports. Stakeholder participation allowed for greater understanding about evaluation. Evaluations were still in the early stages, so no reports of use, but eagerness and enthusiasm about use was noted

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Author (year)				Purpose	Data source	Type of use	Findings
Malen, Murphy, and Geary (1988)	√		√	Analysis of the effect of a specific program evaluation with a "political" evaluation report and the unique decision context and the extent of acceptance of data/recommendations and impact of the report	Utah state legislature, interviews with 21 individuals ($n = 1/21$)	Evaluation implementation; decision or policy setting	Characteristics of the evaluation and context interacted to make the evaluation information a "significant threat," a threat to pervasive ideologies, political alignments, reform commitments, and education appropriations. The evaluation exposed divides in a fragile coalition and threatened connections in the legislature
Marra (2003)	√	√	√	Use of evaluation for improving public organizations' performance through better design of governance structures and more entrepreneurial managerial efforts	World Bank evaluation studies ($n = 4$)	Evaluation implementation; decision or policy setting	Five key issues were identified as affecting use: (a) Governance structures affect the potential for evaluation to play as a check and balance within the organization and enforce results accountability. (b) The high-profile political role of the evaluation department helps evaluation to be accepted and valued for strategic planning at the apex of the organization. (c) Managers discount evaluation for their own work and ascribe higher salience for their subordinates. (d) Most interviewees endorse the symbolic role of evaluation to legitimize a position or decision. (e) Actionable and evidence-based recommendations were likely to be taken into account

Author				Focus	Sample	Purpose/Setting	Findings
Marsh and Glassick (1988)			√	Effect of types of evaluation recommendations (subject, audience, specificity, and depth) and implementation of recommendations by schools	Evaluations conducted by evaluation branch of large metro school district ($n = 4$)	Evaluation implementation; stakeholder involvement	School administrators used recommendation more when they were detailed and arose from verbal discussions between the stakeholders and evaluators. Recommendations about early phases of a project were more likely to be used if they focused on instructional change; recommendations from later phases were more likely to be used if they focused on administrative problems. Verbal interaction between the evaluator and program staff enhanced the understanding, acceptance, and utilization of the recommendations
McCormick (1997)	√	√	√	Relationship between users' commitment to the program, involvement with the program, attitude toward evaluation, organizational position, and type of organization and reported conceptual, processing, persuasive, and instrumental uses	Potential evaluation users of the program evaluation division of a state legislative auditor and a social service research organization ($n = 89$)	Decision or policy setting; stakeholder sinvolvement	Conceptual use exceeded all other types of use, and processing use exceeded persuasive or instrumental use. Involvement in evaluation was highly related to all types of use, especially "processing use." Public/government and private nonprofit organizations utilized evaluation information equally. Managers were more active than legislators in terms of processing use. Attitude toward evaluation had little influence on evaluation use

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Author			Description	Sample	Category	Findings
Newman et al. (1987)	√	√	Effect of conflict, importance, setting, and superintendent support on decision making as measured by Decision-Making Information Needs Scale (Newman, Brown, Rivers, & Glock, 1983)	School board members ($n = 361$)	Decision or policy setting	Evaluation use is influenced by the perceived importance and setting of the program. When making a decision about a program of high importance, board members required more time, more information, and more contacts with a consultant. Program setting had the greatest strength of association. Program conflict influenced information needs. When the program was of high conflict (and no knowledge or superintendent attitude was given), board members wanted more time, more information, more personal contacts, and contacts with consultants compared to low conflict settings
Potts (1998)	√	√	Relationship between evaluation method (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed) and conceptual and instrumental use	Ten administrators from student service programs at a large state university ($n = 10$)	Evaluation implementation	University administrators felt that the findings from mixed-method reports produced greater knowledge gain, were more credible, and were more useful than single-method quantitative or qualitative studies
Preskill and Caracelli (1997)	√ √	√	Evaluators' beliefs on evaluation use, including the implications of stakeholder involvement on use	American Evaluation Association (AEA) evaluation used by Topical Interest Group (TIG) members ($n = 282$)	Stakeholder involvement	Survey of evaluators' perceptions of evaluation use. Identified seven most important strategies to influence use: planning for use at beginning of evaluation, identifying and prioritizing intended users and uses, designing evaluation with limited resources, planning for communicating with stakeholders throughout. Found that definition of use has expanded from traditional to include process use and organizational learning concepts

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Author (year)				Purpose	Sample	Setting/use type	Findings
Rinne (1994)	✓	✓	✓	Relationship among the perceived purpose of evaluation (program improvement, judge merit/worth, knowledge generation) and the utilization of evaluation results taking into account anxiety level of potential end users of evaluation	Health care educators who teach health promotion and prevention programs ($n = 540$)	Decision or policy setting	The study found the importance of external purposes for conducting evaluation as compared to internal purposes. External purposes predicted positive maintenance and negative change. Both internal and external purposes predicted conceptual use. With the exception of no use, all constructs of use were predicted by one or more of the anxiety constructs. When controlling for anxiety, no considerable increase in predictability was found for the association between purpose and use
Rockwell et al. (1990)	✓	✓		Examined the impact of attending to Patton's (1997) utilization-focused evaluation "personal factors" on evaluation uses	One team of four extension staff who were intended evaluation users ($n = 1/4$)	Evaluation implementation; decision or policy setting; stakeholder involvement	Six factors were identified as encouraging evaluation use after attending to the personal factor in the planning of the evaluation: (a) the intended user's information needs; (b) the timeliness of the study; (c) the intended user's ownership of the information that was fostered by their involvement; (d) interaction among intended users and the evaluator; (e) the evaluation's methodological appropriateness and quality; and (e) discussion of the results in steering committee meetings

Santhiveeran (1995)	✓			Impact of evaluation type, internal factors, and external factors on five domains of use measured by Kirkhart and Glasser (1991) Use Scale	Mental health executive directors and program administrators ($n = 180$)	Decision or policy setting	The key factors found affecting the use of evaluation data were the proportion of the budget allocated for evaluations, the availability of an evaluation director, and the proportion of funding from state and local sources. Personal characteristics (gender, age, and ethnicity) and job-related characteristics (time spent in personnel management, supervision, and program development) were found to be potential predictors of evaluation utilization. The attitudes of the individual respondents toward evaluation were not related to evaluation utilization
Shea (1991)	✓	✓	✓	Relationship between evaluation process, evaluator characteristics, and the decision context and conceptual, instrumental, and symbolic use measured by items from Johnson (1980) and Week (1979)	Canadian Evaluation Society members ($n = 332$)	Evaluation implementation; decision or policy setting; evaluator competence; stakeholder involvement	Canadian evaluators reported high levels of use (91–99%) of the last evaluation. Most of the uses were conceptual, followed by instrumental and persuasive uses. Complex relationships existed between three categories of independent variables (process, evaluator, and context) and use. All three categories of factors had some relationship with instrumental and conceptual use. Persuasive use was only associated with one process and two evaluator variables. The number of contact hours spent in any of the following activities was significantly associated with instrumental use: planning, implementation, and dissemination

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Study			Purpose	Sample	Category	Findings
Sleezer (1987)	√		Effect of types of evaluation reports (informational, examinational, or analytical) on level of financial support and logic of budget decision making	Decision makers in manufacturing organizations responsible for financial resource allocation for training ($n = 40$)	Evaluation implementation	Evaluation reports had a very low level of influence over decisions about funding training programs. Only 50% of the respondents even looked at the report prior to making a decision and those who read the report did not use it, did not believe it, or related it to a previous program only. No relationship was found between type of report and its use
Sperlazza (1995)	√	√	Describe the impact of participation of a team of evaluation professionals on their professional development and use of results	An evaluation team, four members ($n = 1/4$)	Stakeholder involvement	Participatory evaluation was seen as advantageous and participation was related to increased use. Advantages of the approach included the team getting to know their colleagues and gain understanding of their program, valuing staff involvement in decision making, and building a sense of ownership of their program
Turnbull (1999)	√	√	Test causal relationships in proposed model between participatory evaluation characteristics and use of evaluation information	Teachers from British Columbia school accreditation program ($n = 315$)	Stakeholder involvement	High levels of influence were related to high levels of participation efficacy. There was a positive relationship between participation efficacy and instrumental and symbolic use, suggesting that participation efficacy is a mediating factor linking action theory (participation) and conceptual theory (use)

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| Weiss et al. (2005) | √ | √ | Examination of the use and influence of DARE program evaluations; application of Mark and Henry's (2004) mechanisms of evaluation influence | Law enforcement officials and school district administrators from 16 communities with and without DARE evaluations (*n* = 128) | Evaluation implementation; decision or policy setting | DARE evaluations were used in a variety of ways: politically to persuade others, instrumentally to make decisions about future programming, and conceptually in terms of a raising the consciousness of stakeholders. A new type of use was identified, "imposed use" in which districts were forced to replace the program with one on a government approved list. The pathways to which influence was achieved were tangled, complex, and difficult to discern retrospectively. Motivational factors played a part; incentives pushed districts to apply evaluation results. Additionally, the urge to act rationally influenced behavioral use of the results |

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