Beyond Use: A Theory of Evaluation Influence

presented by
Gary T. Henry*
Georgia State University
gthenry@gsu.edu

*Paper co-author Melvin M. Mark

Evaluation Café
Western Michigan University
March 24, 2003
Influence of Evaluation Findings:
An Example

Use of performance measurement in states in U.S.
(Melkers and Willoughby 2002)

- Legislative Branch Final Appropriation Decisions
  Not important to somewhat important (1.58)
- Executive Budget Decisions
  Somewhat important (1.96)
- Agency Budget Development
  Somewhat important to important (2.54)
Influence of Evaluation Findings

- Performance Measures
- Agency Agenda Setting
- Agency Policy Proposals
- Executive Policy Proposals
- Appropriations Policy
Levels of Evaluation Influence

Individual

Interpersonal

Collective Action (Public and Private Organizations)
Table 1: Targets for evaluation influence at the **individual level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Attitudes and Behaviors</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude Change</strong>&lt;br&gt;Greenberg, Mandell, &amp; Onstott (2000)</td>
<td>Evaluation findings change state policymakers’ opinions about feasibility of implementing program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salience</strong>&lt;br&gt;Henry &amp; Gordon (2001)</td>
<td>Information about program effects raise the importance of the issue or social problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elaboration</strong>&lt;br&gt;Petty &amp; Cacioppo (1986)</td>
<td>Evaluation report stimulates individuals to think more about the program and their expectations for its outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priming</strong>&lt;br&gt;Krosnick &amp; Brannon (1993)</td>
<td>Discussion of test scores at beginning of evaluation report makes test scores more important in reader's judgment about program effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skill Acquisition</strong>&lt;br&gt;King (2002)</td>
<td>New skills, such as collaboration or survey techniques, are learned through participation in evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavior Change</strong>&lt;br&gt;Patton (1997)</td>
<td>Teachers begin to mix whole language and phonics instruction after learning that combining the approaches is more effective than either one separately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2: Targets for evaluation influence at the **interpersonal level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpersonal</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persuasion</strong></td>
<td>Communication of results through credible organization persuades policymakers that program should be supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Greenberg, Mandell, &amp; Onstott (2000)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Justification</strong></td>
<td>Results showing quality childcare enhances children’s development are used to justify higher quality standards for childcare licenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Shulock (1999)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change Agent</strong></td>
<td>Results influence an individual to work for organizational change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Weick &amp; Quinn (1999)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minority Group Influence</strong></td>
<td>Opinion minorities use findings to counter widely held attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Glazer (1994)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Norms</strong></td>
<td>Evaluation changes social norms about telecommuting and new norms increase telecommuting and reduce driving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Henry &amp; Gordon (2003); Ajzen and Fishbein (1980)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Targets for evaluation influence on collective actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collective Action (Public or Private Organizations)</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agenda Setting</strong>&lt;br&gt; Henry (2002); McCombs &amp; Zhu (1995)</td>
<td>Media reports of evaluation findings increase public opinion about the importance of providing preschool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy-oriented Learning</strong>&lt;br&gt; Sabatier &amp; Jenkins-Smith (1993)</td>
<td>Advocacy coalition modifies policy recommendation based on evidence of success of several program alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy Change</strong>&lt;br&gt; Mintrom (1997)</td>
<td>Evidence of growing social problem influences the adoption of a major policy reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diffusion</strong>&lt;br&gt; Berry &amp; Berry (1990)</td>
<td>Evidence of a policy’s success in another jurisdiction influences the adoption of similar policy elsewhere</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Levels and Mechanisms of Evaluation Influence

**Individual Attitudes and Behaviors**
- Attitude Change
- Salience/Importance
- Elaboration
- Priming
- Skill Acquisition
- Behavior Change

**Interpersonal Behaviors**
- Justification
- Persuasion
- Change Agent
- Social Norms
- Minority Group Influence

**Collective Action (Public & Private Organizations)**
- Agenda Setting
- Policy/Change
- Policy-oriented Learning
- Diffusion
Example of influence pathway triggered by evaluation process

Evaluation Process → Attitude Change → Social Norms → Behavioral Change
A theory of evaluation influence: Conclusions

Regarding “theory”
- Theory of influence parallels program theory (of change).
- Influence and evaluation outcomes replace the construct “use”.
- Fine grained models of influence mechanisms and pathways with evaluation findings and processes as the triggers.
- Realist approach, emphasizing underlying mechanisms through which evaluation affects attitudes and behavior.

Regarding “learning”
- Specifies learning as key outcome of evaluation.
- Individual, interpersonal, and organizational learning.

Regarding “evidence”
- The mechanisms we identify have empirical support.
- We argue for more and better evidence about use or influence.
- Evidence is the missing link for “evidence-based practice”