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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Erin Mehalic Burr entitled "Evaluation Use and Influence among Project Directors of State GEAR UP Grants." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Educational Psychology and Research.

Jennifer Morrow, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Gary Skolits, Steve McCallum, Jennifer Richards

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Evaluation Use and Influence among Project Directors of State GEAR UP Grants

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee-Knoxville

Erin Mehalic Burr

August 2009

DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving husband, Andy. You have supported me over the last five years through the good times and the bad. You have been my motivation to keep going when things got tough. For these things I will forever be grateful.

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A special thank you to my dissertation committee: Dr. Jennifer Ann Morrow, Dr. Gary Skolits, Dr. Steve McCallum, and Dr. Jennifer Richards for all of your guidance and support while I worked on my dissertation. Thanks to the staff of the National Council for Community and Educational Partnerships for their assistance with my study. To Margot Ackerman and Sarah Schultz-Robinson for being amazing friends and listeners who helped me get to where I am now. I could not have done this without you. To my family, thank you for always believing in me and to my husband, your love and support have meant everything to me.

ABSTRACT

Evaluation use is a major goal of program evaluators, because it can lead to program improvement and sustainability. This dissertation adds to the literature on "Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs" (GEAR UP) grant evaluation use by assessing (1) the extent to which project directors of state grants use evaluation results (i.e., instrumental use, conceptual use, persuasive use, and/or process use), (2) the extent to which the evaluations of the state GEAR UP grant programs have had an influence at the individual, interpersonal, and collective levels, and (3) what factors have an impact on the use of those results (i.e., quality of the evaluation, decision and policy setting factors). Additionally, this dissertation provides insight into GEAR UP administrators' expectations for evaluation use among state GEAR UP grant project directors and support systems for evaluation use.

The participants in this study were 17 current state GEAR UP grant project directors. Electronic copies of surveys and links to an online survey were emailed to participants and paper-and-pencil surveys were distributed during the 2009 National Council for Community Education Partnerships (NCCEP)/GEAR UP Capacity Building Workshop in New Orleans, LA. Telephone interviews were conducted with former NCCEP officials. Descriptive analyses were used to address each research question.

Results indicated that GEAR UP project directors are using their programs' evaluations for instrumental, conceptual, symbolic, and process-related purposes. Project directors reported evaluation influence at the individual, interpersonal, and collective levels. Both implementation factors and decision and policy setting factors had an impact on project directors' decisions to use their programs' evaluations. Most of the former NCCEP staff interviewed had high

expectations for use of evaluation results by state project directors. Former NCCEP staff members were able to provide a number of examples of cases where states were using their programs' evaluations. All of the former NCCEP staff members interviewed said that they thought project directors had been encouraged and trained to promote use. Former NCCEP staff also identified a number of barriers to directors' use of their programs evaluations and provided some suggestions for addressing these barriers.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the purpose of the study, details the problem researched, and discusses the significance of the study. U.S. Department of Education Institute of Educational Sciences (2007) data indicates that postsecondary education enrollment rates decreased 8% from 1985 to 1990, but have been steadily increasing from 1990 to 2007 (21%). This trend can be partially attributed to the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant program enacted in 1999 (USDOE, 2008d). Since their inception GEAR UP programs have helped approximately 1.5 million students become prepared to enroll in college (National Council for Community and Education Partnerships, NCCEP, 2008). While the focus of decisions on yearly renewal of individual grants is based on the success of the programs (as determined by required project performance measures reported in the Annual Performance Report - APR), there is little evidence that attention is paid to the use of evaluation elements of the APR content requirements. This is evidenced by the fact that there is only one question on the APR form that addresses “actions required”, (i.e., “Are you planning to make changes to the grant in response to the results?”) (USDOE, 2007a, p. 5). Any GEAR UP project evaluation reports written are completed above and beyond the APR requirements. Much of the literature reporting on GEAR UP grant programs describes successful programs (Ward, 2006), while there has been minimal reporting on whether or not the use of evaluation results may have contributed to those successes (Meehan, Cowley, & Whittaker, 2001). GEAR UP programs are comprehensive and complex interventions which involve many individuals working at various levels of school systems, in community organizations, and in participating institutions of higher education.

Evaluation results for each GEAR UP project can be used in a multitude of ways (i.e., instrumental use, conceptual use, persuasive use, and/or process use) and the subsequent use of these results is impacted by a number of different factors (e.g., those associated with the quality of the evaluation, and an assortment of decision and policy setting factors). Regardless of the way an evaluation is used, the process of the evaluation and the results can be seen as having an influence on those involved in or surrounding the evaluation.

Statement of the Problem

The USDOE spends approximately $300 million on GEAR UP programs each year and is committed to determining its effectiveness. While the federal government is using performance measure results provided in the annual evaluation reports to determine whether or not to renew funding, the project directors of these grants and their teams can also use the evaluation reports in a number of ways. However, there is no evidence that the project directors and their teams are consistently using the evaluation reports to improve their programs.

Currently, no research has been published on: (1) whether or not grantees are using the information from their program evaluations, (2) how the grantees are using the results of their programs' evaluations, (3) which factors have an influence on grantees' use of the evaluation results, and (4) what influence involvement in evaluation has on grantees. Gathering this information has the potential to be as important to the USDOE as the operational data on the program's successes. Additionally, presenting this information in evaluation literature may be helpful to other evaluators who are seeking to ensure that their evaluations are being used.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to introduce literature on GEAR UP grant evaluation use. This was accomplished by examining: a) about the extent to which project directors of state grants use evaluation results (i.e., instrumental use, conceptual use, persuasive use, and/or process use); b) the extent to which the evaluations of the state GEAR UP grant programs have had an influence at the individual, interpersonal, and collective levels; and c) the factors that have an impact on the use of those results (i.e., quality of the evaluation, decision and policy setting factors). Additionally, this study is designed to assess GEAR UP administrators' expectations for evaluation use.

Significance of the Study

Over the last 10 years, Congress has appropriated $2.4 billion for the GEAR UP program (NCCEP, 2008). The estimated allotment for the 2009 fiscal year is $303.4 million ($121.8 million for state grants, $180 million for partnership grants) with $1.5 million designated for the evaluation of these grants (i.e., individual grant evaluations and a national evaluation) (USDOE, 2008a). In order to ensure that potential grantees have sufficient plans for evaluating the success of their program, 20% of the selection criteria points defined for the GEAR UP grants are assigned to evaluation. The USDOE's support of program evaluation is further evidenced by the abundance of tools and services they offer grantees for gathering, sharing, and interpreting data (e.g., EVE – an online system for editing, verifying, and reporting additional information for the Annual Performance Report).

Per GEAR UP evaluation requirements, evaluations must address three pre-specified objectives which are outcomes-oriented (USDOE, 2007b). Once a grant is funded the grantee

must collect baseline data in the first year, set target rates for each performance measure for the remaining years of the project, and collect data on specific performance measures selected by the USDOE as well as some selected by the project directors and/or their evaluator. Results must be reported each year as part of an Annual Progress Report (APR). These reports require the grantee/evaluator to report how their program is addressing the mission of the GEAR UP program by answering a specific set of performance related questions. Grantees are also required to report frequencies and percentages regarding information such as general school data, student information, student college awareness preparation information, student college-going preparation information, student academic preparation information, and parent/guardian information. In addition to the APR reports, evaluation reports are due at the end of each funding year for the USDOE to review and these are used to base grant renewal decisions.

Since grantees' progress is repeatedly being reviewed in order to make funding decisions, it is in the best interest of the grantees to not only read their grant's evaluation reports each year but also to consider using them to improve their programs. Research on grantees' use of evaluation results and the factors that impact their use could be instrumental in helping funding agencies learn about what they can do to facilitate evaluation use and what impact evaluations are having on their grant program. This information may be useful to the USDOE for determining whether or not evaluation activities that extend beyond collecting basic performance data represent a waste of funds or contribute to the achievement of the mission of the GEAR UP program. Additionally, by collecting data on how grantees are using their evaluations, the USDOE can begin the process of tracking evaluation use and influence across the six-year span of the grants and eventually measure the long-term effects of evaluation influence.

Objective

The ultimate goal of this dissertation is to find out: a) to what extent and for what purposes are state GEAR UP grant directors are using the results of their grant's evaluations (i.e., instrumental use, conceptual use, persuasive use, and/or process use); b) the what extent to which the evaluations of the state GEAR UP grant programs have had an influence at the individual, interpersonal, and collective levels; and c) what factors impact the decision to use evaluation results (i.e., quality of the evaluation, decision and policy setting factors). Additionally, this dissertation aims to learn about GEAR UP administrators' expectations for evaluation use. The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors use the evaluation of their program for instrumental (decision-making) purposes?
2. To what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors use the evaluation of their program for conceptual (educational) purposes?
3. To what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors use the evaluation of their program for persuasive (political) purposes?
4. As a result of involvement in their program's evaluation, to what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors engage in process use?
5. To what extent have the evaluations of the state GEAR UP grant programs had an influence at the individual, interpersonal, and collective levels?
6. To what extent do evaluation implementation factors (i.e., evaluation quality, credibility, relevance, communication quality, findings, and timeliness) have an impact on state GEAR UP grant project directors' use of evaluation results?

7. To what extent do decision and policy setting factors (i.e., information needs, decision characteristics, political climate, competing information, personal characteristics, and commitment and/or receptiveness to evaluation) have an impact on state GEAR UP grant project directors' use of evaluation results?
8. What were former NCCEP staff's key use expectations and support systems regarding the use of evaluation results by state GEAR UP project directors?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an analysis of the relevant literature that deals with evaluation use and evaluation influence. A review of the literature revealed that modern social program evaluation came about in the 1960's (Shadish, Cook, & Levinton, 1995). The concept of evaluation use has been a topic of much interest for over 40 years. During that time much of the emphasis of this research has been on definitions of evaluation use and factors that impact use (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Shulha & Cousins, 1997). In the last ten years, specific types of evaluation use have come to be recognized as routes to evaluation influence. Two detailed models have been offered to explain evaluation influence. This literature review will cover the full body of evaluation use and influence research and describe evaluation use and influence in the context of GEAR UP grants. This literature review is derived from sources identified using database searches of several disciplines including Ingenta, Psycinfo, and PsychArticles. Additional literature was accessed from the GEAR UP report page located on the NCCEP/GEAR UP Data and Evaluation website. The literature review will be presented in five sections.

The first section will provide detailed information on the four types of evaluation use recognized in the evaluation literature. The second section covers a description of the various factors which have been identified as having an impact on evaluation use. In the third section, two models of evaluation influence are presented. The fourth section provides a summary and offers some conclusions about evaluation use and evaluation influence literature as well as some suggestions for future research. The fifth section provides a description of the GEAR UP grant program and discusses research associated with GEAR UP grant projects.

Evaluation Use

Researchers in the field of evaluation have been exploring and discussing the topic of evaluation use or utilization for approximately forty years. Henry and Mark (2003) suggest that the mid-1970's through the early-1980's were the years during which evaluation use received the most attention; however, renewed interest came about around the late 1990's through the early-2000's. Evaluation use is still an important issue among evaluators which has been evidenced in a number of ways. For instance, the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCEE, 1994) listed utility as one of the main categories of standards. Among the utility standards, Lawrenz, Gullickson, and Toal (2007) identified four which are relevant to evaluation use: (1) stakeholder identification (Utility 1), (2) information scope and selection (Utility 3), (3) report clarity (Utility 5), and (4) evaluation impact (Utility 7). The American Evaluation Association (AEA) has formed a topical interest group (TIG-EU) which has been dedicated to advancing our understanding of evaluation use for approximately 20 years.

A multitude of definitions for evaluation use and/or types of use have emerged over the years. Use has become a word which evaluators frequently discuss with clients at various points before and/or during an evaluation in an effort to emphasize the importance, benefits, or impacts of evaluations. Much of the research available on evaluation use has focused on identifying factors which may impact the various types of use. While many such factors have been identified, most evaluators have reached a consensus that evaluation use is a major concern deserving continued attention in the literature (Lawrenz, Huffman, & McGinnis, 2007; Preskill & Caracelli, 1997). Shadish, Cook, and Leviton (1991) emphasized the significance of use as it represents a major part of evaluation theory and suggested that use is essential to the

legitimization of the field of evaluation. For each of these reasons, many evaluators continue to focus on evaluation use, not only to maintain an updated understanding of what evaluation use means, but also to understand what factors may impact use and the context in which these factors are most influential.

What is Evaluation Use?

Developing a definition of evaluation use is an important concept for evaluators to understand as the outcome of any evaluation should be use of the results. Without a common definition of use, it would be difficult for evaluators to assess the extent to which their findings were being used (i.e., overlooking one or more aspects of use). For example, in their review of the literature, Cousins and Leithwood (1986) noted that some researchers have studied the vague concept of *utilization potential*. However, much of the evaluation use research has focused on one or more concrete aspects of evaluation use (e.g., use for decision-making purposes, use for educational purposes, etc.).

In the early years of evaluation use research, use was defined as being tied solely to decision making, which is now more commonly termed instrumental use (Preskill & Torres, 2000). Since that time the definition of use has been expanded to include conceptual use (i.e., educational use, organizational learning), political/persuasive/symbolic use (i.e., involves interpersonal influence), and process use (i.e., changes that occur as a result of involvement in an evaluation) (Shulha & Cousins, 1997). In more recent literature, evaluation use has been expanded to include the notion of misuse. *Evaluation influence* has begun to replace the *evaluation use* as some have thought it better captures the meaning of the changes that occur as a result of evaluation use (Christie, 2007; Henry & Mark, 2003; Kirkhart, 2000).

Instrumental Use

Instrumental use has possibly received the most attention in the literature. Rich (1977, as cited in Levtion & Hughes, 1981) refers to instrumental use as "cases where respondents cited and could document ... the specific way in which research was being used for decision-making or problem-solving purposes" (p. 528). This definition has remained relatively stable as Clavijo, Fleming, Hoermann, Toal, and Johnson (2005) described instrumental use as instances in which "results are used in making decisions about program structure and function" (p. 47). In their review of the literature, Cousins and Leithwood (1986) provided a number of examples of instrumental use that have been commonly described in literature such as making decisions about funding, the functioning of a program, and management. Weiss, Murph-Graham, and Birkeland (2005) suggest that pure instrumental use is not often observed. Instead, many factors contribute to a decision maker's choice to make a decision. Additionally, evaluators may not recognize cases of instrumental use as they do not track the impact their evaluation has beyond the end of the evaluation.

Conceptual Use

Conceptual use or enlightenment, which has also received substantial attention in the literature, has been described in a number of ways. Cousins and Leithwood (1986) referred to conceptual use as "education of decision makers." Boyer and Langbein (1991) describe conceptual use as use which leads to "changing a policymaker's thinking about an issue without necessarily putting the information to any specific, documented end" (p.516). Henry and Rog (1998) refer to conceptual use as "enlightenment, or the use of findings to influence the way a program or its effects are viewed" (p. 90). And more recently, Henry and Mark (2003) have

referred to conceptual use as “something that is newly learned about a program, its participants, its operations, or outcomes through an evaluation” (p. 294). In their review of the literature, Cousins and Leithwood (1986) reported examples of conceptual use that have been commonly assessed in literature which included: education of staff, substantiating previous opinions, improving the confidence of staff, and clarifying a program’s strengths and weaknesses. According to Weiss, Murphy-Graham, and Birkeland (2005), numerous researchers consider conceptual influence as having the greatest impact on policy.

Persuasive Use

Persuasive use has been described as use that “involves drawing on evaluation evidence in attempts to convince others to support a political position, or to defend such a position from attack (Leviton & Hughes, 1981, p. 528).” Much later, Henry and Rog (1998) refer to persuasive use as “use of evaluation findings to retrospectively support a decision made prior to the evaluation finding” (p.90). They also offer two alternative terms for this type of use which include symbolic and political use. More similar to Leviton and Hughes’ (1981) description of persuasive use, Valovirta (2002) suggests that evaluation can be viewed as argumentation. He describes argumentation as having two dimensions: an individual meaning (when an evaluator draws conclusions based on data in order to make arguments) and a social meaning (a verbal interaction among people about evaluation results). The individual meaning includes four types of claims an evaluator can make that constitute persuasive arguments (i.e., claims of facts and description, claims of synthesis and explanation, evaluative claims, and claims of action), which build upon each other starting with the claims of facts and description. The social meaning refers to arguments made in discussions or negotiations that lead to a group’s greater understanding.

It is particularly important for evaluators to be cognizant of political biases which may impact their evaluation as they may lead to biased evaluations. In their review of the literature, Shulha and Cousins (1997) mentioned that persuasive use of evaluation results can be considered a misuse of evaluation. Patton (2007) described misuse as the negative side of evaluation use. In contrast, Weiss, Murphy-Graham, and Birkeland (2005) condone persuasive use as they support the idea of using evaluation results to support a previously held opinion. Instead, what they consider misuse is when users twist the findings to meet their needs.

Process Use

According to Patton (1997), "Process use refers to and is indicated by individual changes in thinking and behavior, and program or organizational changes in procedures and culture, which occur among those involved in evaluation as a result of the learning that occurs during the evaluation process" (p. 90). Forss, Rebien, and Carlsson (2002) explain that Patton's definition of process use specifies the difference between changes that occur when users are provided with the results of an evaluation (i.e., conceptual use) and the changes that occur as a result of being involved in the evaluation regardless of the findings in a report. Patton explained that process use may be evidenced in the following four ways: (1) increasing program staff's understanding of their program, (2) supporting the intervention, (3) supporting the commitment of staff to the program by encouraging them to learn more about their program, and (4) program and organizational growth. More recently, Patton (2007) defined process use as "changes in attitude, thinking, and behavior that result from participating in an evaluation" (p. 99). He has also identified two additional ways in which process use may be evidenced including the incorporation of evaluation into an organization's thinking and instrumentation effects (i.e.,

activities which are measured are activities that get accomplished). He describes process use as a sensitizing concept (its meaning differs depending on place or set of circumstances in which it is measured) and each of the six ways in which process use may be evidenced as sensitizing categories. Because of his support of process use as a sensitizing concept, Patton discourages researchers from attempting to reach a consensus on a standard operational definition of process use.

Measurement of Evaluation Use

Henry and Mark (2003) recognize that while the term ‘evaluation use’ is handy, evaluation use has “avoided rigorous and consistent specification, operationalization, or empirical examination” (p. 309). Some researchers suggest that future studies need to focus on how instrumental, conceptual, persuasive, and process use can be measured (Kirthart, Morgan, & Sincavage, 1991; Lawrenz, Huffman, & McGinnis, 2007; Patton, 2007; Preskill & Caracelli, 1997; Russ, Atwood, & Egherman, 2002). However, in attempting to measure the different types of use there are certain things that must be considered, specifically factors that may have an impact on evaluation use. For example, as Weiss, Murphy-Graham, and Birkeland (2005) point out, pure instrumental use is not often observed. In other words, an evaluation report is not the lone consideration for making decisions. Consequently it may be helpful to identify factors that contribute to a decision maker’s decision when attempting to measure instrumental use. Additionally, identifying impacting factors of other types of evaluation use can also be helpful for understanding why an evaluation is or is not used.

Impacting Factors of Evaluation Use

One of the current challenges in the field of evaluation is ensuring that the results or findings of an evaluation are actually being used by relevant stakeholders. If evaluation results are not being used then evaluators are not able to achieve the primary goal of evaluation, social betterment (Henry, 2000; Mark, Henry, & Julnes, 2000). This is a challenge affecting grant funding agencies, evaluators, and researchers. As more government and private agencies are requiring researchers to include evaluation as a component of their grant proposals, more government and private funds may be spent by researchers simply to fulfill a requirement rather than to improve their research program. This would have negative consequences for both the researcher (i.e., their research program suffers) and the funding agency (i.e., wasted funds). If the evaluation findings are not useful, then it would be more appropriate for the granting agency to use the findings in some other way, in turn, reducing evaluation opportunities and the opportunity for evaluation to promote improvement. For these reasons among others, identifying factors which impact evaluation use has been an important focus for evaluation research.

A great deal of evaluation research has been successful in identifying factors which impact evaluation use, much of which can be generalized to most evaluation users. Leviton and Hughes (1981) reviewed the literature on evaluation use published from the late sixties to 1980 and identified five categories of factors which have been found to influence evaluation use. The first factor, *relevance*, referred to issues such as the appropriateness of the choice of audience addressed in the evaluation, the relevance to the policy maker's and program manager's needs, and the timeliness of the evaluation results being presented. The second factor identified was the *effectiveness of communication* between evaluators and potential users. This included issues such

as dissemination, the impact of bureaucratic hierarchies on communication, and the directness of the users in communicating their needs to the evaluator. The third factor identified, *ability of users to effectively process evaluation findings*, referred to issues such as awareness of relevance, clarity of presentation, and the information processing style of users. The fourth factor identified, *the credibility of the evaluator*, included issues such as how the information presented provided by the evaluator compares to other information, users' preconceptions, evaluator's credibility, and quality of the evaluation. Finally, the fifth factor identified was the *users' involvement and role as an advocate*. This referred to the users' commitment to evaluations and their advocacy for programs and policies. Leviton and Hughes suggest that these factors should each be considered by the evaluator to promote evaluation use.

Cousins and Leithwood (1986) reviewed the evaluation use literature published between 1971 and 1986, which partially overlapped the review by Leviton and Hughes (1981). As expected, many if not most of the influencing factors they identified were the same. However, Cousins and Leithwood organized their findings differently. They identified 12 influencing factors which fit into two general categories, *evaluation implementation* (i.e., evaluation quality, credibility, relevance, communication quality, findings, and timeliness) and *decision and policy setting* (i.e., information needs, decision characteristics, political climate, competing information, personal characteristics, and commitment and/or receptiveness to evaluation).

What their review added to the literature was a method for assigning weight to the various factors identified so that evaluators could discern how much time they should devote to each of these factors. In order to assess the relative impact of an influencing factor, Cousins and Leithwood recorded the estimated number of reports observed (i.e., relationships and non-

relationships observed), the estimated number of relationships observed, and the number of studies reviewed. They developed a calculation they could use to create a prevalence of relationship index (compared the strengths of the relationships between the independent and dependent variables in the studies). This index was designed to fulfill three purposes. First, it assessed factors across all types of use (instrumental, conceptual, and persuasive) as well as potential for use. Second, it assessed the differences in the strength of influence among the factors. Finally, it assessed which of the factors were most influential across types of use. What Cousins and Leithwood found was that use was most evident when: a) evaluations employed appropriate methods and complexity; b) suggestions were appropriate for and significant to users; c) findings did not conflict with users' beliefs and expectations; d) users were involved and were previously committed to the benefits of evaluation; e) the data reported was relevant to users' problems; and f) little information provided by the evaluation conflicted with outside sources of information.

Shulha and Cousins (1997) conducted the next review of the evaluation use literature, which covered works published between 1986 and 1997. They identified five major developments in theory, research, and practice arising from this time period. The first of these is an increased emphasis on context as it relates to understanding and explaining use. Evaluators are encouraged to learn more about the structure, culture, and politics of the organization they are evaluating. The second development is the inclusion of process use as another form of evaluation use. Third is the development of a focus on the difference between individuals and organizations in how evaluation is used. Fourth, a focus on understanding what factors lead to misuse of evaluation findings has developed. Finally, the role of the evaluator has been expanded

in relation to ensuring evaluation use, so that it includes responsibilities such as facilitation, planning, and educating. Each of these areas of development are currently hot topics in the evaluation literature (Amo & Cousins, 2007; Fetterman, 2003; Mark & Henry, 2003; Patton, 2007).

More recent studies on evaluation use have assessed similar influencing factors of evaluation use to those identified in the earlier evaluation literature. Valovirta (2002) found that, among government agencies in Finland, the "degree of pressure for change and the relationship between conflict and consensus seem to profoundly affect the role evaluations play within the management environment of the agencies" (p.60). In other words, he is suggesting that the interactional or social context of an evaluation has an impact on its utilization. Drawing on experience with the U.S. General Accounting Office and the World Bank, Grasso (2003) suggests that accurately identifying the evaluation audience, providing useable information/data relevant to users' problems, proper timing of a report, clarity of report, and methodological credibility are all factors which impact the use of evaluation results. In a simulation study, Christie (2007) found the type of data provided had an influence on evaluation use among community health center program directors and students in educational leadership programs. It was determined that large-scale study data, case study data, and anecdotal accounts were each influential among decision makers, however, large-scale study data and case study data were more influential. Lawrenz, Gullickson, and Toal (2007) used a case narrative of an evaluation of a multisite national program to show how different methods of disseminating results impact evaluation use. They found that providing stakeholders with a written report is not enough to facilitate use. In addition to disseminating reports of the findings, fact sheets, brochures, site visit

handbooks, and issue papers (i.e., papers focusing on stakeholders' main concerns) had the strongest effect.

Weiss, Murphy-Graham, and Birkeland (2005) suggest that there is an increasing pressure for users to pay attention to evaluation results. This emphasizes the importance of considering each of the factors identified which impact evaluation use so that evaluators can provide users with the most user-friendly information. In turn, evaluators are offered an opportunity to have a stronger impact on programs which they evaluate. While knowledge of types of use and impacting factors may be beneficial, understanding the context in which they operate is vital. The notion of evaluation influence as described by Kirkhart (2000) and Henry and Mark (2003) helps provide this context.

Models of Evaluation Influence

The field of evaluation has begun to move from using the term *evaluation use* to *evaluation influence* as a number of evaluators have expressed that the term *evaluation use* (i.e., instrumental, conceptual, persuasive, and process use) is limiting. Many evaluators feel that it does not adequately capture the change that occurs as a result of an evaluation (Henry, 2000; Henry & Mark, 2003; Kirkhart, 2000; Mark & Henry, 2004; Weiss, Murphy-Graham, & Birkeland, 2005). For instance, Henry and Mark (2003) feel that the term 'use' is better utilized as a description of positive and desirable outcomes than for describing the various types of use as "specific forms of use may be too imprecise or too focused on end-states to fruitfully guide research and practice" (p. 311). As Kirkhart (2000) explains: "The term *influence* (the capacity or power of persons or things to produce effects on others by intangible or indirect means) is broader than use, creating a framework with which to examine effects that are multidirectional,

incremental, unintentional, and instrumental" (p. 7). She describes this framework in her integrated theory of influence.

Kirkhart's Integrated Theory of Influence

First developed in 1995 and revised in 2000, Kirkhart's Integrated Theory of Influence describes three dimensions of influence which include: source, time, and intention. These dimensions are further broken down into four categories (unintended process-based influences, intended process-based influences, unintended results-based influences, and intended results-based influences. An illustration of Kirkhart's theory (2000, p. 8) is provided below (Figure 1) as well as a discussion of each dimension and the four categories in which they may fall.

Source. Source, which was originally described by Henry and Rog (1998), refers to the reference (e.g., evaluation report, involvement in the evaluation) from which the influence is derived (i.e., results-based influence or process-based influence). As mentioned above, evaluation influence represents the impact an evaluation has on individuals through intangible or indirect means. Some of those intangible means: instrumental, conceptual, and persuasive evaluation use can be considered results-based influence. Some examples of results-based influence would be a decision to re-allocate program funds or to make a decision associated with program management. Process-based influence on the other hand can be described as the impact an evaluation has through process use (i.e., "the influence of evaluation process on persons or systems being evaluated" Kirkhart, 2000, p.6). An example of a process-based influence would be the development of skills by the staff as a result of what they have learned from their involvement in their program's evaluation (e.g., survey design, administration, and analysis; ability to work collaboratively, etc.). For descriptive purposes, process-based influence may

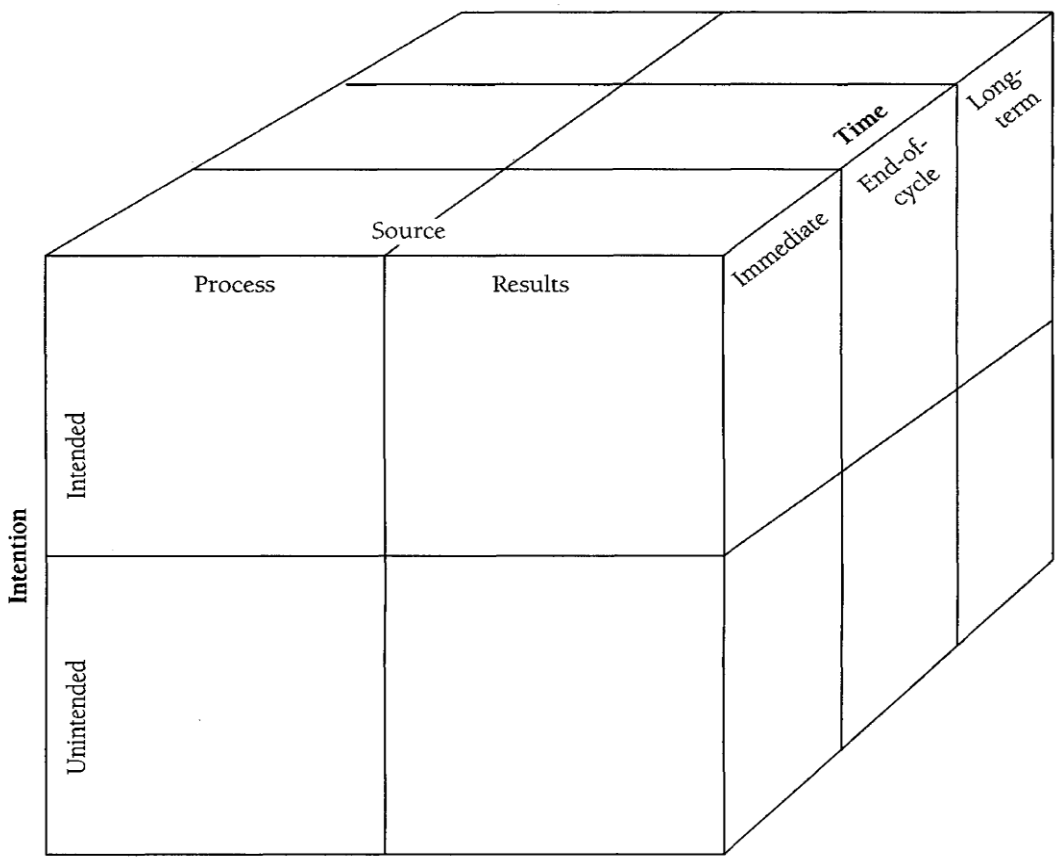

Figure 1. Kirkhart's Integrated Theory of Influence (adapted from Kirkhart, 2000)

be referred to as source A and results-based influence may be referred to as source B.

Intention. Intention refers to the degree to which evaluators, clients, and stakeholders are involved in planning and guiding an evaluation's influence. Intention produces either intended influence, which refers to a direct relationship between the intention of the users and the influence of the evaluation, or it can produce unintended influence, which refers to unexpected influence that occurs. As mentioned above, both process-based influence and results-based influence can be either intentional or unintentional. For descriptive purposes, intended influence may be referred to as intention A and unintended influence may be referred to as intention B. Building on the process-based source example above, an example of an intended process-based influence (intent A + source A) would be a program director hiring an evaluator with survey development skills, so that as the program was being evaluated the program staff could learn how to develop surveys. An example of an unintended process-based influence (intent B + source A) could be if program staff, as a result of their involvement in an evaluation, unexpectedly became more skilled at working collaboratively. Building on the results-based source example, an example of an intended results-based influence (intent A + source B) would be to plan to use the evaluation findings to inform budget adjustments. An example of unintended results-based influence (intent B + source B) would be a program director deciding to adjust the budget after seeing the results of their program's evaluation.

Time. Time refers to the importance of considering the influence of an evaluation at various points in time after an evaluation (i.e., immediate, end-of cycle, and long term). Each of these types of influence can fall into one of the four categories mentioned above. These time points are similar to the outcome time points often described in logical models (i.e., initial or

short-term outcomes, intermediate outcomes, and longer-term outcomes). For descriptive purposes, immediate influences may be referred to as time 1, end-of cycle influences may be referred to as time 2, and long term influences may be referred to as time 3.

Immediate influences typically reflect a noticeable impact that occurs during the process of conducting an evaluation (i.e., intent A + source A + time 1; or intent B + source A + time 1). However, immediate influences can also present themselves as results-based influence (i.e., intent A + source B + time 1; or intent B + source B + time 1). Consistent with the previous examples, an illustration of an immediate process influence would be the development of skills by the staff as a result of what they have learned from their involvement in their program's evaluation while it is being conducted (either intentionally or unintentionally). Kirkhart explains that this type of influence may only be experienced for a short amount of time or may continue through the existence of the program. Furthermore, this type of influence may be visible rather quickly or it might take a while to recognize. An example of an immediate unintentional results-based influence would be if an evaluator reported that the data being collected during site visits was much richer than they anticipated and in response the program director decided to re-allocate program funds to cover the cost of additional site visits, whereas an intentional results-based influence would be a re-allocation of travel funds because a program director wanted to show the evaluator that they wanted to increase their support of the evaluation effort.

End-of-cycle influences can also be both process-based (characterized by the end of a cycle) and results-based (distinguished by the end of an evaluation). An example of an intentional process-based end-of-cycle influence (i.e., intent A + source A + time 2) would be program staff who may not usually communicate with each other coming together as part of a

meeting associated with the end of an evaluation cycle. This same example could also happen unintentionally (intent B + source A + time 2). An example of an intentional results-based end-of-cycle influence (intent A + source B + time 2) would be a program director deciding changing their attitude about a certain aspect of the program as a result of the findings presented in the evaluation report. This example could also represent an unintentional results-based end-of-cycle influence (intent B + source B + time 2).

Long-term influences are often described as the influences which may not be recognized until further after an evaluation has ended. These influences may not be recognized by an evaluator unless he/she tracks these types of use over an extended period of time following the submission of the final evaluation report. However, they may be influences that were previously observed as immediate and/or end-of-cycle influences. An example of an intentional process-based long-term influence (intent A + source A + time 3) would be staff developing surveys for program-related use after the evaluation has ended as a result of a program director making sure they were involved in the evaluation enough to learn how to develop surveys, whereas an example of an unintentional process-based long-term influence (intent B + source A + time 3) would be staff developing surveys for program-related use after the evaluation has ended as an unexpected result of their involvement in the evaluation. An example of an intentional results-based long-term influence (intent A + source B + time 3) would be program staff making detailed records of their activities because it is something that was suggested in the final evaluation report and the program director expected them to do so, whereas an example of an unintentional results-based long-term influence (time 3 + source B + intent B) would be program

staff making detailed records of their activities because it is something that was suggested in the final evaluation report (i.e., not intentionally or as instructed by someone else).

Kirkhart (2000, p. 18-19) cites nine potential applications for her theory which include: “clarifying debates on use”, “mapping influence surrounding a particular evaluation”, “tracking evolving patterns of influence over time”, “sorting out use and misuse”, “improving validity of studies of influence”, “facilitating meta-analysis of studies of influence”, “tracking evolution of evaluation theory”, “comparing evaluation theories”, and “supporting theory building.” After Kirkhart (2000) presented her three dimensions of influence, Henry and Mark (2003) offered another model of evaluation influence that expanded upon her dimensions of influence by describing various mechanisms of change and adding a new three level component through which these mechanisms can be understood. The following section provides a detailed description of Henry and Mark’s model.

Henry and Mark’s Three Level Model

Henry and Mark (2003) describe three levels at which evaluation produces influence (i.e., individual, interpersonal, and collective). For each level, Henry and Mark provide a number of different change processes through which an evaluation may produce influence. Drawing on Kirkhart’s (2000) theory, her notions of source, intention, and time can be applied to each of these aspects of Henry and Mark’s model. An illustration of Henry and Mark’s model is provided below (Figure 2) followed by a description of each level of influence and its respective mechanisms of change.

Individual. At the individual level, Henry and Mark list six mechanisms of change or possible outcomes. These outcomes include: attitude change (i.e., new concepts cause people to

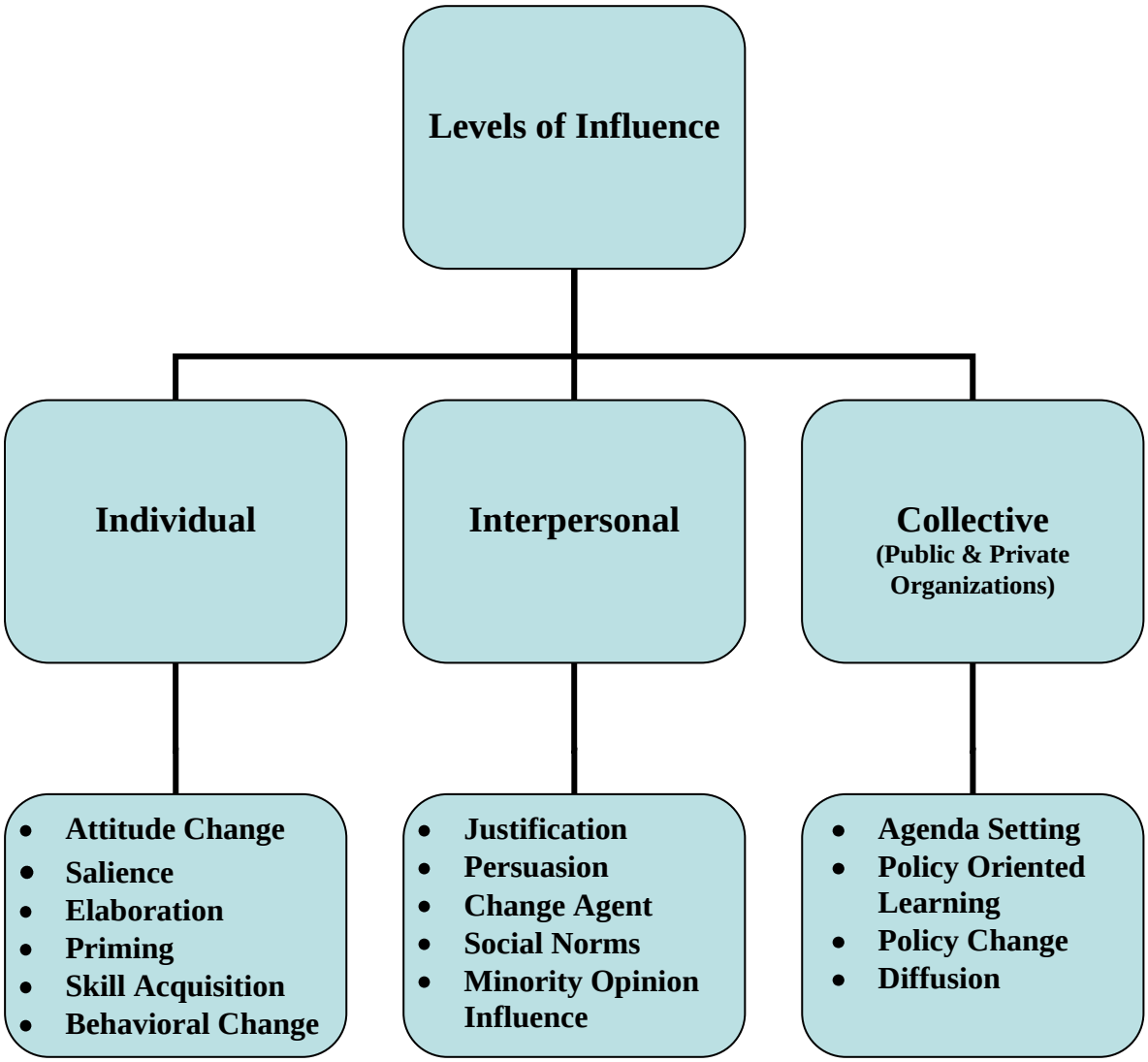

Figure 2. Henry and Mark's Three Level Model. (adapted from Henry and Mark, 2003)

reevaluate and alter their opinions), salience (i.e., judged significance of an issue), elaboration (i.e., increased processing/review of program issues), priming (i.e., bringing the program to people's attention), skill acquisition (i.e., increased evaluation capacity), and behavior change (i.e., new concepts cause people to modify their behaviors). As mentioned above, each of these mechanisms of change can be viewed as individual "cubes" as illustrated previously in Figure 1 (Kirkhart's (2000) theory of evaluation influence).

Interpersonal. The interpersonal level of evaluation influence refers to courses of action that a person or people engage in that influence others' attitudes and/or behaviors. The five mechanisms identified at the interpersonal level include: justification (i.e., using evaluation results to justify existing opinions), persuasion (i.e., using results to convince others of one's opinion), change agent (i.e., a person(s) who rise to action), social norms (i.e., new norms develop as a result of evaluation findings), and minority opinion influence (i.e., swaying of the majority opinion by a small group).

Collective. The collective level refers to evaluation influence which may occur across individuals or organizations. The four mechanisms Henry and Mark describe include: agenda setting (i.e., aligning opinions with the media, politics, or government), policy-oriented learning (i.e., thinking about evaluation findings in order to keep informed for making policy-related decisions), policy change (i.e., modification of policy based on results), and diffusion (i.e., changes to the policies, programs, and practice of others outside of the program being evaluated based on the findings of an evaluation).

Both of these models (Henry & Mark, 2003; Kirkhart, 2000) offer new contexts in which evaluators can guide their research. Henry and Mark suggest that researchers/evaluators study

one or more of the change mechanisms described in their model and these mechanisms should be used to guide researchers/evaluators in identifying the "'pathways' or working hypotheses that link evaluation processes to outcomes" (p. 293).

Tracking Evaluation Influence

Research has suggested that evaluators should pay attention to the processes or pathways that lead to evaluation influence (Henry & Mark, 2003; Mark & Henry, 2004; Morabito, 2002). For example, in Morabito's (2002, p. 328) study of evaluator roles and evaluation process influence he stated that, "…the evaluator should begin a process of reflection upon his/herself and his/her client to determine the combination of appropriate roles and strategies that appear to be most indicative of an influential evaluation process." Mark and Henry (2004) go on to suggest that using their model of evaluation influence to understand an evaluation's impact can not only "guide the development of better influence plans for evaluation practice", but also "provide the basis for more thoughtful discussion about the responsibilities of the evaluator for evaluation influence" (p. 47). While there may not be a step-by-step, "catch all" plan for tracking evaluation influence in any program evaluation, it is evident that researchers are emphasizing the importance of paying attention to the change processes that contribute to that influence.

Mark and Henry's (2003) model of evaluation influence can be used to inform evaluators about the various types of influence that occur on three different levels (i.e., individual, interpersonal, collective) and to guide evaluators through the process of identifying and tracking the influence that their evaluation has had. Using this framework, evaluators may be encouraged to identify the individuals who may be impacted by an evaluation, those individuals who may interact as a part of this evaluation, and the social organizational body that the evaluation may

have an impact on. Perhaps the process of identifying the people and/or groups that define these levels can serve as a first step in identifying and tracking evaluation influence.

Summary and Directions for Future Research

As mentioned earlier, it seems as though the researchers of evaluation use have come to some level of agreement as to what evaluation use means "the effect the evaluation has on the evaluand—the "thing" being evaluated—and those connected to the evaluand" (Christie, 2007, p. 8). While some researchers have studied the vague construct of evaluation potential (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986), most researchers have chosen to study one or more aspects of evaluation use. The categories of evaluation use that have been identified include instrumental, conceptual, symbolic/persuasive, and process use. It appears that evaluation researchers have come to a general agreement about the definitions of instrumental, conceptual, and symbolic/persuasive use. However, many evaluators have found defining process use to be difficult (Harnar & Preskill, 2007). Patton (2007) suggested that process use is a sensitizing concept (i.e., its meaning will differ depending on the situation) and as such evaluators should not try to develop a standard operational definition. Amo and Cousins (2007) suggested that researchers should conduct more empirical research on process use as organizational capacity and readiness for evaluation can be increased through process use.

Due to the growing recognition of context as an issue impacting use, evaluators have moved from using the term "evaluation use" to exploring it in the broader context of evaluation influence (Kirkhart, 2000). According to Kirkhart, evaluation influence (i.e., the capacity of an evaluation to affect individuals through intangible or indirect means) takes into consideration the dimensions of time, source of findings, and intention. In their model based on Kirkhart's notion

of evaluation influence, Henry and Mark (2003) describe three levels at which influence can be observed (i.e., individual, interpersonal, and collective or organizational levels). Each of these models provides evaluators with guidance on how to target or narrow their studies (i.e., these models can help an evaluator choose the appropriate dimensions or levels to focus their measurement of change on).

Over the past 40 years of evaluation use research, as broader conceptualizations of evaluation use have emerged, so have factors which have been identified as having an impact on use. Factors identified as having an impact on evaluation use include: type of evaluation data, reports which accurately identify the evaluation audience, reports which provide useable information/data relevant to users' problems, proper timing of a report, clarity of report, methodological credibility, evaluation approach, methodological sophistication, intensity of evaluation, users' prior commitment to the benefits of evaluation, and consistency of report findings with the beliefs and expectations of the users. This body of research suggests that evaluators should take each of these factors into consideration when designing their evaluation plans or when they negotiate an evaluation contract. By doing so, evaluators are more likely to see their evaluation results being used in one way or another. It is important, however, for the evaluator to ensure that the results are not misused.

It appears that research aimed at identifying the factors that impact the use of evaluation results has not provided evaluators with much insight into how these factors have different roles in different contexts. Since there are so many types of organizations in need of evaluations there is an opportunity for researchers to learn about how factors impacting the use of evaluation results may differ from setting to setting. Many different types of organizations or users of

evaluation findings have been the focus of evaluation use studies including: congress, government-funded grant program managers, community health agency directors, graduate students in educational leadership programs, and large private sector corporations (Boyer & Langbein, 1991; Christie, 2007; Grasso, 2003; Lawrenz, Gullickson, & Toal, 2007; Russ, Atwood, & Egherman, 2002; Seigel & Tuckel, 1985). The variety of organizational settings represented in the literature exemplifies the growing concern around learning how to address contextual issues in an evaluation (Kirkhart, Morgan, & Sincavage, 1991; Mathison, 1994; Shulha & Cousins, 1997).

There are a variety of topics in which evaluators are suggesting research on evaluation use is still needed. One of these topics is research that examines instruments designed to measure instrumental, conceptual, persuasive, and process use (Lawrenz, Huffman, & McGinnis, 2007; Patton, 2007; Preskill & Caracelli, 1997; Russ, Atwood, & Egherman, 2002). Another promising avenue of research focuses on evaluation influence and includes topics such as the development of evaluation influence theories, research on change processes, and how to improve evaluation influence (Cummings, 2002; Henry & Mark, 2003; Weiss, 1998). Finally, research on how evaluators can track evaluation use (Shulha & Cousins, 1997) and evaluation influence (Henry & Mark, 2003) is needed. As Henry and Mark (2003) suggest, researchers can track the pathways made up of the change processes that occur as a result of an evaluation (in order to generate hypotheses about evaluation outcomes), for the following purposes: “1) to guide the research on evaluation influence; and 2) to think through a plan for maximizing the influence of a specific evaluation” (p.311). By devoting attention to these issues, evaluators will continue to work toward social betterment.

GEAR UP Program Description

The GEAR UP grant program began as a result of President Clinton signing the Higher Education Amendments of 1998 (Public Law 105-244). This discretionary grant program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) was developed in order to prepare low-income students to meet the requirements for college enrollment and to succeed at the postsecondary level. GEAR UP awards two types of six-year grants, state and partnership grants. Partnership grants are made up of "at least one college or university, at least one low-income middle school, and at least two other partners (such as community organizations, businesses, religious groups, student organizations, SEAs, LEAs, and parent groups, (USDOE, 2008c)" and statewide grants. The state grants address statewide college access needs and serve specific high-poverty middle and high schools across a state whereas partnership grants are designed to serve students in at least one low-income middle school.

For each GEAR UP grant, cohorts of students in the targeted schools are typically served by their grant program from their seventh grade year through graduation from high school. Upon graduation, scholarships are awarded to GEAR UP project students so that they are more able to attend college. The three main goals of GEAR UP are: "to increase the high school graduation and college-going rates of low-income students; to improve the academic performance of low-income students; and to enhance schools' academic and curricular reforms, including professional development for teachers of low-income students. (NCCEP, 2008)" The GEAR UP program is run through an outside agency, the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships.

GEAR UP Literature

An extensive review of the literature on GEAR UP programs revealed that of the 32 documents identified, the majority (i.e., 24) were evaluation reports or factsheets. The abundance of evaluation reports is understandable though, as yearly evaluation reports are mandatory. However, the dearth of research related to GEAR UP programs is not so easily understood. Among the eight GEAR UP research articles that were identified, Meehan, Cowley, and Whittekar (2001) was the only published article which specifically focused on the use of evaluation results. Hewett and Rodgers (2003) merely mentioned that evaluation was being used to track success of their program and Yampolskaya, Massey, and Greenbaum (2006) described the evaluation of their program and how its findings could be used to improve other GEAR UP programs. The other five articles did not mention evaluations.

Meehan and colleagues (2001) surveyed school administrators (i.e., 9 county administrators and 29 school administrators) from the school systems named in the 1999 Fairmont State College GEAR UP partnership grant on their use of two evaluation summary sheets which reflected the findings of their year one and year two evaluations. The survey assessed administrators' level of satisfaction with seven characteristics of the evaluation summaries (i.e., overall quality, presentation/layout, usability, promptness, relevance, met needs, and comprehensiveness). The survey personnel also addressed the following five open-ended questions and/or discussion topics:

1) Describe how the survey summaries were analyzed (i.e., who reviewed them, along or in group settings, if and how information was presented to others).

2) How were findings from the survey data used as input for the GEAR UP initiative? (i.e., how did data support implementation of planned program components, what changes were made to existing plans, what additional services or activities were included).
3) Describe how survey data may have affected students involved in the GEAR UP initiative.
4) Describe how survey data may have affected parents involved in the GEAR UP initiative.
5) What are your suggestions for improving future baseline survey summaries? (p. 5)

Results revealed that the evaluation summaries were rated favorably on all aspects assessed (i.e., from the midpoint of the rating scale and up). The evaluation summaries were presented to or reviewed by a wide variety of individuals and groups associated with the program with the GEAR UP coordinators and staff, and the school administrators being mentioned the most often. The evaluation summaries were reported as being used most often as input for both specific and less specific programs and activities as well as for program development and determining program needs. While it was determined to be too early in the program to assess the impact of the evaluation summaries on students, these summaries were found to raise awareness of the GEAR UP program among parents. Suggestions provided for future evaluation summaries were primarily requests for longitudinal studies, while a smaller number of suggestions were for adjustments to the timing of the survey and implementation of new data collection methods. The authors made recommendations for exploring a number of ways for increasing the number of

people in various groups who these summaries are shared with; however, no suggestions were made for other GEAR UP programs to collect this type of data on their own programs.

While it is possible that other grant programs are collecting data similar to those of this study, findings of such studies are not being shared with the general public or other GEAR UP grantees for that matter. GEAR UP grantees should be encouraged not only to conduct studies focusing on the use and impact of their program's evaluations, but also to share the results of those studies with others. This information would be of benefit to grantees seeking to improve their programs, evaluators seeking to improve their evaluations and associated reports, and to the US Department of Education to ensure that their funds being spent on evaluation are actually contributing to achieving the goals of the GEAR UP program.

Goals of the Study

There are four goals of this study. *First*, the researcher plans to determine the extent to which project directors of state grants use evaluation results (i.e., instrumental use, conceptual use, persuasive use, and/or process use). *Second*, the researcher seeks to identify the extent to which the evaluations of the state GEAR UP grant programs have had an influence at the individual, interpersonal, and collective levels. *Third*, the researcher intends to determine the extent to which various factors that characterize an evaluation (i.e., evaluation implementation factors, decision and policy setting factors) impact grantees' use of their programs' evaluations. *Fourth*, the researcher aims to learn about GEAR UP administrators' expectations for evaluation use.

Various studies have been conducted that focus on evaluation use, evaluation influence, and/or the factors that may have an impact on the use of an evaluation (Boyer & Langbein, 1991;

Christie, 2007; Grasso, 2003; Lawrenz, Gullickson, & Toal, 2007; Russ, Atwood, & Egherman, 2002; Seigel & Tuckel, 1985), but few studies exist that focus on these variables within a large scale, multi-site evaluation such as the state GEAR UP grant programs. The studies that have focused on these variables have only mentioned that evaluations are being used, reported on use of and satisfaction with evaluation summaries, and examined the impact of a program on students and parents. For this reason it is important to examine a broader conception of evaluation use and evaluation influence among project directors of state GEAR UP grant programs and to examine factors that have an impact on that use.

Information gained by examining the concepts of evaluation use and influence among state GEAR UP grantees could be used to help make the grantees more aware of: a) the extent to which they use their program's evaluation, b) the magnitude of the influence of their program's evaluation on their staff as well as others involved with or exposed to the program, and 3) the barriers to the use of their evaluation's results. By increasing grantees' awareness of the use of their program's evaluation and the impact use has on others, the grantees can begin to address the barriers to the use of their program's evaluation. This awareness may lead to the improvement of their programs (a plus for the funders) and an increased likelihood that their grants will be renewed (a plus for the grantees). This information may be used by project directors/evaluators of other large-scale, multi-site evaluations to help them find ways to increase the use of their evaluations and in turn the impact of their programs on others.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors use the evaluation of their program for instrumental (decision-making) purposes?

2. To what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors use the evaluation of their program for conceptual (educational) purposes?
3. To what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors use the evaluation of their program for persuasive (political) purposes?
4. As a result of involvement in their program's evaluation, to what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors engage in process use?
5. To what extent have the evaluations of the state GEAR UP grant programs had an influence at the individual, interpersonal, and collective levels?
6. To what extent do evaluation implementation factors (i.e., evaluation quality, credibility, relevance, communication quality, findings, and timeliness) have an impact on state GEAR UP grant project directors' use of evaluation results?
7. To what extent do decision and policy setting factors (i.e., information needs, decision characteristics, political climate, competing information, personal characteristics, and commitment and/or receptiveness to evaluation) have an impact on state GEAR UP grant project directors' use of evaluation results?
8. What were former NCCEP staff's key use expectations and support systems regarding the use of evaluation results by state GEAR UP project directors?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter addresses the methodology and procedures used to conduct the study. Participants, data collection, survey instruments, research design, and data analysis are all addressed in this chapter.

Participants

State GEAR UP Grant Project Directors

The primary group of participants in this study is comprised of 17 current state GEAR UP grant project directors who chose to complete the survey. Due to the fact that three of the 41 state grants are new, only 38 project directors were eligible to complete the survey. A 44.7% response rate was observed. GEAR UP project directors are persons affiliated with state agencies designated by the governor. Some examples of agencies include: Institutions of Higher Education – IHEs (i.e., degree-granting institutions), Local Education Agencies – LEAs (i.e., any official school districts), and/or State Education Agencies – SEAs (i.e., "any agency that oversees federal or state funding for education, and enacts policies or regulations for instruction" Colorado Department of Education, 2008). Sampling was not necessary as all current project directors were invited to participate in this study. However, three of the current state project directors were not able to participate due to the fact that they were in their first year of their grant and had not yet received their first evaluation. Figure 3 shows the states that have state GEAR UP grants in grey and states without grants in white.

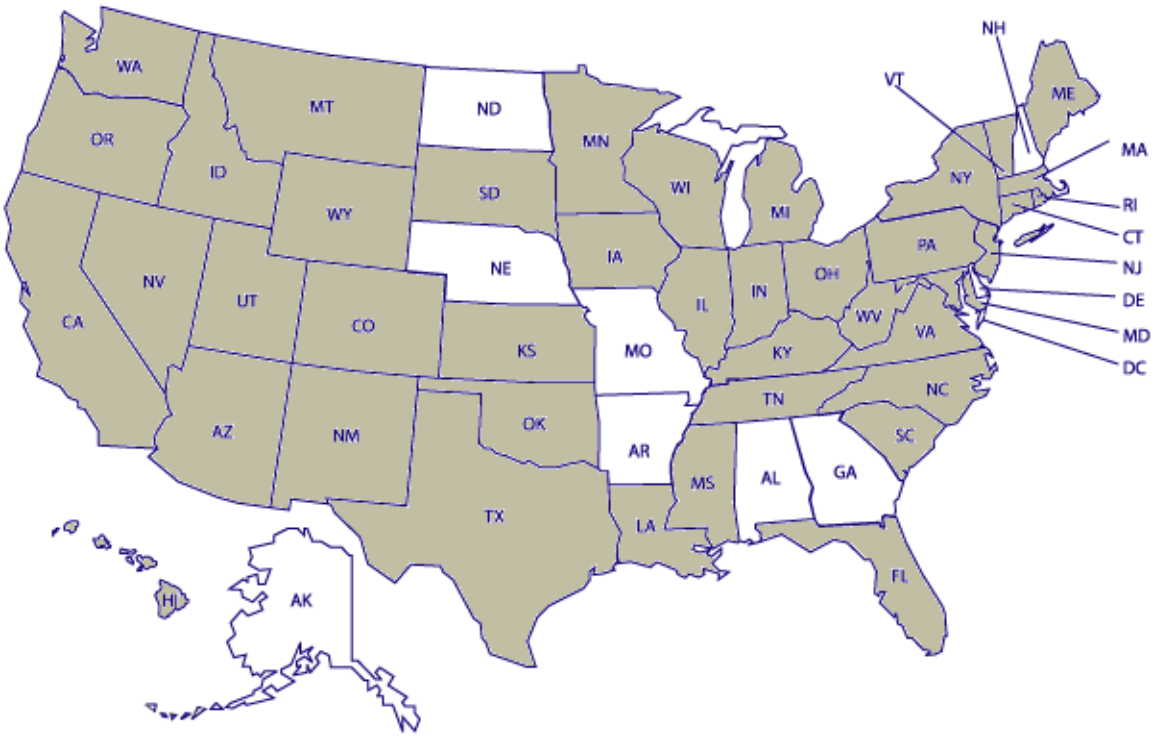

Figure 3. States with GEAR UP Grants
Note. States with GEAR UP Grants are shaded in grey.

Former NCCEP Staff

The second group of participants included four former NCCEP staff members who are familiar with the evaluation of GEAR UP grants.

Survey Instrument

Purpose of Survey

The purpose of this survey instrument (developed for this study by the author) is to assess the use of evaluation results by project directors of Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) state grants. In particular, it is designed to help achieve a better understanding of the personal involvement of a project director in the evaluation process and if an evaluation report leads to changes in their GEAR UP Program. This survey instrument addressed the extent to which GEAR UP project directors use the results of their program's evaluation to make decisions, to educate, to support prior or political opinions about their program, and as a means of changing their thinking and/or behaviors by being involved in the evaluation. The survey assessed which forms of evaluation influence the evaluations of the state GEAR UP grant programs had at the individual, interpersonal, and collective levels, and the extent to which state GEAR UP project directors consider the manner in which the evaluation was conducted or other circumstances surrounding the evaluation into consideration when making their decision to use the results.

Constructs/Variables of Interest

Evaluation Use. The survey instrument assesses four aspects of evaluation use including: a) instrumental use/use for decision making (i.e., fund/don't fund, making changes in program

delivery/implementation), b) conceptual use/use for education (i.e., influencing perceptions of current and ideal program structure among decision makers), c) symbolic use (i.e., "waving the flag of evaluation to claim a rational basis for action (or inaction), or to justify pre-existing positions" – Henry & Mark, 2003, p.294), and/or d) process use (i.e., "changes in thinking and behavior of those involved in the evaluation, and program or organizational changes in procedures and culture" – Patton, 1997, p.90). For the purpose of this survey instrument, instrumental use is operationally defined as use of the evaluation results by a GEAR UP project director to make a program related decision. Conceptual use is operationally defined as an instance in which a GEAR UP project director read or reviewed evaluation report materials for the purpose of gaining knowledge about the program. Symbolic use is operationally defined as the acknowledgement by a GEAR UP project director that they used the results of their evaluation to justify a program-related decision or to support a pre-existing opinion about the program and process use is operationally defined as any changes that GEAR UP project directors experience as a result of their involvement in the evaluation.

Evaluation Influence. The survey instrument assesses Kirkhart's (2000, p.7) notion of evaluation influence – "the capacity or power of persons or things to produce effects on others by intangible or indirect means" in the context of Henry and Mark's (2003) 3 Level Model. It includes questions that address the change mechanisms which occur at each level (i.e., individual, interpersonal, and collective). The six mechanisms identified at the individual level include: attitude change (i.e., new concepts cause people to reevaluate and alter their opinions), salience (i.e., judged significance of an issue), elaboration (i.e., increased processing/review of program issues), priming (i.e., bringing the program to people's attention), skill acquisition (i.e.,

increased evaluation capacity), and behavior change. The five mechanisms identified at the interpersonal level include: justification (i.e., using evaluation results to justify existing opinions), persuasion (i.e., using results to convince others of one's opinion), change agent (i.e., a person(s) who rise to action), social norms (i.e., new norms develop as a result of evaluation findings), and minority opinion influence (i.e., swaying of the majority opinion by a small group). Finally, the four mechanisms identified at the collective level include: agenda setting (i.e., aligning opinions with the media, politics, or government), policy-oriented learning (i.e., thinking about evaluation findings in order to keep informed for making policy-related decisions), policy change (i.e., modification of policy based on results), and diffusion (i.e., changes to the policies, programs, and practice of others outside of the program being evaluated based on the findings of an evaluation).

Factors that Impact Evaluation Use and Influence. The researcher also included questions about various factors that have been identified in the literature as having an impact on project directors or program managers' decisions to use or not to use the results of an evaluation (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986). These factors can be grouped into two categories which include implementation (i.e., quality, credibility, relevance, communication, findings, and timeliness) and decision and policy setting (i.e., information needs, decision characteristics, politics, funding, competing information, personal characteristics, and commitment to evaluation). An example of an item would be, "The credibility of the evaluator influenced my decision to use the evaluation results." Respondents were asked to report the extent to which each of these influencing factors impacts their decision to use the results of their program's evaluation.

Development of Pilot Survey

Survey Creation Methods. To develop the GEAR UP evaluation use survey instrument, the researcher conducted a literature review and used brainstorming (i.e., with colleagues) to create survey items. The researcher conducted a literature review on evaluation use and influence in order to clearly define the construct(s) of interest as well as to identify factors that have been found to impact evaluation use. The researcher used the search terms evaluation use, evaluation utilization, evaluation politics, evaluation decisions, use of evaluation results, and evaluation influence. The researcher also reviewed the reference lists in sources located to identify additional resources which did not come up in the literature search. Finally, the researcher became familiar with the national GEAR UP grant program for partnership grants by reviewing the materials provided on the Internet by the Department of Education.

Once this literature was located, the constructs of interest were defined. Then the research questions which could be answered with the data collected through the survey instrument were developed. These questions helped guide the process of item development, which included identifying whether or not other researchers had already developed a measure or questionnaire that addresses the construct(s) of interest. No measures were identified; therefore the survey items were developed based on definitions of the construct(s) of interest and impacting factors identified in the literature. Initially, the items were developed by using brainstorming. Survey item ideas were put on paper, so that the ideas could be worked on and expanded upon before sharing the items with others. Later the researcher brainstormed with colleagues in order to develop additional questions and so that the initial set of items could be modified.

The literature review was conducted in order to determine how the constructs of interest (i.e., the four types of evaluation use and evaluation influence) have been conceptually and operationally defined by other researchers. This activity revealed that most evaluation researchers have come to a general agreement about the conceptual definition of evaluation use as well as the types of use (Christie, 2007). Evaluation researchers suggest that operational definitions of the types of evaluation use may vary depending on the context in which they will be measured. Operational definitions for evaluation use in the current study were developed based on definitions provided by authors of three reviews of the evaluation use literature (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Leviton & Hughes, 1981; Shulha & Cousins, 1997) and tailored to fit the context of the state GEAR UP grants. Researchers of evaluation influence all appear to use Kirkhart's (2000) definition of evaluation influence. The operational definition for evaluation influence in the current study was developed based on Henry and Mark's (2003) 3 Level Model of Evaluation Influence.

Next, items were developed for each of these constructs based on examples of generic program-related activities that have been associated with each type of evaluation use (e.g., making funding decisions). An evaluation expert who is currently serving as an evaluator of a GEAR UP grant reviewed program-related activities to ensure they matched the constructs of interest. This activity provided information needed to develop better survey items. The researcher designed the instrument so that subsets of the evaluation use items would simultaneously assess the constructs of interest at each level described in Henry and Mark's (2003) Three Level Model. For example, the item "I have used the results of my program's evaluation to support the opinion I had about my program before the evaluation was conducted"

represents symbolic use at the interpersonal level via the change mechanism of justification. The researcher developed 35 evaluation use items with four subscales (i.e., 8 items for instrumental use, and 9 items each for the conceptual, symbolic, and process use subscales). For each type of use there are seven individual items (six for instrumental use) which use a Likert-type response scale (i.e., 1 – to no extent, 2 – to some extent, 3 – to a moderate extent, 4 – to a great extent, and 5 – to a very great extent). The ninth item for each subscale (eighth for instrumental use) asks the respondent if he or she used the evaluation results in another way related to the stem for that subscale (e.g., for instrumental use: I have changed some of my other grant-related behaviors). The ninth item for each type of use subscale (eighth for instrumental use) is a supply item which asks for the respondent to provide detail about the other type of use he or she referred to if they said yes to the fifth question in that subscale (e.g., for instrumental use: If yes, what other type of behavior did you change?).

When developing survey items for the section of the instrument on factors which may influence evaluation use, the researcher referred to the factors identified in Cousins and Leithwood's (1986) review of the evaluation use literature. The researcher developed 13 items based on the two categories of evaluation implementation (6 items) and decision and policy setting (7 items). The response choices offered for the influencing factor items are: 1 – to no extent, 2 – to some extent, 3 – to a moderate extent, 4 – to a great extent, and 5 – to a very great extent.

Development Phase Pretesting. In order to determine if the survey instrument would be understood by its intended respondents and fulfill its purpose a workgroup made up of three graduate student reviewers (i.e., including the instrument designer) who worked together to pre-

field test the instrument as part of a survey research class activity. During the review process, the researcher explained the purpose of the survey to the members of the workgroup and provided them each with paper copies of the questionnaire. The reviewers were asked to read through the survey items and make notes individually before sharing their comments with the group.

Members of the workgroup were given a checklist of things to look for during their independent review, which included: spelling or grammatical errors, words which are unfamiliar or could be identified as jargon, questions which need additional background information to be included, items that are too long or contain too many concepts, and wording that introduces bias. Next, the workgroup reviewed the survey instrument together and discussed the wording of the invitation, directions for each set of questions, each item, the response sets, and any other concerns the reviewers have. Finally, the researcher shared with the reviewers the intended format for the survey and solicited their feedback. All iterations of the survey instrument and associated copies were kept in a binder and an electronic folder so that the development of the instrument can be tracked for reporting purposes. Once the revisions were made to the survey instrument, the researcher organized the questions into the final format which would be used in the pilot testing.

Pilot Testing of New Survey

The researcher was interested in using self-report methodology. The primary mode of administration was a paper-and-pencil survey, which was given to three former GEAR UP partnership grant project directors (January 2009). They were each asked to beta-test the survey and provide information on the length of time it took them to complete the survey, any questions that were confusing and an explanation why, terminology that they felt could be considered

jargon, spelling or grammatical errors, questions which needed additional background information to be included, items that were too long or contain too many concepts, and wording that introduces bias. Upon receipt of this feedback, necessary changes were made to the survey instrument.

Staff Interviews

The purpose of the staff interviews was to gather detailed information on NCCEP staff members' perspectives on evaluation use in relation to the GEAR UP grant program. More specifically, the researcher was interested in gathering information from NCCEP staff members in order to address research question 8, "What are the NCCEP staff's key use expectations and support systems regarding the use of evaluation results by state GEAR UP project directors?" Each staff member was asked the following six questions:

1. What were your expectations for evaluation use among state GEAR UP project directors?
2. Do you know any examples (from when you were with the agency) that suggest the findings from state GEAR UP evaluations were being used?
3. Have evaluators of state GEAR UP grants been trained to promote use?
4. Have project directors been encouraged and trained to promote use?
5. What do you think are the barriers to evaluation use among state GEAR UP project directors?
6. What do you think could be done to promote evaluation use among state GEAR UP project directors?

Procedure

Prior to data collection the researcher met with the NCCEP Director of External Relations during the July 2008 NCCEP/GEAR UP annual conference to discuss NCCEP's sponsorship of the proposed data collection. The proposed study was well received and sponsorship was agreed upon, with the stipulation that the GEAR UP administration be kept updated on the progress of the survey development and given adequate notice before sending pre-notification emails to GEAR UP grantees about the surveys. A copy of the approved proposal was provided to the GEAR UP administration prior to data collection. This study was submitted to the University of Tennessee's Institutional Review Board for approval. Upon approval, data collection was conducted between the months of February and April 2009. Data collection methods included paper-and-pencil surveys, emailed electronic copies of surveys, web-based surveys, and telephone interviews.

Pre-notification emails were sent from NCCEP on behalf of the researcher requesting GEAR UP project directors' participation in this study and informing them of its purpose and importance (See Appendix A). The email informed them of the attached electronic copy of the survey which they could complete and return by email or print out and return at the February 2009 NCCEP/GEAR UP Capacity-Building Workshop in New Orleans, LA. The email also provided the times and location where paper-and-pencil copies of the survey would be distributed and could be returned at the conference.

Survey packets were distributed at the February 2009 NCCEP/GEAR UP Capacity-Building Workshop in New Orleans, LA. Packets included a survey information sheet and a paper-and-pencil copy of the survey instrument. The instructions in the survey informed

participants of a specified location within the conference hotel at which they could return their completed surveys. Refer to Appendixes C and F for the paper-and-pencil/electronic survey information sheet and survey. The researcher created unique identification numbers for each participant, which were posted on the top of their surveys. Only the researcher has access to the list of unique identification numbers and the names to which they correspond. These ID numbers were used to identify any project directors who did not complete the survey at the conference, so that they could be sent an email invitation to complete the web-based survey after the conference. The web-based survey was administered using Inquisite Manager. Three project directors completed electronic copies of the survey, four project directors completed the survey in paper and pencil form, and ten completed the survey in the online format. Refer to Appendixes B and E for the web-based survey invitation email and the web-based survey information sheet. Data collected through surveys is kept confidential.

Telephone interviews were conducted with four former NCCEP staff members and/or evaluators. The telephone interviews lasted between 15-20 minutes each. Prior to conducting the telephone interviews, the interviewees were emailed a request to participate in the study which included an attached informed consent form. Participants were required to email or fax back their signed informed consent form to the researcher before their interview was scheduled. See Appendixes F and G for the telephone interview informed consent form and telephone interview protocol.

Analyses Conducted

Data Cleaning

The researcher ran frequency analyses for all variables in order to check for mistakes in coding and missing data and ran descriptives on continuous variables in order to identify any normality problems. Data which were found to be skewed, kurtotic, or have any outliers were not transformed or excluded from analyses as outlying cases. Due to the small number of participants any outlying cases may represent "indicate an extreme of behavior of the process under study" (Easton & McColl, 1997). Once the data was prepared for analysis, the researcher created average composite scores for each type of evaluation use (i.e., instrumental use, conceptual use, symbolic use, and process use) and factors that have an impact on evaluation use (i.e., implementation factors; and decision and policy setting factors). Frequency analyses were conducted for all categorical data. Descriptive analyses were conducted for individual items as well as composite variables.

Reliability

In order to assess reliability, internal consistency were calculated for each of the evaluation use subscales (i.e., instrumental use, conceptual use, symbolic use, and process use) and the two categories of items measuring factors that have an impact on evaluation use (i.e., implementation factors; and decision and policy setting factors). Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .70 and above were considered acceptable.

Validity

In order to promote validity of the survey instrument, the researcher initially referred to the evaluation use literature while developing the items for the survey instrument. By identifying

items used in other evaluation use research the researcher was able to establish content validity. To confirm the content validity, evaluation experts were asked to review the survey items.

Research Questions

In order to address research questions 1-7, descriptive analyses were run for: a) the 31 evaluation use items which use a Likert-type response scale, b) the four evaluation use composite scores, c) the 13 impacting factors of evaluation use items, and d) the two impacting factor composite scores.

Qualitative Data Analysis. The researcher reviewed the content from the former NCCEP staff interviews (associated with research question 8 – "What were former NCCEP staff's key use expectations and support systems regarding the use of evaluation results by state GEAR UP project directors?") as well as the open-ended questions in the survey using the method of constant comparison/grounded theory in order to identify themes or common responses (Glaser, & Strauss, 1967). Indicators of categories in the data were identified and coded on the documents. The codes were then compared in order to find similarities and differences in responses. Similar responses were selected as categories. The coding schemes were comprised of categories (i.e., overarching categories of responses) and subcategories (i.e., specific categories of responses within main categories). Once the coding schemes were developed, the researcher coded the transcripts, tallied up the number of responses per category and subcategory for each question, and identified the most common responses.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

The researcher calculated descriptive statistics and frequencies in order to determine if there were any coding errors or outliers and to detect any missing data. Few missing values (less than 5%) were present in the dataset, so these cases were kept in the dataset. Four of the nine composite scores had outlying cases (symbolic use - 2 cases, individual evaluation influence - 1 case, interpersonal evaluation influence – 1 case, implementation factors – 1 case). These data were kept in the dataset in their raw form which explains why some of the variables have large standard deviations (data is more spread out across the rating scale). Most of the survey items and composites had standard deviations between the absolute values of 1 and 2. Composite scores were created for each type of evaluation use by adding the scores for each of the Likert-type items (0 = No extent, 1 = Some extent, 2 = A moderate extent, 4 = A great extent, 5 = A very great extent) and calculating an average score. The same method for creating composite scores was used for the three levels of evaluation influence (individual, interpersonal, collective) and two impacting factors of evaluation use subscales (implementation factors, decision and policy setting factors). Internal consistency alpha coefficients were calculated for each of the four types of evaluation use, three levels of evaluation influence, and the two groups of impacting factors of evaluation use. The internal consistency alpha coefficients for the evaluation use subscales are as follows: Instrumental evaluation use (.84), Conceptual use (.86), Symbolic use (.88), and Process use (.92). The internal consistency alpha coefficients for the three levels of evaluation influence are as follows: Individual Level (.93), Interpersonal Level (.82), and Collective Level (.78). The internal consistency alpha coefficients for the impacting factors of

evaluation use were .84 for implementation factors and .89 for decision and policy setting factors. The means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alphas for the evaluation use, evaluation influence, and impacting factors of evaluation use subscales are presented in Table 1.

Summary of Survey Data

Participant Characteristics

Out of the 17 participants, 16 responded when asked if this was their first their GEAR UP grant. Four (25.0%) reported that it was their first. Of those directors who said it was not their first grant, 11 (91.7%) said it was their 2nd grant and 1 (8.3%) said it was their fourth grant. When asked what year of their GEAR UP grant they were in 1 (6.2%) reported that they were in their 1st year, 3 (18.7%) in their 3rd year, 10 (62.5%) in their fourth year, 1 (6.2%) in their fifth year, and 1 (6.2%) in their sixth year. Eight (53.3%) of the 15 directors who responded stated that they took over for the original project director of their state's GEAR UP grant.

Previous evaluation use. Ten (62.5%) project directors reported that they had previously served as the project director of a project/grant (other than their current GEAR UP grant) which was formally evaluated. Of those project directors who said yes, 80% (8) used the results of their evaluation for making program-related decisions, 70% (7) used the results of their evaluation for educational purposes, and 50% (5) used the results of their evaluation for persuasive purposes.

Current evaluation use. 14 (87.5%) respondents reported that they have shared their results of their GEAR UP program with others outside of their program (e.g., with local government officials, with the public, etc.). Of those who responded yes, 21.4% (3) reported that doing so has led to others changing their policies, programs, and/or practice. 56.2% (9) of respondents reported that they were "very familiar" with the results contained in their program's

Table 1. *Cronbach's Internal Consistency Alpha Coefficients*

Variable	*M*	*SD*	Cronbach's Alpha
Evaluation use			
Instrumental use	2.25	.83	.84
Conceptual use	2.45	.90	.86
Symbolic use	1.63	.95	.88
Process use	1.85	1.13	.92
Evaluation Influence			
Individual level	2.07	.88	.93
Interpersonal level	1.97	.87	.82
Collective level	1.62	1.05	.78
Influencing factors			
Implementation factors	2.21	.92	.84
Decision and policy-setting factors	1.60	1.07	.89

Note. N = 17. N = 17, Scale of measurement: 0 = No extent, 1 = Some extent, 2 = A moderate extent, 4 = A great extent, 5 = A very great extent.

evaluation report. This was followed by 37.5% (6) who reported being “familiar”, and 6.2% (1) who reported being “somewhat familiar” with the results contained in their program’s evaluation report.

When asked the extent to which they have been involved in their program’s evaluation, 7 (43.8%) of the project directors responded “To a very great extent”, followed by 5 (31.2%) who responded “To a great extent”, 3 (18.8%) who responded “To a moderate extent”, and 1 (6.2%) who responded “To some extent" (Figure 4). When asked “How would you describe the relationship you have with the evaluation team?” 13 (81.2%) respondents reported “A great deal of contact”, 2 (12.5%) reported “Some contact”, and 1 (6.2%) reported “Very little contact" (Figure 5). All of the project directors (16) reported that they find evaluation to be worth the effort. Concerning the project directors’ perception of their knowledge of evaluation, 10 (62.5%) reported that they feel “Very knowledgeable”, and 6 (37.5%) reported that they feel “Somewhat knowledgeable”. When asked “To what extent do you think NCCEP supports the evaluation of GEAR UP programs?”, 2 (12.5%) of project directors reported “To a very great extent”, 4 (25.0%) “To a great extent”, 4 (25.0%) “To a moderate extent”, 5 (31.2%) “To some extent”, and 1 (6.2%) responded “To no extent” (Figure 6). Finally, when asked “Approximately what percent of your project budget focuses on supporting evaluation?” the majority of respondents (7, 43.8%) said 5% or less, followed by 4 (25.0%) who said 6-10%, 4 (25.0%) who said 11-15%, and 1 (6.2%) who said 20% or more (Figure 7).

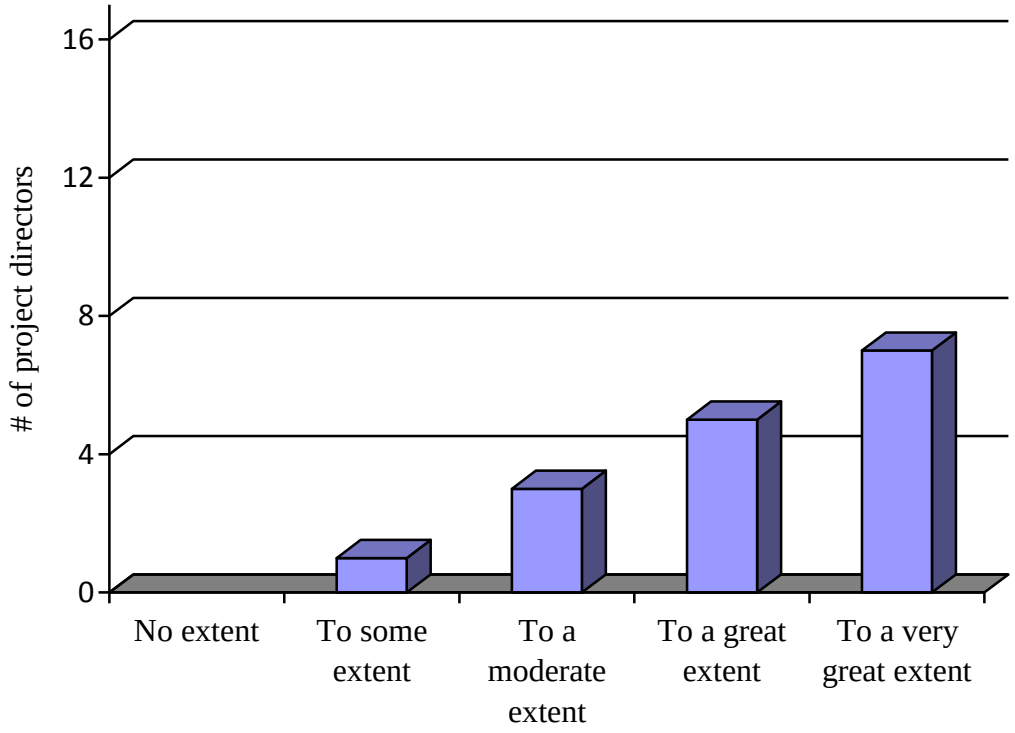

Figure 4. Project Directors' Involvement in their Program's Evaluations

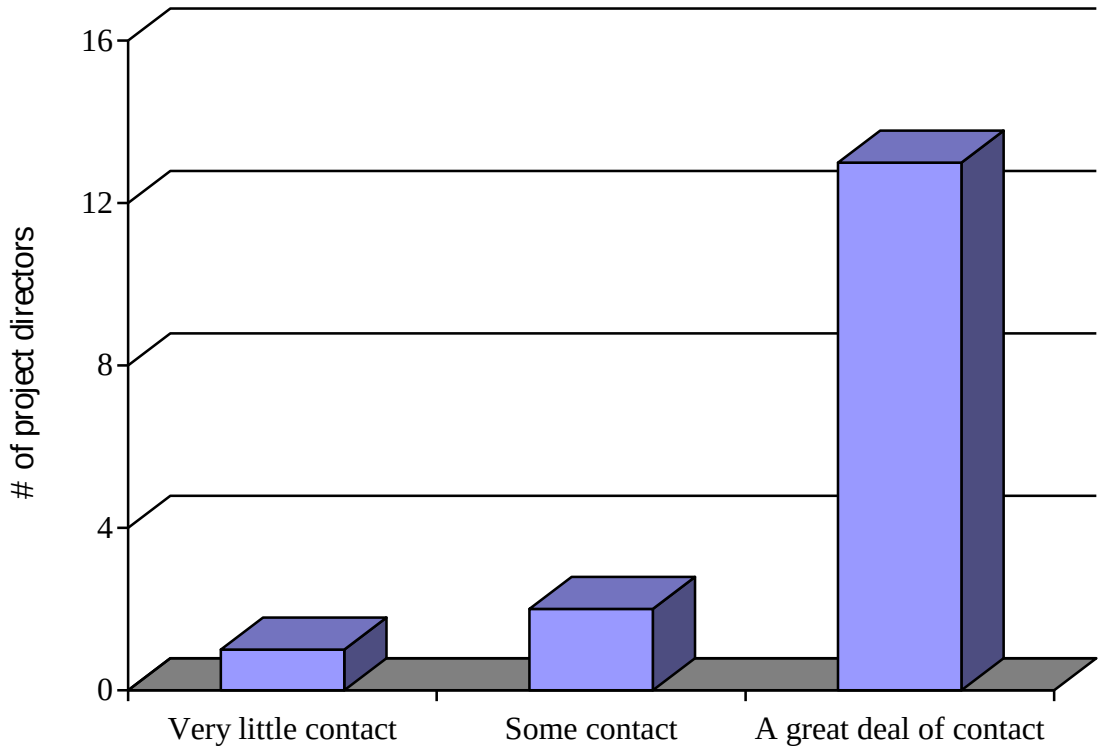

Figure 5. Project Directors' Contact with the Evaluation Team

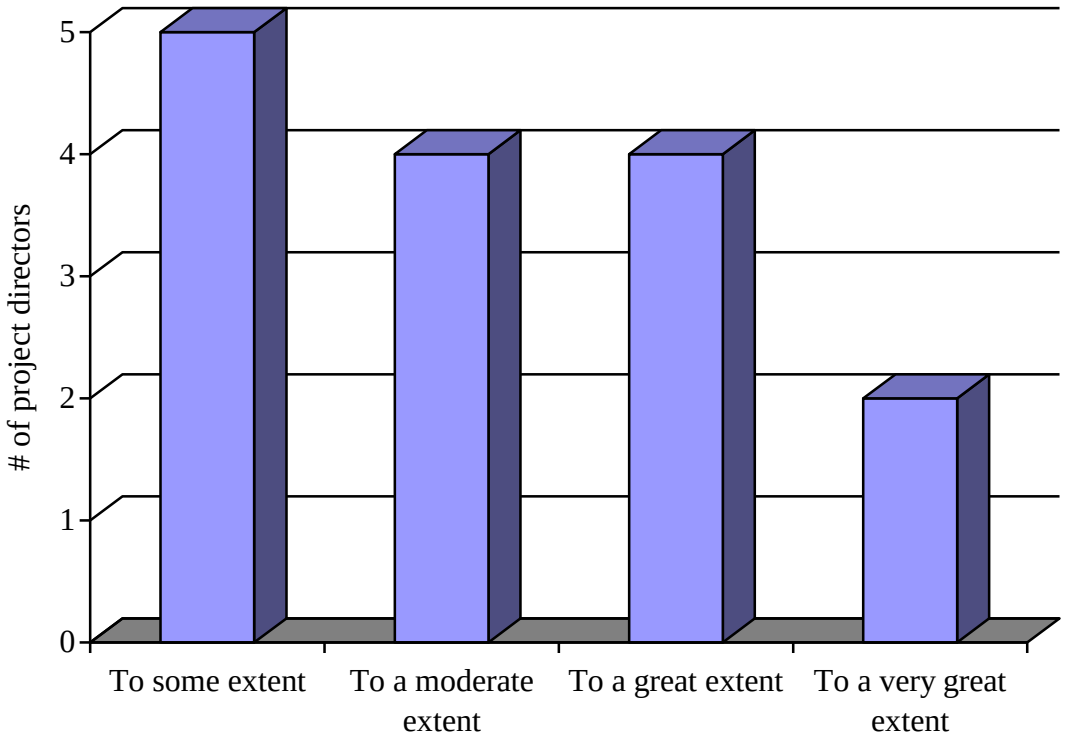

Figure 6. Project Directors who Think NCCEP Supports the Evaluation of GEAR UP Programs

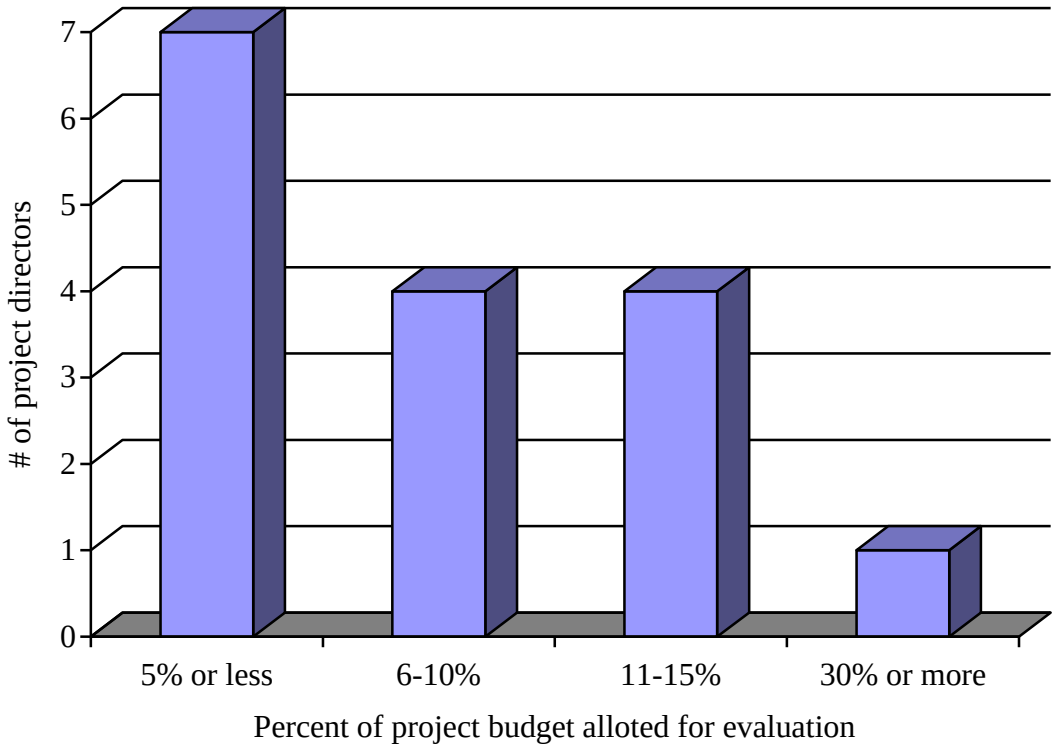

Figure 7. Percent of Project Directors' Budgets for Evaluation

Evaluation Use

Research question one. In order to address the first research question, “To what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors use the evaluation of their program for instrumental (decision-making) purposes?” descriptive analyses were performed. The average response for the instrumental use composite was between "to a moderate extent" and "to a great extent" (M = 2.25, SD = 0.83). When asked about changing some of their other grant-related behaviors based on the new concepts/information they have learned as a result of the evaluation of their grant, the average response was "to some extent" and "to a moderate extent" (M = 1.94, SD = 1.56). Refer to Table 2 for instrumental evaluation use item descriptives. Of the responses provided by the 11 project directors who reported that they have changed some of their other grant-related behaviors, the most frequently provided “other” instrumental behaviors changed include: communication (i.e., "We have changed communication strategies with internal and external stakeholders", " ...communicate directly with service provider to make product more user-friendly for target audience"), staff allotment (i.e., "Changed staff assignments related to gathering grant data", "staff to school ratio to align with need"), and data collection/management (i.e., "added data management system", "[changed] survey content and administration"). Among some of the other instrumental behaviors project directors reported changing included: "marketing", "more focus on student engagement in rigorous academic programs", "introduced random retrospective review of reported in-kind matches", "introduced more pro-active activities", and "share state application measureable objectives with sub grantees to secure reporting data support."

Table 2. *Descriptives for Instrumental Evaluation Use*

Instrumental use items	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Made a decision(s) associated with program management	3.06	1.25	-1.22	0.70
Re-evaluated the importance of particular grant activities	2.35	0.79	0.99	0.82
Made a judgment about the significance of program issues	2.24	1.03	-0.15	-1.5
Made a decision about the staffing of my program	2.24	1.52	-2.09	-1.42
Changed some of my other grant-related behaviors	1.94	1.56	0.11	-1.57
Made a funding decision	1.88	1.05	0.26	-0.51
Changed one or more of my program's priorities	1.76	1.25	0.29	-0.50

Note. N = 17, Scale of measurement: 0 = No extent, 1 = Some extent, 2 = A moderate extent, 4 = A great extent, 5 = A very great extent.

Research question two. In order to address the second research question, “To what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors use the evaluation of their program for conceptual (educational) purposes?” descriptive analyses were performed. The average response for the conceptual use composite was between "to a moderate extent" and "to a great extent" (M = 2.45, SD = 0.90). When asked if they have used the results of their program’s evaluation for some other education-related purposes, the average response was between "to a moderate extent" and "to a great extent" (M = 2.12, SD = 1.50). Refer to Table 3 for conceptual evaluation use item descriptives. Of the responses provided by the 13 project directors who reported that they have used the results of their program’s evaluation for some other education-related purposes, the most frequently provided “other” conceptual behaviors include: to educate (i.e., "to inform program Governance Committee and other stakeholders", "to share with affiliated and membership organizations", "educate school staff", "educate program participants"), to generate discussion (i.e., "policy discussions and decision-making process at creating the state strategic master plan for education", "have shared survey results as a way of generating statewide discussions of college access"). Among the other educational purposes the project directors reported using their programs' evaluation results for included: "paper and poster presentation", "[to] identify other areas that should be evaluated", "...in other student activities and programs at the Commission of Higher Education", and "to expand the number of indicators we track to indicate progress." Refer to Table 3 for conceptual evaluation use item descriptives. Of the responses provided by the 13 project directors who reported that they have used the results of their program’s evaluation for some other education-related purposes, the most frequently provided “other” conceptual behaviors include: to educate (i.e., "to inform

Table 3. *Descriptives for Conceptual Evaluation Use*

Conceptual use items	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Learn about the weaknesses of my program	2.88	1.11	-0.67	-0.78
Educate my program staff	2.82	1.19	-0.90	0.40
Learn about the strengths of my program	2.47	1.13	-0.52	-0.03
Inform my opinion about the current activities of my program	2.35	1.22	0.15	-1.60
Inform my opinion about the ideal activities of my program	2.24	1.20	-0.20	-0.82
Learn other new things about my program (i.e., related to its participants, operations, or outcomes)	2.24	1.25	-0.29	-0.50
Become more aware of elements related to my program (e.g., one type of outcome rather than others – student attitudes about college visits rather than number of students who participated in a college visit)	2.18	0.81	-1.16	2.11
Used the results of my program's evaluation for some other education-related purposes	2.12	1.50	-0.10	-1.48

Note. N = 17, Scale of measurement: 0 = No extent, 1 = Some extent, 2 = A moderate extent, 4 = A great extent, 5 = A very great extent.

program Governance Committee and other stakeholders", "to share with affiliated and membership organizations", "educate school staff", "educate program participants"), to generate discussion (i.e., "policy discussions and decision-making process at creating the state strategic master plan for education", "have shared survey results as a way of generating statewide discussions of college access"). Among the other educational purposes the project directors reported using their programs' evaluation results for included: "paper and poster presentation", "[to] identify other areas that should be evaluated", "...in other student activities and programs at the Commission of Higher Education", and "to expand the number of indicators we track to indicate progress."

Research question three. In order to address the third research question, “To what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors use the evaluation of their program for persuasive (symbolic, political) purposes?” descriptive analyses were performed. The average response for the symbolic use composite was between "to some extent" and "to a moderate extent" (M = 1.63, SD = 0.96). When asked if they have used the results of their program’s evaluation for some other persuasive purpose, the average response was between "to some extent" and "to a moderate extent" (M = 1.75, SD = 1.53). Refer to Table 4 for symbolic evaluation use item descriptives. Of the responses provided by the 10 project directors who reported that they have used the results of their program’s evaluation for some other persuasive purpose, the most frequently provided “other” symbolic behaviors that project directors reported include: justify grant decisions (i.e., "To justify and emphasis on greater, or in-depth staff development", "to justify a request to change the school served and length of service"), and to share results to promote program (i.e., "to validate the importance of program services", "to demonstrate effectiveness in addressing

Table 4. *Descriptives for Symbolic Evaluation Use*

Symbolic use items	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Raise the importance in people's minds of the impact of my program on educational reform	2.29	1.36	-0.27	-1.02
Justify the opinion I had about my program before the evaluation was conducted	1.94	1.09	-0.20	-0.16
Improve the culture within my organization/grant program	1.82	1.33	-0.17	-1.37
Used the results of my program's evaluation for some other persuasive purpose	1.75	1.53	0.22	-1.34
Convince others to support a policy position	1.71	1.53	0.33	-1.43
Cause others to become involved	1.29	1.05	1.55	2.13
Match my opinions to promote the agenda with those of the media, politics, or government	1.24	1.34	0.73	-0.77
Change the prevailing opinion in my organization/grant program	1.12	1.27	1.00	0.08

Note. N = 17, Scale of measurement: 0 = No extent, 1 = Some extent, 2 = A moderate extent, 4 = A great extent, 5 = A very great extent.

statewide reform issues", "testifying before our state legislators about our GEAR UP program", "to show results such as college going rate, remedial course taking pattern", "share results with NCCEP, the Governor's Office and the legislative staff"). Among other persuasive purposes project directors reported using their evaluations' results for included: "[to] improve the culture within participating campuses and parent groups", "funding", and "increasing staffing needs for a comprehensive hands-on approach with grantees".

Research question four. In order to address the fourth research question, “As a result of involvement in their program’s evaluation, to what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors experience process use?” descriptive analyses were performed. The average response for the process use composite was between "to a moderate extent" and "to a great extent" (M = 1.85, SD = 1.13). When asked if their involvement in their program’s evaluation has changed them in some other way(s), the average response was between "to some extent" and "to a moderate extent" (M = 1.18, SD = 1.59). Refer to Table 5 for process evaluation use descriptives. Only 6 of the 8 project directors who reported that their program’s evaluation has changed them in some other way(s), provided detailed information on what other way(s) they were referring to. Among the “other” process use behaviors that project directors reported were: greater attention to presentation of data, increased openness to collaboration, better communication of evaluation with program, personnel, better understanding of data, and "understanding of the need for longitudinal data not available via the APR".

Evaluation Influence

Research question five. In order to address the fifth research question, “To what extent have the evaluations of the state GEAR UP grant programs had an influence at the individual,

Table 5. *Descriptives for Process Evaluation Use*

Process use items	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Changed one or more of my behaviors associated with my program (e.g., increased my engagement in my program, developed a professional network, requested additional evaluation results and reports)	2.41	1.18	0.11	-1.47
Become more aware of elements related to my program (e.g., participant reactions)	2.00	1.41	0.30	-1.29
Gained one or more new skills (e.g., survey design, survey administration, data analysis, research design, ability to work collaboratively, etc.)	1.94	1.39	0.43	-1.07
Changed the way I behave in relation to my program in an effort to keep informed for policy-related discussions	1.76	1.39	0.48	-0.98
Increased the amount of time I devote to reviewing programmatic issues	1.71	1.40	0.29	-1.27
Changed the way I think about my program in an effort to keep informed for policy-related discussions	1.71	1.45	0.44	-1.09
Changed my attitudes/opinion about my program	1.41	1.17	0.63	-0.12
My involvement in my program's evaluation has changed me in some other way(s)	1.18	1.59	1.05	-0.53

Note. N = 17, Scale of measurement: 0 = No extent, 1 = Some extent, 2 = A moderate extent, 4 = A great extent, 5 = A very great extent.

interpersonal, and collective levels?" descriptive analyses were performed.

Individual level evaluation influence. The average response for the individual level evaluation influence composite was between "to a moderate extent" and "to a great extent" (*M* = 2.07, *SD* = 0.88). Refer to Table 6-8 for individual level evaluation influence descriptives.

Interpersonal level evaluation influence. The average response for the interpersonal level evaluation influence composite was between "to some extent" and "to a moderate extent" (*M* = 1.97, *SD* = 0.88). Refer to Table 9 for interpersonal level symbolic evaluation influence descriptives.

Collective level evaluation influence. The average response for the collective level evaluation influence composite was between "to some extent" and "to a moderate extent" (*M* = 1.62, *SD* = 1.05). Refer to Table 10 for collective level process evaluation influence descriptives.

Impacting Factors of Evaluation Use

Research question six. In order to address the sixth research question, "To what extent do evaluation implementation factors (i.e., evaluation quality, credibility, relevance, communication quality, findings, and timeliness) implementation factors (i.e., evaluation quality, credibility, relevance, communication quality, findings, and timeliness) have an impact on state GEAR UP grant project directors' use of evaluation results?" descriptive analyses were performed. The average response for the implementation factors composite was between "to a moderate extent" and "to a great extent" (*M* = 2.20, *SD* = 0.92). Refer to Table 11 for evaluation implementation factor descriptives.

Research question seven. In order to address the seventh research question, "To what extent do decision and policy setting factors (i.e., information needs, decision characteristics,

Table 6. *Descriptives for Instrumental Evaluation Influence and Change Mechanisms at the Individual Level*

Individual Level Evaluation Influence Items	Mechanism of Change	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Re-evaluated the importance particular grant activities	Elaboration	2.35	0.79	0.99	0.82
Made a judgment about the significance of program issues	Salience	2.24	1.03	-0.15	-1.54
Made a decision about the staffing of my program	Behavior Change	2.24	1.52	-0.21	-1.43
Made a funding decision(s)	Behavior Change	1.88	1.05	0.26	-0.51

Note. N = 17, Scale of measurement: 0 = No extent, 1 = Some extent, 2 = A moderate extent, 4 = A great extent, 5 = A very great extent.

Table 7. *Descriptives for Conceptual Evaluation Influence and Change Mechanisms at the Individual Level*

Individual Level Evaluation Influence Items	Mechanism of Change	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Learn about the weaknesses of my program	Attitude Change	2.88	1.11	-0.67	-0.78
Learn about the strengths of my program	Attitude Change	2.47	1.13	-0.52	-0.03
Inform my opinion about the current activities of my program	Attitude Change	2.35	1.22	0.15	-1.60
Inform my opinion about the ideal activities of my program	Attitude Change	2.24	1.20	-0.02	-0.82
Learn other new things about my program (i.e., related to its participants, operations, or outcomes)	Attitude Change	2.24	1.25	-0.29	-0.50
Become more aware of elements related to my program (e.g., one type of outcome rather than others – student attitudes about college visits rather than number of students who participated in a college visit)	Priming	2.18	0.81	-1.16	2.11

Note. N = 17, Scale of measurement: 0 = No extent, 1 = Some extent, 2 = A moderate extent, 4 = A great extent, 5 = A very great extent.

Table 8. *Descriptives for Symbolic and Process Evaluation Influence and Change Mechanisms at the Individual Level*

Individual Level Evaluation Influence Items	Mechanism of Change	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Symbolic use					
Raise the importance in people's minds of the impact of my program on educational reform	Salience	2.29	1.36	-0.27	-1.02
Process use					
Changed one or more of my behaviors associated with my program (e.g., increased my engagement in my program, developed a professional network, requested additional evaluation results and reports)	Behavioral Change	2.41	1.18	0.11	-1.47
Become more aware of elements related to my program (e.g., participant reactions)	Priming	2.00	1.41	0.30	-1.29
Gained one or more new skills (e.g., survey design, survey administration, data analysis, research design, ability to work collaboratively, etc.)	Skill Acquisition	1.94	1.39	0.43	-1.07
Increased the amount of time I devote to reviewing programmatic issues	Elaboration	1.71	1.40	0.29	-1.27
Changed my attitudes/opinion about my program	Attitude Change	1.41	1.18	0.63	-0.12

Note. N = 17, Scale of measurement: 0 = No extent, 1 = Some extent, 2 = A moderate extent, 4 = A great extent, 5 = A very great extent.

Table 9. *Descriptives for Instrumental, Conceptual, Symbolic, and Process Evaluation Influence and Change Mechanisms at the Interpersonal Level*

Interpersonal Level Evaluation Influence Item	Mechanism of Change	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Instrumental use					
Made a decision(s) associated with program management	Change Agent	3.06	1.25	-1.22	0.70
Conceptual use					
Educate my program staff	Change Agent	1.24	1.35	-0.89	0.40
Symbolic use					
Justify the opinion I had about my program before the evaluation was conducted	Justification	1.94	1.09	-0.20	-0.16
Improve the culture within my organization/grant program	Social Norms	1.82	1.33	-0.17	-1.37
Changed the way I behave in relation to my program in an effort to keep informed for policy-related discussions	Policy-Oriented Learning	1.76	1.39	0.48	-0.98
Convince others to support a policy position	Persuasion	1.71	1.53	0.33	-1.43
Cause others to become involved	Change Agent	1.29	1.05	1.55	2.13
Change the prevailing opinion in my organization/grant program	Minority Opinion	1.12	1.27	1.00	0.08
Process use					
Changed the way I think about my program in an effort to keep informed for policy-related discussions	Policy-Oriented Learning	1.71	1.45	0.44	-1.09

Note. N = 17, Scale of measurement: 0 = No extent, 1 = Some extent, 2 = A moderate extent, 4 = A great extent, 5 = A very great extent.

Table 10. *Descriptives for Process Evaluation Influence and Change Mechanisms at the Collective Level*

Collective Level Evaluation Influence Items	Mechanism of Change	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Instrumental use					
Changed one or more of my program's priorities	Policy Change	1.76	1.25	0.29	-0.50
Symbolic use					
Matched my opinions to promote the agenda with those of the media, politics, or government	Agenda Setting	1.24	1.35	0.73	-0.77
Process use					
Changed the way I behave in relation to my program in an effort to keep informed for policy-related discussions	Policy-Oriented Learning	1.76	1.39	0.48	-0.98
Changed the way I think about my program in an effort to keep informed for policy-related discussions	Policy-Oriented Learning	1.71	1.45	0.44	-1.09

Note. N = 17, Scale of measurement: 0 = No extent, 1 = Some extent, 2 = A moderate extent, 4 = A great extent, 5 = A very great extent.

Table 11. *Descriptives for Evaluation Implementation Factors*

Implementation factors	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Relevance	2.75	1.00	-0.34	-0.74
Findings	2.75	1.07	-0.95	1.61
Credibility	2.00	1.32	0.00	-1.26
Communication quality	2.00	1.51	-0.13	-1.42
Evaluation quality	1.94	1.18	-0.14	-0.86
Timeliness	1.81	1.28	0.18	-0.58

Note. N = 16, Scale of measurement: 0 = No extent, 1 = Some extent, 2 = A moderate extent, 4 = A great extent, 5 = A very great extent.

politics, funding, competing information, personal characteristics, and commitment to evaluation) have an impact on state GEAR UP grant project directors' use of evaluation results?", descriptive analyses were performed. The average response for the decision and policy setting factors composite was between "to some extent" and "to a moderate extent" (M = 1.60, SD = 1.07). Refer to Table 12 for evaluation implementation factor descriptives.

Open-ended Survey Questions

When asked "What could NCCEP do to promote your understanding of the evaluation process?" the majority of respondents (7 of 11) said training (i.e., non-evaluator uses of evaluation, workshops that define terms, how to contract evaluation services, evaluator led-workshops, APR best practices). The other three respondents mentioned things like: provide a network for sharing with other states and partnership grants, establish a database for input from programs, publishing best results and practices, provide technical evaluation assistance, and give us examples of other grants' evaluation processes. Refer to Figure 8 for participant responses.

When asked "What could NCCEP do to promote your ability to use evaluation results to improve the effectiveness of your program?" the two main responses project directors provided included: a) provide training or workshops (4 of 9), and b) provide case studies (3 of 9). Other responses included: continue technical assistance, describe standards for program evaluation, and provide a clearinghouse for evaluation results. Refer to Figure 9 for participant responses.

NCCEP Staff Interviews

Research question eight. In order to address the eighth research question, "What are former NCCEP staff's key use expectations and support systems regarding the use of evaluation

Table 12. *Descriptives for Evaluation Implementation Factors*

Implementation factors	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Commitment to evaluation	2.12	1.31	-0.26	-0.35
Information needs	1.94	1.34	-0.06	-1.06
Decision characteristics	1.87	1.31	0.06	-0.85
Personal characteristics	1.81	1.42	0.06	-1.33
Political climate	1.25	1.44	0.58	-1.24
Competing information	1.13	1.41	0.89	-0.70
Funding	1.06	1.39	0.73	-1.52

Note. N = 16, Scale of measurement: 0 = No extent, 1 = Some extent, 2 = A moderate extent, 4 = A great extent, 5 = A very great extent.

"Provide a network for sharing program models, strategies, practices, and approaches to data collection and evaluation, distinguishing State grants from Partnership projects; Establish a databank for input from programs to inform and influence relevant policy issues."
"Possibly training on non-evaluator uses of program evaluations."
"NCCEP does a good job with pre-conferences, evaluation strand, website evaluation page." "Publishing best results and best practices of states and partnerships would be helpful."
"A basic workshop that defines terms for people would be helpful. For example, how many directors know that "evaluation" is not synonymous with "APR"? That they can complete their own APRs? That the formal evaluation for GEAR UP is only required every two years, and that the US ED does not require an external evaluator? In fact, a how-to on working with a vendor to contract evaluation services would likely be very helpful to grantees. Since these people are often also exhibitors, it might be a little dicey to put together, but I'm sure there's a way."
"Continued trainings on the purpose of evaluation, the preferable type (summative or formative), and tips on promoting the outcomes to effect change."
"Maintain good partnerships with professional evaluators and have them present informal/workshops/materials that explain the process and benefits of evaluation."
"Revive trainings and support for evaluation teams"
"We are not evaluators, we are program managers. Usually the evaluation is contracted out, so the process is not relevant. What NCCEP could do is to provide certain technical assistance in crafting questions and defining issues so that the results of the evaluation are useful. Of course, before we do that, we need to know what the purpose of the evaluations are for. At the state director's level, I think it's more about what the result of the evaluation can help me map out new policies. But other directors may have different goals."
"Offer different types of training on evaluation - I attended the Evaluation 101 sessions, found them to be informative about other programs, but not on how evaluations should be conducted."
"NCCEP could provide concrete examples of other grants' evaluation processes at conferences."
"A workshop on APR best practices would be useful."

Figure 8. Project Directors' Suggestions for NCCEP to Promote their Understanding of the Evaluation Process

"Possibly training on non-evaluator uses of program evaluations."
"Continue technical assistance, hire NCCEP evaluation consultant"
"A workshop on exactly that topic would be extremely helpful. Perhaps if NCCEP identified some grantees who had useful evaluations done and worked with them over a period of 6 months on using/implementing the recommendations (i.e., provided technical assistance), then presented on the results of those case studies--that would be fascinating, a real-life example of what worked, what didn't, and how to contract one's next evaluation to further the project."
"As my answer was provided in the previous question, I am not certain how NCCEP could help to promote the use of evaluation results to improve effectiveness. I know that there is a template used by California GEAR UP that acts as an informational for advocacy purposes. I believe if that form is revisited and redesigned and state administrators are able to populate with data from evaluations, then it is a question who to share it with and when. The question is how to promote program results that work, the program areas that are not working need redesigning to become more effective or removed. The problem is that advocacy only works when there is substantial ability to report, however as a lead administrator (state grant) I only receive the information from the eleven projects on an annual basis (APR) which is after the budget period, so how can NCCEP help a state grant who is dependent on others for measurable data for its report?"
"Describe standards for program evaluation. Identify case studies of GEAR UP projects using evaluation to improve program effectiveness."
"A collective clearinghouse of the evaluation results would be a good tool to help define discussions."
"NCCEP could provide concrete examples of other grants' evaluation processes at conferences."
"Provide workshops in framing evaluation results for dissemination to the public"
"A workshop on how to use APR data would be useful"

Figure 9. Project Directors' Suggestions for NCCEP to Promote their Ability to Use Evaluation Results to Improve the Effectiveness of their Program

results by state GEAR UP project directors?", four telephone interviews were conducted. All responses were compiled by question and reviewed for common themes. In order to protect interviewees' anonymity, interviewees' comments have been paraphrased. Direct quotes are not provided. In response to the first question the former staff members were asked "What are your expectations for evaluation use among state GEAR UP project directors?" one respondent said that evaluation use should be a high priority. This individual felt that the data should be taken seriously and be used to improve interventions, operations, and efficiency. Another respondent said that they expected project directors to: a) understand the importance of evaluation, b) make a forthright effort to make a reasonable evaluation plan, and c) to make of use of their plan. A third respondent said that they expected a heavier level of dependency and use of evaluation in general. Unlike the other interviewees, the fourth respondent said that their expectations for evaluation use among

state GEAR UP project directors were relatively low. The interviewee explained that the grantees have little guidance in the way of evaluation, specifically how much money to allot for an evaluation. One problem mentioned was that because states are scored for evaluation on their grant application, they dedicate fewer funds for evaluation (e.g., if one state dedicates $300,000 for evaluation, another would dedicate $100,000) because they do not want to be scored lower. This interviewee further explained that grantees tend to think that commitments of high quality rigorous evaluations will detract from grant acceptance.

When asked, "Do you know any examples (from when you were with NCCEP) that suggest the findings from state GEAR UP evaluations were being used?" each of the interviewees said yes. Some of the examples provided came in the form of general statements

about evaluation use among state project directors whereas others were examples of evaluation use by particular state grantees. Some of the more general examples provided were states using their evaluations for dissemination, communication, and public relations. Another general example shared was that the project staff has been using trend data and overall performance numbers to get a sense of how they are doing and to refine their grants. In one of the examples of use by a particular state, school systems and project staff implementing project initiatives are reviewing the evaluation findings and conclusions. Two other states used the findings of the first evaluation to guide the redesign for their second grant. Three other states drastically changed their educational interventions and/or approaches to GEAR UP based on their programs' evaluations. Some states used their summative data for sustainability purposes. Another two states have used their evaluations to advocate for more professional development. These states identified what worked and focused their training on them in order to maximize the effects of their success. One final state mentioned has been taking what they learned from their data each year to other offices to get additional funding.

In response to the third question, “Have evaluators of state GEAR UP grants been trained to promote use?” two of the interviewees said no and two said yes. One of the interviewees who said no said that they did not think any training on evaluation use has specifically been provided to state GEAR UP staff or state GEAR UP evaluators. This interviewee explained that evaluation institutes and conference workshops addressed other aspects of evaluation such as techniques and strategies rather than on use of evaluation findings. The second interviewee who said no explained the partnership grants often have internal evaluators who promote use, whereas state grantees often use external evaluators who are not as readily available to facilitate use. One of

the interviewees who said yes explained that in the sustainability workshop offered at the annual capacity-building workshop facilitators talk about sustainability and the fact that program evaluation data is key to making your arguments for sustainability. This interviewee also said that the purpose for evaluation and why evaluations are conducted was emphasized in the pre-conference workshops. The second interviewee who said yes said that evaluators and project directors were discussing data collection and use as well as how evaluators should be more integrated into program planning.

In response to the fourth question, “Have project directors been encouraged and trained to promote use?” each of the interviewees said yes. One interviewee who said yes said that from the NCCEP perspective there is a lot of encouragement going on for evaluation and use of evaluation data (i.e., through conference workshops). Another explained that in previous years NCCEP really worked hard to make sure project directors were on-board with the evaluation. This interviewee provided an example of the Chicago partnership grant and how the staff made their evaluator a part of their senior leadership. The interviewee also described how other project directors have adversarial relationships with their evaluators. A third interviewee described how GEAR UP.org was designed to be a long-term portal where project directors could look at what was going on with their program and that they were encouraged to use the portal. The fourth interviewee discussed how the use of results is always emphasized in evaluation training workshops sponsored by NCCEP (and conducted by members of the Evaluation Council). The interviewee said that formative evaluation is also explained at these workshops along with why it is important for keeping on track and making adjustments towards desired project outcomes.

In response to the fifth question the former staff members were asked, “What do you think are the barriers to evaluation use among state GEAR UP project directors?” the most common responses were: the format of the APR (3), lack of familiarity with using results (3), and the time required to complete the APR (2). Other responses included issues such as: the lack of staff time to promote use, evaluations are seen as being summative only - not for use, the lack of incentive for use, and project directors preference to spend grant money on intervention activities rather than their programs' evaluations.

In response to the sixth question the former staff members were asked, “What do you think could be done to promote evaluation use among state GEAR UP project directors?” the most common responses were: redesign the APR (2) and provide training on how to use evaluation results (2). Other responses included: putting a greater emphasis on evaluation during the entire grant cycle, distributing examples of how evaluations are being used, providing incentives for use of evaluation findings, integrating use in projects' management systems, gearing evaluations more toward the promotion of use rather than compliance, positioning evaluation use under the umbrella of sustainability, and getting program staff to promote buy-in among leaders of school systems.

Key Findings

- The average response for the instrumental use and conceptual use items was between "to a moderate extent" and "to a great extent" whereas the average response for the symbolic use and process use items was between "to some extent" and "to a moderate extent".
- The average response for the individual level evaluation influence items was between "to a moderate extent" and "to a great extent" whereas the average response for the

interpersonal and collective level evaluation influence items was between "to some extent" and "to a moderate extent".

- The average response for implementation factors items was between "to a moderate extent" and "to a great extent" whereas the average response for decision and policy setting factors items was between "to some extent" and "to a moderate extent".
- The majority of survey respondents said that NCCEP could provide training (i.e., evaluator led-workshops, workshops that define terms, training on non-evaluator uses of evaluation in order to promote their understanding of the evaluation process).
- State GEAR UP project directors would like for NCCEP to: a) provide training or workshops on evaluation, evaluation use, and the APR; and b) provide case studies of successful GEAR UP evaluations in order to promote their ability to use evaluation results to improve the effectiveness of their program.
- Three of the former NCCEP staff members had high expectations for evaluation use among state GEAR UP directors, while the remaining one had lower expectations because they felt that grantees tend to think that commitments of high quality rigorous evaluations will detract from grant acceptance.
- All of the former NCCEP staff members interviewed were able to provide one or more examples that suggest the findings from state GEAR UP evaluations are being used.
- Two of the four former NCCEP staff members interviewed felt that the *evaluators* of state GEAR UP grants have been trained to promote use, whereas the other two could not point to any specific training on use.

- All of the former NCCEP staff members interviewed said that they thought *project directors* had been encouraged and trained to promote use.
- The main barriers to evaluation use among state GEAR UP project directors that former NCCEP staff members provided were: the format of the APR, lack of familiarity with using results, and the time required to complete the APR.
- The main suggestions for promoting evaluation use among state GEAR UP project directors that former NCCEP staff members provided were to redesign the APR and to provide training on how to use evaluation results.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the findings, limitations of this study, implications for future research, recommendations for NCCEP and the GEAR UP program, and conclusions.

This dissertation study focused on evaluation use and influence among state project directors of "Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs" (GEAR UP) grants. The purpose of this study was to learn: a) about the extent to which project directors of state grants use evaluation results (i.e., instrumental use, conceptual use, persuasive use, and/or process use), b) the extent to which the evaluations of the state GEAR UP grant programs have had an influence at the individual, interpersonal, and collective levels, and c) what factors have an impact on the use of those results (i.e., implementation factors, decision and policy setting factors). Additionally, this study is designed to assess GEAR UP administrators' expectations for evaluation use.

The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. To what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors use the evaluation of their program for instrumental (decision-making) purposes?
2. To what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors use the evaluation of their program for conceptual (educational) purposes?
3. To what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors use the evaluation of their program for persuasive (political) purposes?
4. As a result of involvement in their program's evaluation, to what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors engage in process use?

5. To what extent have the evaluations of the state GEAR UP grant programs had an influence at the individual, interpersonal, and collective levels?
6. To what extent do evaluation implementation factors (i.e., evaluation quality, credibility, relevance, communication quality, findings, and timeliness) have an impact on state GEAR UP grant project directors' use of evaluation results?
7. To what extent do decision and policy setting factors (i.e., information needs, decision characteristics, funding, political climate, competing information, personal characteristics, and commitment to evaluation) have an impact on state GEAR UP grant project directors' use of evaluation results?
8. What were former NCCEP staff's key use expectations and support systems regarding the use of evaluation results by state GEAR UP project directors?

This study sought to fill the gaps in the evaluation use literature by focusing specifically on current state project directors of GEAR UP grants. This section provides a comprehensive discussion of the findings of this study.

Summary of Findings

Evaluation use. Concerning the first research question, "To what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors use the evaluation of their program for instrumental (decision-making) purposes?" findings revealed that project directors were using their programs' evaluations for instrumental purposes between "to a moderate extent" and "to a great extent". On average, project directors reported that the main instrumental purpose that they used their programs' evaluation for was to make a decision associated with program management. Of all of the evaluation use items, this was rated the highest as it was the only item rated between "to a great

extent” and “to a very great extent”. The other purposes project directors rated between “to a moderate extent” and “to a great extent” included (ranked from highest to lowest): a) to re-evaluate the importance of particular grant activities, b) to make a judgment about the significance of program issues, and c) to make a decision about the staffing of their program. Instrumental use was the second most prevalent type of evaluation use as 4 of the 7 items were rated between “to a moderate extent” and “to a great extent” or higher.

The second research question was “To what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors use the evaluation of their program for conceptual (educational) purposes?” Findings revealed that project directors were using their programs’ evaluations for conceptual purposes between "to a moderate extent" and "to a great extent”. On average, project directors reported that the main conceptual purpose that they used their programs’ evaluation for was to learn about the weaknesses of their program. The other purposes project directors rated between “to a moderate extent” and “to a great extent” included (ranked from highest to lowest): a) to educate their program staff, b) to learn about the strengths of their program, c) to inform them about the current activities of their program, d) to inform their opinion about the ideal activities of their program, e) to learn other new things about their program (related to its participants operations and outcomes), f) to become more aware of elements related to their program (one type of outcome rather than others – student attitudes about college visits rather than number of students who participated in a college visit), and g) for some other purpose. Conceptual use was the most prevalent type of evaluation use as all items were rated as being used between “to a moderate extent” and “to a great extent”. This finding supports the notion that project directors and their staff are being made aware of the findings of their programs evaluations. In turn, it may also

explain why instrumental use is the second most prevalent type of evaluation use among project directors. That is, informed project directors (due to conceptual use) are better equipped to make educated decisions (instrumental use).

The third research question was “To what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors use the evaluation of their program for persuasive (political) purposes?” Findings revealed that project directors were using their programs’ evaluations for persuasive purposes between "to some extent" and "to a moderate extent”. On average, project directors reported that the main persuasive purpose for which they used their programs’ evaluation for was to raise the importance in people’s minds of the impact of their program on educational reform. This is probably due to the fact that by showing their program has an impact, the U.S. Department of Education will likely continue to fund their grant. The other top rated persuasive items included: a) to justify the opinion I had about my program before the evaluation was conducted, b) to improve the culture within my organization/grant program, c) for some other persuasive purpose, and d) to convince others to support a policy position. Symbolic use was the lowest rated type of evaluation use as all but one item were rated between "to some extent" and "to a moderate extent".

The fourth research question was “As a result of involvement in their program’s evaluation, to what extent do state GEAR UP grant project directors experience process use?” Findings revealed that project directors were engaging in process use between "to some extent" and "to a moderate extent”. On average, project directors reported that the main process-related purpose that they used their programs’ evaluation for was to change one or more of their behaviors associated with their program (e.g., increased engagement in program, developed a

professional network, requested additional evaluation results and reports). The other top rated process use items included: a) to become more aware of elements related to my program (e.g., participant reactions), b) to gain one or more new skills (e.g., survey design, survey administration, data analysis, research design, ability to work collaboratively, etc.), and c) to change the way I think about my program in an effort to keep informed for policy-related discussions. Process use was the second lowest rated type of evaluation use as all but two items were rated between "to some extent" and "to a moderate extent". While directors are engaging in process use, perhaps more process use will lead to an increase in one of the already higher rated process use items, "to gain one or more new skills". An increase in gaining certain skills such as data collection may be helpful for the project directors when they collect data for the APR. If they can manage more of the data collection for the APR, then their evaluators can focus on collecting more in-depth data on the functioning of their programs.

Evaluation influence. The fifth research question was “To what extent have the evaluations of the state GEAR UP grant programs had an influence at the individual, interpersonal, and collective levels?” Findings revealed that evaluation influence was reported at all three levels and through all change mechanisms. These findings support the mechanisms of change identified in Henry and Mark's (2003) three level model of evaluation influence within the context of the GEAR UP grant program. Project directors reported more evaluation influence at the individual level than at the interpersonal level and more influence at the interpersonal level than the collective level.

At the individual level, the highest rated item was a process use item (i.e., As a result of my involvement in my program's evaluation, I have increased the amount of time I devote to

reviewing programmatic issues). This was followed by the instrumental use item "Based on the information I have re-evaluated the importance of particular grant activities" and the conceptual use item "I have used the results of my program's evaluation to inform my opinion about the current activities of my program."

At the interpersonal level, the highest rated item was an instrumental item (i.e., Based on the information I have learned as a result of the evaluation of my grant I have made a decision associated with program management). This was followed by the conceptual use item "I have used the results of my program's evaluation to educate my program staff" and the symbolic use item "I have used the results of my program's evaluation to justify the opinion I had about my program before the evaluation was conducted."

At the collective level, two items were tied as the highest rated items. These included the instrumental use item "Based on the information I have changed one or more of my program's priorities" and the process use item "As a result of my involvement in the evaluation of my program, I have changed the way I behave in relation to my program in an effort to keep informed for policy-related discussions." As mentioned above, evaluation influence was lowest at the collective level as all items were rated between "to some extent" and "to a moderate extent." Further investigation is needed to explain this finding.

Impacting factors of evaluation use. Concerning the sixth research question, “To what extent do evaluation implementation factors (i.e., evaluation quality, credibility, relevance, communication quality, findings, and timeliness) have an impact on state GEAR UP grant project directors’ use of evaluation results?” findings revealed that current state GEAR UP grant project directors’ use of their programs’ evaluations is impacted by the following evaluation

implementation factors (in order of importance): a) by the relevance of the evaluation to the needs of their program, b) the findings presented in the evaluation report, c) the credibility of the evaluator, d) the evaluator's ability to communicate with them throughout the process of the evaluation of their program, e) the quality of their program's evaluation, and f) the timeliness of the evaluation findings becoming available. The finding that the relevance of the evaluation to the needs of the project directors' programs has the most impact on project directors' decisions to use their programs' evaluations is particularly important for evaluators to keep in mind. Without providing relevant information to the project directors, use of evaluation results is less likely.

Concerning the seventh research question, "To what extent do decision and policy setting factors (i.e., information needs, decision characteristics, political climate, competing information, personal characteristics, and commitment and/or receptiveness to evaluation) have an impact on state GEAR UP grant project directors' use of evaluation results?" findings revealed that current state GEAR UP grants project directors' use of their programs' evaluations is impacted by the following evaluation decision and policy setting factors (in order of importance): a) their commitment and/or receptiveness to evaluation, b) their informational needs, c) the significance of the decision that they needed to make concerning their program, d) their personal characteristics (e.g., personal observations, staff, peers, etc.) e) the current political climate in the schools that the their grant serves, f) information provided through sources outside of the grant, and g) their dependence on the U.S. Department of Education for funding. It is noteworthy that project directors' commitment and/or receptiveness to evaluation has the most impact on their decision to use their programs' results. This finding emphasizes the importance of getting project

directors to understand the benefits of evaluation use and to commit to using their evaluations to improve their programs.

The finding that both the implementation factors and decision and policy setting factors have an impact on the state GEAR UP project directors' decisions to use their program' evaluation supports the previous literature on impacting factors on evaluation use (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Shulha & Cousins, 1997). The finding that the implementation factor items were rated as having a greater impact than the decision and policy setting factors items provides insight into what impacts state project directors' decisions to use their programs' evaluations. This information can be taken into consideration by both project directors and evaluators when working to develop and carry out an evaluation plan

NCCEP staff expectations. Concerning the eighth research question, "What are former NCCEP staff's key use expectations and support systems regarding the use of evaluation results by state GEAR UP project directors?" four former NCCEP staff members were interviewed. Findings revealed that the staff had high expectations for evaluation use among state GEAR UP project directors, with the exception of one interviewee who said that their expectations for evaluation use among state GEAR UP project directors were relatively low. However, their reasoning was that grantees have little guidance in the way of evaluation, specifically how much money to allot for an evaluation. This interviewee further explained that grantees tend to think that commitments of high quality rigorous evaluations will detract from grant acceptance. If this is the case, then it would be important for NCCEP or the U.S. Department of Education to provide project directors with guidance on what portion of their grant budget should be allotted for evaluation.

All former NCCEP staff members were able to provide examples that suggest the findings from state GEAR UP evaluations were being used. Some examples were of states: a) using their evaluations for dissemination, communication, and public relations; b) using trend data and overall performance numbers to get a sense of how they are doing and to refine their grants; c) school systems and project staff implementing project initiatives are reviewing evaluation findings and conclusions; d) using the findings of the first evaluation to guide the redesign for a second grant; e) to drastically change their educational interventions and/or approaches to GEAR UP based on their programs' evaluations; f) using their summative data for sustainability purposes; g) using their evaluations to advocate for more professional development; and h) taking what they learned from their data each year to other offices to get additional funding. These findings support the survey results that GEAR UP project directors are using their programs' evaluations.

There were mixed opinions concerning whether or not evaluators of state GEAR UP grants have been trained to promote use. Of the two interviewees who said that they did not think the evaluators had been trained to promote use, the reasons they provided included: a) evaluation institutes and conference workshops address other aspects of evaluation such as techniques and strategies rather than on use of evaluation findings, and b) partnership grants often have internal evaluators who promote use, whereas state grantees often use external evaluators who are not as readily available to facilitate use. Of the two interviewees who said yes, the reasons they provided included: a) in the sustainability workshop offered at the annual capacity-building workshop facilitators talk about sustainability and the fact that program evaluation data is key to making your arguments for sustainability, b) the purpose for evaluation and why evaluations are

conducted was emphasized in the pre-conference workshops, and c) evaluators and project directors were discussing data collection and use as well as how evaluators should be more integrated into program planning. These findings suggest that additional training for evaluators is needed as evaluation use may be emphasized in the workshops, but not discussed in-depth.

The former NCCEP staff members felt that project directors have been encouraged and trained to promote use. They made comments that: a) there was a lot of encouragement for evaluation and use of evaluation data (i.e., through conference workshops), b) in previous years NCCEP really worked hard to make sure project directors were on-board with the evaluation, c) GEAR UP.org was designed to be a long-term portal where project directors could look at what was going on with their program and that they were encouraged to use the portal, d) the use of results is always emphasized in evaluation training workshops sponsored by NCCEP (and conducted by members of the Evaluation Council), and e) formative evaluation is also explained at these workshops along with why it is important for keeping on track and making adjustments towards desired project outcomes. This finding is in contrast to what the project directors reported. Many of the project directors suggested training on evaluation use is needed to help them understand evaluation and how to use their programs' evaluations. This finding suggests that the instruction that NCCEP is currently providing is insufficient.

Former NCCEP staff members identified a number of potential barriers to evaluation use among state GEAR UP project directors. These included: the format of the APR, a lack of familiarity with using results, and the time required to complete the APR. It is evident that the APR is problematic as both the project directors and former NCCEP staff members have mentioned its shortcomings. The lack of familiarity with using results again provides support for

the notion that additional training is needed for the project directors. Other barriers identified included issues such as: the lack of staff time to promote use, evaluations are seen as being summative only, the lack of incentive for use, and project directors' preference to spend grant money on intervention activities rather than their programs' evaluations. These are all concerns which could be addressed through training and support (specific suggestions are provided in recommendations section).

Former NCCEP staff members provided some suggestions for promoting evaluation use among state GEAR UP project directors. In line with the identification of the format of the APR as a barrier, redesigning the APR was suggested. In order to address project directors' lack of familiarity with using results interviewees suggested providing training on how to use evaluation results in which examples of evaluations being used would be included. Some other notable responses included: focusing on evaluation use throughout the grant cycle, offering incentives for using evaluations, integrating use into projects' management systems, moving evaluations away from compliance and more toward the promotion of use, promoting evaluation use as a means for fostering sustainability, and to promote buy-in among leaders of school systems. These suggestions should be taken into consideration by both NCCEP and the Department of Education.

Limitations of Study

There are a number of limitations to this study which may have an impact on the findings presented. It is important to take these limitations into consideration when reviewing the interpretations of the results.

Participation

The major limitation of this study was the participation rate. Out of the 41 total state project directors, 7 project directors had new grants. Four of these directors were receiving renewal grants. The other three had new grants that were not renewals, which meant that they had not yet received their first evaluation report. This brought the population to which the survey was applicable down to 38 state project directors.

The email list for the population of interest was maintained by NCCEP and was not available for use by non-NCCEP affiliated individuals. Therefore, contact with potential participants was subject to the availability[1] of NCCEP officials for reviewing and sending out communications regarding this study. Due to the fact that the first survey email invitation was sent to participants five days prior to the conference, it is likely that many of the project directors were busy preparing to leave for the conference (only one project director responded to this email before the conference, two afterwards). Concerning the data collection that occurred at the capacity building workshop in New Orleans, NCCEP did not have a state project director meeting scheduled, so the only way to contact the state project directors was to ask if there were any state project directors present at the workshops who could complete the survey (only 28 attended the workshops, 4 of which returned surveys). Seven project directors responded to the first email request for their participation in the online version of the survey (five responded within a day of the email being sent). A week later the researcher contacted NCCEP to send out an online survey reminder email and was informed that the project directors were already receiving many emails from NCCEP, so they may not be able to send out a reminder email. At

[1] Due to the fact that the individual from NCCEP who initially agreed to sponsor this study took a job with another organization, assistance with my study required the time of various NCCEP officials who were already very busy preparing for the annual capacity building workshop and other organizational activities.

that point only 14 surveys had been returned. NCCEP officials assisted the researcher in soliciting participation from the project directors by making individual phone calls to the project directors who still had not completed the survey. As a result of the phone calls made by NCCEP, an additional 2 project directors completed the survey. The amount of time it took to collect surveys from the 17 project directors who responded may be partially explained by the fact that there were no incentives for their participation. After 10 weeks and the implementation of four different survey data collection methods, only 17 of the 38 state project directors' surveys were received. The response rate (44.7%) may have an impact on the generalizability of the results. For example, there may be a difference between non-responders and responders. If there is a difference between responders and non-responders, then the results of this study are limited in their generalizability.

Survey Instrument

For this study, data was collected from the state GEAR UP project directors solely through the use of a survey instrument. By only using a survey, participants' responses to questions were limited. Adding interviews and focus groups to the study would have allowed for a wider range of responses regarding their evaluation use and factors that impact their decision to use their evaluations' results in addition to those listed on the questionnaire. These data collection methods were attempted; however, none of the project directors chose to participate. Another limitation of this study was that there were not any previously reliable and valid survey instruments available in the literature. While all components of the survey instrument used in this study proved reliable, further testing is needed. Also, project directors may not have been aware

that their program's evaluations were being used. Therefore, they may not have been able to report on use that did occur.

Conclusions

This study is important because it has provided theory-supported evidence that use of evaluation results has an impact on state GEAR UP grant programs. It has also provided information which may be useful to the USDOE for determining whether or not GEAR UP evaluation activities that go beyond collecting basic performance data represent a waste of funds or contribute to the achievement of the mission of the GEAR UP program. Based on the data analysis conducted for this study, the following 11 major conclusions can be made.

1. Project directors of current state GEAR UP grants are using their evaluations primarily for decision-making and educational purposes and to a lesser extent for persuasive and process use-related purposes.
2. Current state GEAR UP grants project directors' use of their programs' evaluations is having the most impact on them, but their use also has an impact on their co-workers and their grant organizations.
3. Current state GEAR UP grant project directors' use of their programs' evaluations is impacted primarily by implementation factors, but also to a lesser degree decision and policy setting factors.
4. State GEAR UP project directors would like for NCCEP to providing training (i.e., evaluator led-workshops, workshops that define terms, training on non-evaluator uses of evaluation) in order to promote their understanding of the evaluation.

5. State GEAR UP project directors would like for NCCEP to: a) provide training or workshops on evaluation, how to use evaluations, and completing the APR; and b) provide case studies of successful GEAR UP evaluations in order to promote their ability to use evaluation results to improve the effectiveness of their program.
6. Most former NCCEP staff members had high expectations for evaluation use among state GEAR UP directors.
7. All of the former NCCEP staff interviewed were able to provide one or more examples that suggest the findings from state GEAR UP evaluations are being used.
8. Two of the four former NCCEP staff members interviewed felt that the *evaluators* of state GEAR UP grants have been trained to promote use, whereas the other two could not point to any specific training on use.
9. All of the former NCCEP staff members interviewed said that they thought *project directors* had been encouraged and trained to promote use.
10. The main barriers to evaluation use among state GEAR UP project directors that former NCCEP staff members provided were: the format of the APR, lack of familiarity with using results, and the time required to complete the APR.
11. The main suggestions for promoting evaluation use among state GEAR UP project directors that former NCCEP staff members provided were to redesign the APR and to provide training on how to use evaluation results.

Implications

It is evident that project directors are using their programs' evaluations to improve their programs in a number of different ways (i.e., for decision making, for educational purposes, for

persuasive purposes, and in process-related ways). This finding suggests that evaluation activities that go beyond collecting basic performance data do not represent a waste of funds. Instead, they contribute to the achievement of the mission of the GEAR UP program. The results of this study can be used by NCCEP and the U.S. Department of Education to facilitate evaluation use among state GEAR UP project directors. As the project directors and former NCCEP staff members have reported, additional training and workshops on evaluation use would help increase their use of their programs' evaluations.

The findings from this study may also be useful for evaluators of GEAR UP grants who are seeking to ensure that their evaluations are being used. The relevance of the evaluation to the needs of the project directors' programs (highest rated implementation factor) and project directors' commitment and/or receptiveness to evaluation (highest rated decision and policy setting factor) must be taken into consideration as they have the most impact on project directors' decisions to use their programs' evaluations. Frequent communication between the evaluators and project directors may be necessary to ensure that the most relevant data are being collected. The quality of this communication is likely to be impacted by project directors' commitment and/or receptiveness to evaluation, so it is important for NCCEP and the U.S. Department of Education to emphasize the importance of getting project directors to understand the benefits of evaluation use and to commit to using their evaluations to improve their programs.

Recommendations

This year the GEAR UP program offered one of their five workshops at their annual capacity-building workshop that focused on program sustainability. Evaluation use was emphasized during this workshop; however, it was only done so in a manner that suggests it

should be done rather than explaining how it can be done. It is important for NCCEP and/or the U.S. Department of Education to facilitate the development and incorporation of pre-conference and conference workshops that focus on evaluation use. It is recommended that these workshops emphasize the importance of working with the evaluator from the beginning of the grant to design an evaluation that facilitates evaluation use throughout the course of the six-year grants and also plans for use of evaluation results for program sustainability at the end of the grant period. It is suggested that these workshops are offered at the annual meeting as well as at the capacity-building workshop. It is recommended they be taught by experienced evaluators who are intimately familiar with the GEAR UP grant program and the challenges that the project directors commonly experience when trying to use their programs' evaluations. This may necessitate the collection of data on these challenges prior to workshop development. Depending on how much evaluation use differs between state and partnership directors, separate workshops and training sessions may be more helpful. Another possibility would be to identify project directors who are successfully using their programs' evaluations to increase program success and sustainability and have them present at the capacity-building workshop conference break-out sessions. This approach may supplement the evaluator-led workshops in a way that would allow project directors to connect with each other to generate ideas for evaluation use together. It is also recommended that the training be mandatory for all project directors and evaluators.

The current format of the Annual Performance Report requires minimal information on program evaluation and no data on the use of program evaluation. It would be helpful to modify this form to include more detailed program-related data similar to what an evaluator would collect (i.e., beyond the information that is required for reporting to Congress). This would

promote the evaluation of the programs and their use. By organizing the APR in this manner, program directors will be better equipped to improve their programs and their sustainability. For those programs that have not allocated adequate funds for evaluation in their grant, the evaluator often ends up completing the APR, which leaves them with little time to engage in additional evaluation activities. By providing project directors and their staff with training on completing the APR, perhaps the funds they have allotted for their programs' evaluations can be put to better use.

Currently NCCEP and the U.S. Department of Education do not provide grantees with guidance at the grant application stage as to what percentage of their budget they should allot for program evaluation. It is recommended that this guidance is given as this study has provided evidence that grantees are not allotting equal amounts toward evaluation. Therefore, the grants that did not allot much money do not have as much staff time to dedicate toward promoting the use of evaluation findings. Because using evaluation findings is in the best interest of NCCEP and the Department of Education, these organizations should consider offering incentives for evaluation use among their grantees.

Finally, NCCEP currently does not have any staff members who are responsible for overseeing the evaluation of the state GEAR UP grants. A national evaluation of the GEAR UP grant program is being conducted; however, that evaluation does not focus on individual grants' use of their evaluations. Instead, the report (U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary, Policy and Program Studies Service, 2002) focus on the following:

> The report describes the program, as implemented, and sets the stage for later examination of GEAR UP's impact on high school performance and college participation. The report suggests hypotheses and issues about GEAR UP practices and student outcomes that can be pursued in the

> longitudinal study described below. We also identify implementation issues that have arisen as the program has developed that may warrant attention from program officials. (p. 2)

By dedicating one or more staff members' time to monitoring evaluation use among state project directors, evaluation use may become more salient to the directors. This may lead to greater evaluation use and, in turn, greater program success and sustainability.

Future Research

Future researchers should explore evaluation use among project directors of GEAR UP partnership grants in an effort to learn how they may differ from the state project directors. This information could be helpful when designing evaluation-related workshops attended by both types of grantees. By increasing the number of participants it would be possible to determine which of the impacting factors of evaluation use represent the most important predictors. Again, this information would be useful for designing workshops as well as for educating program evaluators.

By conducting focus groups with the project directors, richer information could be collected in an effort to better understand the context in which evaluation use decisions are made. This could provide a clearer picture of the barriers to evaluation use that they are experiencing and how they have been addressing them (or not addressing them). In the future it would be interesting to: a) compare state and partnership evaluation use; b) track pathways to influence; and c) collect data on program success, sustainability, and evaluation use.

By tracking state and partnership grant project directors' pathways to evaluation influence, researchers can generate hypotheses about evaluation outcomes. Grant programs can use this information to begin the process of planning an evaluation that incorporates these findings in a way that would lead to the most influence. Sharing these pathways to influence with

the evaluation community would provide case studies that could guide future studies focused on tracking pathways to influence as well as for developing new models of evaluation influence.

Finally, additional studies are necessary for the validation of the survey instrument used in this study. Future research on evaluation use and influence with non-GEAR UP projects would also be useful for determining if the measure used in this study can be generalized to other populations (e.g., project directors of other grants, community health programs, etc.). Using the survey instrument from this study with non-GEAR UP populations may similarly provide program stakeholders with information needed to help them achieve their programs' goals.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A. Paper-and-Pencil and Electronic Survey Email Invitation

Subject: GEAR UP EVALUATION USE SURVEY

Dear GEAR UP Project Directors:

My name is Erin Burr and I am a research assistant at the Institute of Assessment and Evaluation (IAE). Located within the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences at the University of Tennessee's Knoxville campus, the IAE group is dedicated to the development and implementation of effective strategies and technologies for assessing and evaluating educational organizations, instruction, and programs. I am working with my advisor, Dr. Jennifer Morrow to learn about grantee's use of evaluation findings.

I will also be collecting survey data for this study. I have developed a series of questions related to evaluation use and potential barriers to evaluation use. Surveys will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. You may discontinue your participation at any time, without any penalty. I have attached an electronic copy of the survey questionnaire and survey information sheet, for you to either complete and return through email to (eburr@utk.edu) or turn in as a hard copy at the conference information booth (survey collection box/envelope). I will also be distributing survey questionnaires at the information booth on Sunday, February 8th from 2:00-5:00 p.m., on Monday, February 9th from 3:45-5:00 p.m., and on Tuesday, February 10th to those who choose to participate in the focus groups (times and locations for focus groups are listed above). All surveys are confidential and all data will be reported in group, not individual, formats. Survey packets will include a study information sheet and a paper-and-pencil copy of the survey instrument. Surveys completed at the conference may also be returned at the collection box/envelope located at the conference information booth.

This project has been approved by University of Tennessee's Institutional Review Board.

For more information please contact the principal investigator.

Erin Burr, M.S.
Graduate Evaluation Assistant
University of Tennessee Institute of Assessment and Evaluation
(757) 567-9058
eburr@utk.edu

Appendix B. Web-Based Survey Email Invitation

Dear GEAR UP Project Directors:

My name is Erin Burr and I am a research assistant at the Institute of Assessment and Evaluation (IAE). Located within the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences at the University of Tennessee's Knoxville campus, the IAE group is dedicated to the development and implementation of effective strategies and technologies for assessing and evaluating educational organizations, instruction, and programs. I am working with my advisor, Dr. Jennifer Morrow to learn about grantee's use of evaluation findings.

I am collecting survey data for this study. I have developed a series of questions related to evaluation use and potential barriers to evaluation use. Surveys will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. You may discontinue your participation at any time, without any penalty. All surveys are confidential and all data will be reported in group, not individual, formats.

Please click on the link below to complete the survey:

https://periwinkle.ts.odu.edu/cgi-bin/qwebcorporate.dll?idx=VEA5G7

This project has been approved by University of Tennessee's Institutional Review Board.

For more information please contact the principal investigator.

Erin Burr, M.S.
Graduate Evaluation Assistant
University of Tennessee Institute of Assessment and Evaluation
(757) 567-9058
eburr@utk.edu

Appendix C. Paper-and–Pencil Survey Information Sheet

STATE GEAR UP GRANT PRINCIPAL INFORMATION SHEET

You have been invited to participate in a research study through The University of Tennessee Institute of Assessment and Evaluation. This research is being conducted in partial fulfillment for a doctoral dissertation. The purpose of this study is to learn about state GEAR UP grant project directors' use of their program's evaluation results and factors that may have an impact on the use of evaluation results.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

You are invited to participate if you are a project director of a state GEAR UP grant. As a participant in this study, you will be asked to complete questions regarding the evaluation of your state GEAR UP grant program. The survey questionnaire will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information in the study records will be kept completely confidential. The completed questionnaires will be kept in a locked research lab at the University of Tennessee Institute of Assessment and Evaluation, and only the researcher and her doctoral chair will have access to the questionnaires. Only the researcher will be able to link participants' names to their completed questionnaires. Information used to link participant names and surveys will be removed from the survey after it is received. Information gathered through the questionnaires will be reported in group not individual format.

RISKS

There are no known risks to you as a subject of this study. Upon completing the questionnaire, if you have additional questions regarding this survey please contact the researcher, Erin Burr.

BENEFITS

There are no monetary benefits to you as an individual for participating in this study. However, the information obtained from this study will be used to help improve the GEAR UP grant program. Benefits of participation may include increased awareness about your use of and opinions about your program's evaluation.

CONTACT INFORMATION

This study is being conducted by Mrs. Erin Burr from the Institute of Evaluation and Assessment at the University of Tennessee under the supervision of her advisor, Dr. Jennifer Morrow.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher, Erin Burr, at eburr@utk.edu and 757-567-9058. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the University of Tennessee Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to discontinue participation at any time. Refusal to participate will not involve any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

CONSENT

The return of your completed questionnaire constitutes your consent to participate.

Appendix D. Web-Based Survey Information Sheet

STATE GEAR UP GRANT PROJECT DIRECTOR SURVEY INFORMATION SHEET

You have been invited to participate in a research study through The University of Tennessee Institute of Assessment and Evaluation. This research is being conducted in partial fulfillment for a doctoral dissertation. The purpose of this study is to learn about state GEAR UP grant project directors' use of their program's evaluation results and factors that may have an impact on the use of evaluation results.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

You are invited to participate if you are a project director of a state GEAR UP grant. As a participant in this study, you will be asked to complete questions regarding the evaluation of your state GEAR UP grant program. The survey questionnaire will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information in the study records will be kept completely confidential. The survey data will be kept in a locked research lab at the University of Tennessee Institute of Assessment and Evaluation, and only the researcher and her doctoral chair will have access to the survey data. Only the researcher will be able to link participants' states to their completed surveys. Information used to link participant states and surveys will be removed from the dataset after it is received. Information gathered through the questionnaires will be reported in group not individual format.

RISKS

There are no known risks to you as a subject of this study. Upon completing the questionnaire, if you have additional questions regarding this survey please contact the researcher, Erin Burr.

BENEFITS

There are no monetary benefits to you as an individual for participating in this study. However, the information obtained from this study will be used to help improve the GEAR UP grant program. Benefits of participation may include increased awareness about your use of and opinions about your program's evaluation.

CONTACT INFORMATION

This study is being conducted by Mrs. Erin Burr from the Institute of Evaluation and Assessment at the University of Tennessee under the supervision of her advisor, Dr. Jennifer Morrow.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study), you may contact the researcher, Erin Burr, at eburr@utk.edu and 757-567-9058. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the University of Tennessee Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to discontinue participation at any time. Refusal to participate will not involve any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

CONSENT

The submission of your completed questionnaire constitutes your consent to participate.

Appendix E. Survey

GEAR UP Program Evaluation Survey

Directions: For the following items, please select the extent to which you feel you have engaged in each action. Please **pay special attention** to the statement before each group of items (A-D) as some groups have similar questions.

A. Based on the information I have learned as a result of the evaluation of my grant I have:

	To no extent	**To some extent**	**To a moderate extent**	**To a great extent**	**To a very great extent**
1. Made a funding decision(s).					
2. Made a judgment about the significance of program issues.					
3. Made a decision about the staffing of my program.					
4. Re-evaluated the importance particular grant activities.					
5. Made a decision(s) associated with program management.					
6. Changed one or more of my program's priorities.					
7. I have changed some of my other grant-related behaviors.					
8. If you said yes to question #7, what other type of behavior did you change?					

<u>Directions</u>: For the following items, please select the extent to which you feel you have engaged in each action. Please **pay special attention** to the statement before each group of items (B-D) as some groups have similar questions

B. I have read/reviewed the evaluation report for my GEAR UP grant to help me:

	To no extent	**To some extent**	**To a moderate extent**	**To a great extent**	**To a very great extent**
1. Inform my opinion about the current activities of my program.					
2. Inform my opinion about the ideal activities of my program.					
3. Learn about the strengths of my program.					
4. Learn about the weaknesses of my program.					
5. Learn other new things about my program (i.e., related to its participants, operations, or outcomes).					
6. Become more aware of elements related to my program (e.g., one type of outcome rather than others – student attitudes about college visits rather than number of students who participated in a college visit)					
7. Educate my program staff.					
8. I have used the results of my program's evaluation for some other education-related purposes.					
9. If you said yes to question #8, for what other educational purpose did you use them?					

<u>Directions</u>: For the following items, please select the extent to which you feel you have engaged in each action. Please **pay special attention** to the statement before each group of items as some groups have similar questions.

C. I have used the results of my program's evaluation to:

	To no extent	**To some extent**	**To a moderate extent**	**To a great extent**	**To a very great extent**
1. Raise the importance in people's minds of the impact of my program on educational reform					
2. Convince others to support a policy position					
3. Justify the opinion I had about my program before the evaluation was conducted					
4. Cause others to become involved					
5. Improve the culture within my organization/grant program					
6. Change the prevailing opinion in my organization/grant program					
7. Match my opinions to promote the agenda with those of the media, politics, or government					
8. I have used the results of my program's evaluation for some other persuasive purpose.					
9. If you said yes to question #8, for what other persuasive purpose did you use them?					

Directions: For the following items, please select the extent to which you feel you have engaged in each action. Please **pay special attention** to the statement before each group of items as some groups have similar questions.

D. As a result of my involvement in the evaluation of my program, I have:

	To no extent	**To some extent**	**To a moderate extent**	**To a great extent**	**To a very great extent**
1. Changed my attitudes/opinion about my program.					
2. Changed one or more of my behaviors associated with my program (e.g., increased my engagement in my program, developed a professional network, requested additional evaluation results and reports).					
3. Increased the amount of time I devote to reviewing programmatic issues.					
4. Become more aware of elements related to my program (e.g., participant reactions)					
5. Gained one or more new skills (e.g., survey design, survey administration, data analysis, research design, ability to work collaboratively, etc.)					
6. Changed the way I think about my program in an effort to keep informed for policy-related discussions.					
Changed the way I behave in relation to my program in an effort to keep informed for policy-related discussions.					

<u>Directions</u>: For the following items, please select the extent to which you feel you have engaged in each action. Please **pay special attention** to the statement before each group of items as some groups have similar questions.

D. (continued) As a result of my involvement in the evaluation of my program, I have:

	To no extent	**To some extent**	**To a moderate extent**	**To a great extent**	**To a very great extent**
7. My involvement in my program's evaluation has changed me in some other way(s).					
8. If you said yes to question #8, what other way did you change as a result of your involvement in your program's evaluation?					

Directions: For the following items, please select the extent to which you feel each item influenced your decision to use the results of your program's evaluation.

	To no extent	**To some extent**	**To a moderate extent**	**To a great extent**	**To a very great extent**
1. The quality of the evaluation report influenced my decision to use the evaluation results.					
2. The credibility of the evaluator influenced my decision to use the evaluation results.					
3. The relevance of the evaluation to the needs of my program influenced my decision to use the results.					
4. The evaluator's ability to communicate with me throughout the process of the evaluation of my program influenced my decision to use the evaluation results.					
5. The findings presented in the evaluation report influenced my decision to use the evaluation report.					
6. The timeliness of the evaluation findings becoming available influenced my decision to use the evaluation results.					

Directions: For the following items, please select the extent to which you feel each item influenced your decision to use the results of your program's evaluation.

	To no extent	**To some extent**	**To a moderate extent**	**To a great extent**	**To a very great extent**
1. The type of information (e.g., large-scale study data, case study data, and anecdotal accounts) provided as a result of the evaluation of my program influenced my decision to use the results.					
2. The significance of the decision that I needed to make concerning my program influenced my decision to use the results of the evaluation.					
3. The current political climate in the schools that my grant serves influenced my decision to use the results of the evaluation.					
4. My dependence on the Department of Education for funding influenced my decision to use the results of the evaluation.					
5. Information provided through sources outside of the grant (i.e., personal observations, staff, peers, etc.) influenced my decision to use the evaluation results.					
6. My personal characteristics (e.g., grant-management experience, my information processing style, etc.) influenced my decision to use the results of the evaluation.					
7. My personal commitment toward the evaluation influenced my decision to use the results of the evaluation.					

Demographic Items

1. Is this your first GEAR UP grant?
    a. Yes
    b. No

2. If no, how many _____?

3. Which year of your GEAR UP grant are you in? _____

4. If you are in the first year of your grant, have you already received your first evaluation report?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I do not know

5. Are you the original project director on your GEAR UP grant?
    a. Yes
    b. No

6. Have you ever been a project director of a project/grant (other than this GEAR UP grant) which was formally evaluated?
    a. Yes
    b. No

7. If yes, did you use the results of that evaluation in any of the following ways? Check all that apply.
    a. To make a program-related decision
    b. For educational purposes
    c. For persuasive purposes

8. Have you shared the results of your program with others outside of your program (e.g., with local government officials, with the public, etc.)?
    a. Yes
    b. No

9. If yes, has doing so led to others changing their policies, programs, and/or practice?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Not sure

10. How familiar are you with the results contained in your evaluation report?
    a. Not at all familiar
    b. Somewhat familiar
    c. Familiar
    d. Very Familiar
11. To what extent have you been involved in your program's evaluation?
    a. To little or no extent
    b. To some extent
    c. To a moderate extent
    d. To a great extent
    e. To a very great extent

12. Please describe the role you have in the evaluation process?

13. Do you find evaluation to be worth the effort?
    a. Yes
    b. No

14. How would you describe the relationship you have with the evaluation team?
    a. No contact at all
    b. Very little contact
    c. Some contact
    d. A great deal of contact

15. How knowledgeable do you feel you are about evaluation?
    a. Not at all knowledgeable
    b. A little bit knowledgeable
    c. Somewhat knowledgeable
    d. Very knowledgeable

16. To what extent do you think NCCEP supports the evaluation of GEAR UP programs?
    a. To little or no extent
    b. To some extent
    c. To a moderate extent
    d. To a great extent
    e. To a very great extent

17. Approximately what percent of your project budget focuses on supporting evaluation?
    a. 5% or less
    b. 6-10%
    c. 11-15%
    d. 16-20%
    e. 20% or more
    f. I do not know

18. What could NCCEP do to promote your understanding of the evaluation process?

19. What could NCCEP do to promote your ability to use evaluation results to improve the effectiveness of your program?

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!

Please place your completed survey in the collection box located at the conference information booth

Appendix F. NCCEP Staff Telephone Interview Informed Consent

You have been invited to participate in a research study through The University of Tennessee Institute of Assessment and Evaluation. This research is being conducted in partial fulfillment for a doctoral dissertation. The purpose of this study is to learn about state GEAR UP grant project directors' use of their program's evaluation results and the impact of those results on others as well as to learn about NCCEP staff members' views toward evaluation use.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

You will be asked to participate in a telephone interview regarding members' expectations for evaluation use and evaluation use support systems. I would like to hear your honest and candid opinions about the use of your expectations for evaluation use among state GEAR UP grant project directors and support systems for their evaluation use. The interview should take a maximum of 20 minutes.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The interview that you participate in will not be recorded and your name will not be linked to your comments. Notes from the interview will be maintained in a secure and locked location in a research lab in the University of Tennessee. Access to the interview notes will be restricted to the research team. At no time will your name be linked to the interview notes.

RISKS

You may be uncomfortable sharing information on your perspective on evaluation use among state GEAR UP grant project director's and the support systems for their evaluation use.

BENEFITS

Benefits of participation may include increased awareness about your expectations for grantees' use of their evaluation and the support systems for their evaluation use.

CONTACT INFORMATION

This study is being conducted by Mrs. Erin Burr from the Institute of Evaluation and Assessment at the University of Tennessee under the supervision of her advisor, Dr. Jennifer Morrow.

_____ Participant's initials

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher, Erin Burr, at eburr@utk.edu and 757-567-9058. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the University of Tennessee Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to discontinue participation at any time. Refusal to participate will not involve any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your signature indicates that you read, understood, and had the opportunity to discuss the information provided above, and that you now agree to participate.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

Appendix G. NCCEP Staff Telephone Interview Protocol

Protocol for NCCEP Staff Interview

Subjects: NCCEP Current and Former Staff

Introduction and Informed Consent:

My name is Erin Burr and I am a doctoral student at the University of Tennessee working on my dissertation under the supervision of my advisor Dr. Jennifer Ann Morrow. I would like to thank you for granting me this interview. Let me tell you a little about this study and your rights as a study participant.

The purpose of my study is to learn about state GEAR UP grant project directors' use of their program's evaluation results and the impact of those results on others. In order to gain a better understanding of project directors' use of their evaluations' results, I would like to learn about NCCEP staff members' expectations for evaluation use and evaluation use support systems.

This interview is voluntary. If you do not feel comfortable participating in the interview or if at any time during the interview you feel uncomfortable and wish to end your participation, please feel free to do so. If at a later date, you wish to modify your comments or change your participation status please contact me.

Today, we are going to be talking about GEAR UP evaluation use among state project directors. I would like to hear your honest and candid opinions about your expectations for evaluation use and evaluation use support systems. I'm going to guide the conversation with some questions. I expect that the interview will take approximately 15-20 minutes. Please feel free talk openly and, at any time, let me know if I do or say anything that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Questions

7. What are your expectations for evaluation use among state GEAR UP project directors?

8. Do you know any examples (from when you were with the agency) that suggest the findings from state GEAR UP evaluations were being used?

9. Have evaluators of state GEAR UP grants been trained to promote use?

10. Have project directors been encouraged and trained to promote use?

11. What do you think are the barriers to evaluation use among state GEAR UP project directors?

12. What do you think could be done to promote evaluation use among state GEAR UP project directors?

VITA

Erin Burr was born in Portsmouth, VA and grew up in Surry, VA. In 2000, she was accepted at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA where she obtained both her Bachelors of Science Degree in Psychology (2004) and her Masters of Science Degree in Psychology (2006). Upon graduation, Erin was accepted into the Doctoral program in Applied Experimental Psychology at Old Dominion University. During her graduate work at Old Dominion University, she had the opportunity gain teaching experience, to become involved in numerous educational program evaluations, and to lead an evaluation lab consisting of 17 undergraduate and graduate research assistants. After completing her first year of this program she followed her advisor to the University of Tennessee to complete a Ph.D. program in Evaluation and Assessment. While in her doctoral program, Erin continued to gain experience conducting evaluations in her position as a graduate evaluation assistant at the Institute of Assessment and Evaluation. Through this program Erin had the opportunity to focus her research area of interest on clients' use of evaluations and evaluation influence. Erin's specific areas of interest are evaluation of educational programs in K-12 and higher education. Erin received her doctorate degree in August, 2009.