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Framing the Capacity to Do and Use Evaluation

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Abstract

The construct of organizational evaluation capacity is a concept that is receiving increasing attention in theoretical and research-based literature. It is situated within a stream of inquiry that has come to be known as evaluation capacity building (ECB). This chapter reviews evolving conceptions of ECB and recent research and theory in the area. A conceptualization of organizational capacity for evaluation is explicated. The framework addresses not only the capacity to do but also the capacity to use evaluation. This framework has evolved within our ongoing research program and has also informed other research activities focusing on the integration of evaluation into organizational culture. This chapter concludes with a discussion of implications for ongoing research and practice. © Wiley Periodicals, Inc., and the American Evaluation Association.

Evolving Conceptions of Evaluation Capacity Building

Evaluation capacity building (ECB) has increasingly captured the interest of evaluation theorists, researchers, and practitioners alike since the turn of the millennium. Milstein and Cotton (2000, October) provided a thoughtful framework for consideration by way of framing the theme of *Evaluation*

Note: Parts of this chapter were adapted from a paper presented at the AEA annual meeting in Baltimore in 2007.

2000, the annual meeting of the American Evaluation Association. They differentiated ECB from other kinds of capacity building, such as the ability of individuals, organizations, or communities to achieve broad social or organizational goals. They defined evaluation capacity as "the ability to conduct an effective evaluation (i.e., one that meets accepted standards of the discipline)."

Enhancing in individuals and organizations the *capacity to do* evaluation is an undeniably important concern for evaluation as a professional field. As Milstein and Cotton suggested, there exist at least two important and related streams of inquiry and professional work in evaluation that are very much aligned with this concern: the development and verification of evaluator competencies for professional practice and the design and delivery of pre-service and in-service training in evaluation.

We are aware of two recent research projects identifying through systematic inquiry a set of core competencies for evaluators. The first has emerged from a group of American researchers led by King and Stevahn (King, Stevahn, Ghere, & Minnema, 2001; Stevahn, King, Ghere, & Minnema, 2005a, 2005b) and has resulted in an empirically validated set of "Essential Competencies for Program Evaluators" (ECPE). The competencies are organized under six categories or themes: (a) professional practice, (b) systematic inquiry, (c) situational analysis, (d) project management, (e) reflective practice, and (f) interpersonal competence. Another set of competencies was derived from an independent study commissioned by the Canadian Evaluation Society in support of its evaluation advocacy agenda. Known as the Core Body of Knowledge (CBK) project and undertaken by a group of researchers led by Zorzi (Zorzi, Perrin, McGuire, Long, & Lee, 2002), the project produced a list of 23 general knowledge and skill elements of program evaluation. Each element was categorized into one of the following clusters: ethics; evaluation planning and design; data collection, data analysis, and interpretation; communication and interpersonal skills; and project management.

A second stream of professional activity continues to develop within the global evaluation community, that is, the design and delivery of training opportunities for those aspiring to work in the field (pre-service) and those already engaged in evaluation practice (in-service). Despite some recent evidence to show that evaluation university-level training programs may be on the decline in the United States (Engle & Altschuld, 2003; Engle, Altschuld, & Kim, 2006), in many jurisdictions including North America, Europe, and Australasia, evaluation is taught at the level of (mostly) graduate courses available at universities with potential for specialization in evaluation under related degree designations (e.g., public administration, community psychology, health sciences, and educational administration). In addition, university-based graduate diploma programs (typically one-half master's degree) provide an attractive alternative for many persons seeking advanced training. Such diploma programs are increasingly available in many

jurisdictions (Cousins & Aubry, 2006). In Canada, the Consortium of Universities for Evaluation Education (CUEE, www.evaluationeducation.ca) was recently formed; many member universities offer such diplomas.

In addition to formal, university-level, achievement-oriented training and educational opportunities, globally, professional societies and service providers continue to provide pre- and in-service training at workshops, training institutes, short courses, online programs, and the like (e.g., AEA Summer Institute, CES Essential Skills Series, International Development Evaluation Training Program [IPDET], Evaluator's Institute [TEI]). Many of these are supported by a rapidly expanding bank of resource material developed specifically for ECB training (e.g., CES Sourcebook for evaluation methods; Preskill & Russ-Eft's [2005] resource book of ECB activities; UNICEF and IOCE's web-based MY M&E web-based platform[1]).

An important consideration when thinking about ECB is a distinction that we have used previously (Cousins, Goh, Clark, & Lee, 2004; Cousins et al., 2008) between direct and indirect approaches. The aforementioned menu of ECB options, which are by no means exhaustive, fall into the direct category. These are intentional capacity building initiatives that are designed specifically to foster growth in evaluation knowledge and skill (e.g., see the ECB immersion project described in Lawrenz, Thomas, Huffman, and Covington Clarkson [2008]). Indirect ECB experiences arise in activities where participants learn by doing. Examples would be practicum opportunities where participants assume responsibility for direct engagement with technical activities in the systematic inquiry process. Interestingly, whereas direct ECB approaches are exclusively intentional this is not necessarily the case with indirect ECB. Baizerman, Compton, and Stockdill (2002) argued that ECB is always intentional and does not come about in a haphazard random way. Yet there is growing evidence from research on participatory evaluation (Cousins & Chouinard, 2012), for example, that learning benefits accrue to members of the program stakeholder community by virtue of participation in evaluation activities, otherwise known as process use.

While concern with the capacity to do evaluation is alive and well, inquiry into ECB has taken a wider perspective over the past number of years. This view encompasses not only the capacity to do evaluation but also the *capacity to use* it. While this was not necessarily the case with Sanders' (2003) definition of "mainstreaming" evaluation: "the process of making evaluation an integral part of an organization's everyday operation" (p. 3), in an earlier volume of *New Directions for Evaluation*, Compton, Baizerman, and Stockdill (2002) frame ECB not only in terms of the ability to do quality evaluation but also to use it within the organizational context. Specifically, they define the term as

> A context-dependent intentional action system of guided processes and prac-
> tices for bringing about and sustaining a state of affairs in which quality

program evaluation and its *appropriate uses* are ordinary and ongoing practices within and/or between one or more organizations/programs/sites. (Stockdill, Baizerman, & Compton, 2002, p. 8, emphasis added)

Similar postures were taken by Labin, Duffy, Meyers, Wandersman, and Lesesne (2012) and Preskill and Boyle (2008), both of whom sought to develop models of ECB.

In their conversation with the literature, Stockdill et al. (2002) identified as a lesson that effective ECB requires broad-based demand. The organizational demand for ECB, of course, is inextricably linked to the demand for evaluation, and its sustainability depends on the extent to which evaluation is used within the organization. As we put it some time ago, "The integration of evaluation into the culture of organizations ... has as much to do with the consequences of evaluation as it does the development of skills and knowledge of evaluation logic and methods" (Cousins et al., 2004, p. 101).

Use and Organizational Evaluation Capacity

Thinking about ECB not just as directed activities to foster high-quality professional practice but also in terms of program, organizational, and even societal consequences inherently makes sense to us. Yet, despite inclusion of use in definitions of ECB and recognition of the importance of use to the development of ECB demand (Stockdill et al., 2002), it is our opinion that evaluation use has been underexplored and underemphasized in theory, research, and practice concerning organizational evaluation capacity. Most work in the area focuses on evaluation's supply side (capacity to do evaluation), and little attention has been paid to its demand side (capacity to use evaluation). For example, the multidisciplinary model of ECB developed by Preskill and Boyle (2008) identifies two principal spheres of interest (evaluation knowledge, skill, and attitudes, and sustainable evaluation practice) with some consideration given to the organizational context in which ECB occurs (e.g., leadership, culture, and communication). The integrated model of ECB developed by Labin et al. (2012) explicitly identifies ECB outcomes and the individual (attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors) and organizational (leadership, practice, and resources) levels. Yet, although this is not exclusively the case, these practices and behaviors can be construed as organizational capacity to do evaluation, as opposed to use it. We argue that evaluation use is an essential element of any conception of evaluation capacity and needs to be addressed as such. We now turn to some justification for this claim.

Utilization and Evaluation Theory

In thinking about research on evaluation, evaluation utilization or use is probably the most heavily studied domain of interest in the field (Henry

& Mark, 2003). Much of this research focused on the identification of instrumental, conceptual, and symbolic (persuasive and legitimatize) uses of evaluation findings and the factors and conditions that foster such use. Recent advances in research and theory about evaluation consequences, such as the burgeoning concept of process use (e.g., Cousins, 2007; Forss, Kruse, Taut, & Tenden, 2006; Patton, 1997, 2008) and considerations of use in the context of broader evaluation influences (e.g., Kirkhart, 2000; Mark & Henry, 2004), have significant implications for any consideration of evaluation theory and practice.

Professional Standards of Practice

The production of good quality program evaluation is central to ECB (Baizerman et al., 2002) and it is imperative that ECB initiatives are guided by professional standards of practice to which professional evaluators subscribe. Such standards openly touch on considerations of use. For example, utility has been an explicit and significant element of the Joint Committee Standards for Educational Evaluation, Program Evaluation Standards since their inception in the early 1980s and appropriate uses of evaluation are integral to the AEA guiding principles. Professional evaluator competencies also embrace the concept of utility (Stevahn et al., 2005a; Zorzi et al., 2002).

Evaluation and Organizational Learning

Conceptual and empirical links between evaluation and organizational learning have long been established (e.g., Cousins & Earl, 1995; Owen & Lambert, 1995; Preskill & Torres, 1999), and evaluation may be reasonably thought of as an organizational learning system (Cousins et al., 2004). The results of a survey of AEA members conducted by Fleischer, Christie, and LaVelle (2008) support this perspective through the establishment of a link between evaluation activities and organizational learning and change outcomes. In our opinion, this thinking is part and parcel of Patton's (2011) conception of developmental evaluation where evaluators work closely with organizational decision makers to navigate complexity and enhance innovation. Evaluation in this systemic context is inextricably linked to organizational uses of systematic inquiry and evidence.

Data Use Leads to Data Valuing

Results of our own research have tentatively shown that the successful use of evaluation data in organizations fosters their valuing by members as a powerful force for organizational and program change (Cousins, Goh, & Clark, 2005). From the perspective of integrating evaluation into organizational culture, "data use leads to data valuing" is a hypothesis worth pursuing. Demand for evaluation is not likely to grow as a result of promotional campaigns. Organizational decision makers need to

experience the benefits of evaluation firsthand before they willingly embrace it as leverage for change.

Direct Versus Indirect ECB

As mentioned above, direct ECB is always intentional but indirect ECB is not necessarily so. The central operative construct in indirect ECB is process use. Through direct experience or close proximity to evaluation, nonevaluator stakeholders learn new ways of conceptualizing; they learn to think "evaluatively," as described, for example, in the catalyst-for-change approach to ECB presented by Garcia-Iriarte, Suarez-Balcazar, Taylor-Ritzler, and Luna (2011). There is some evidence to suggest that process use and use of evaluation findings may be correlated (Amo & Cousins, 2012). Regardless, the effectiveness of indirect ECB is integrally related to use considerations, an argument consistent with Carman and Fredericks' (2010) claim that "evaluation capacity builders can help non-profit organizations to maximize the use of evaluation information and help them to better position themselves with external stakeholders" (p. 100).

If we accept as reasonable and justifiable that considerations of consequence ought to be integrated into our conception of ECB then a logical next step would be to conceptually unpack this notion into a framework of evaluation capacity that might ultimately serve evaluation theory, research, and practice. As Nacarrella et al. (2007) and Nielsen, Lemire, and Skov (2011) point out, there has been much focus on the methods and roles of ECB but not much attention to evaluation capacity itself. The development and explication of a framework for organizational evaluation capacity represents the main contribution of this chapter of the present volume. To follow, we explicate what we see as the principal constructs of interest and suggested relations among them. We then turn to some thoughts about how this representation can inform research on organizational evaluation capacity.

Framework for Organizational Evaluation Capacity

The framework presented in this chapter has evolved over a considerable period of time, perhaps commencing with our initial foray into the domain of integrating evaluation into the organizational culture (Cousins et al., 2004). We begin by reviewing some assumptions for the framework and then move to its description and intended use for research.

Assumptions

A basic assumption from which we operate is that ECB knowledge and practice, as would be the case with any evaluation-related domain of inquiry, will benefit from well-developed, credible, research-based evidence. As such we are motivated to contribute to the discourse about ECB through empirical inquiry. We are both cognizant and accepting of a

range of choices available to researchers who wish to systematically study complex phenomena in evaluation.

Our approach to empirical inquiry is one that embraces the notion of preordinate conceptual structure as a means of guiding data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Yet we are not "hard-liners" in this respect. We appreciate the essentiality of considerations of context and that it is ultimately counterproductive and limiting to rigidly adhere to a preordinate frame when thinking about and studying complex social phenomena.

For this reason, we offer the conceptual framework to follow as a tentative guide to understanding. We specify constructs and suggested relations among them not as a stab at theoretical explanation, but as a tentative set of boundaries to help focus and direct inquiry. Equally important is a commitment to open-mindedness meaning that the framework ought to be thought of as contestable and challengeable in the face of systematically generated data.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.1 presents a visual representation of our conceptual framework. The framework has evolved from a prior integration and analysis of research and collaborative exchange among members of our research group. It unpacks an expanded conception of ECB that embraces as essential the notion of evaluation consequences; the capacity to do and use evaluation. We use as a unit of analysis the organization as much of our prior work has been concerned with the challenge of integrating evaluation into the organizational culture (Cousins et al., 2004) and the conception of evaluation as an organizational learning system (Cousins & Earl, 1995; Owen & Lambert, 1995). We turn now to a description of the constructs and their interrelations.

In thinking about complex phenomena we find it useful to consider the nature of the phenomena, the consequences to which it might lead, and the antecedent conditions, factors, or forces that help to shape or otherwise influence it. Associated questions might be: What is it? What effects might it have? From where does it come? In the present case, our focus is on integrating the capacity to do and use evaluation and, as such, considerations of what evaluation capacity is and what effects it is likely to have are melded together. This is represented in the right-hand side of Figure 1.1, the unit of analysis being the organization. On the left side, we represent antecedent conditions and forces that influence or help to determine evaluation capacity within the organization.

Antecedents of ECB. We capture principal forces and influences on organizational ECB in two constructs: sources of evaluation knowledge skills and abilities (K/S/A) and organizational support structures.

Sources of K/S/A relate in a very direct way to the foregoing discussion of evaluation as a profession, particularly with regard to work on the

Figure 1.1. Conceptual Framework Depicting Organizational Capacity to Do and Use Evaluation
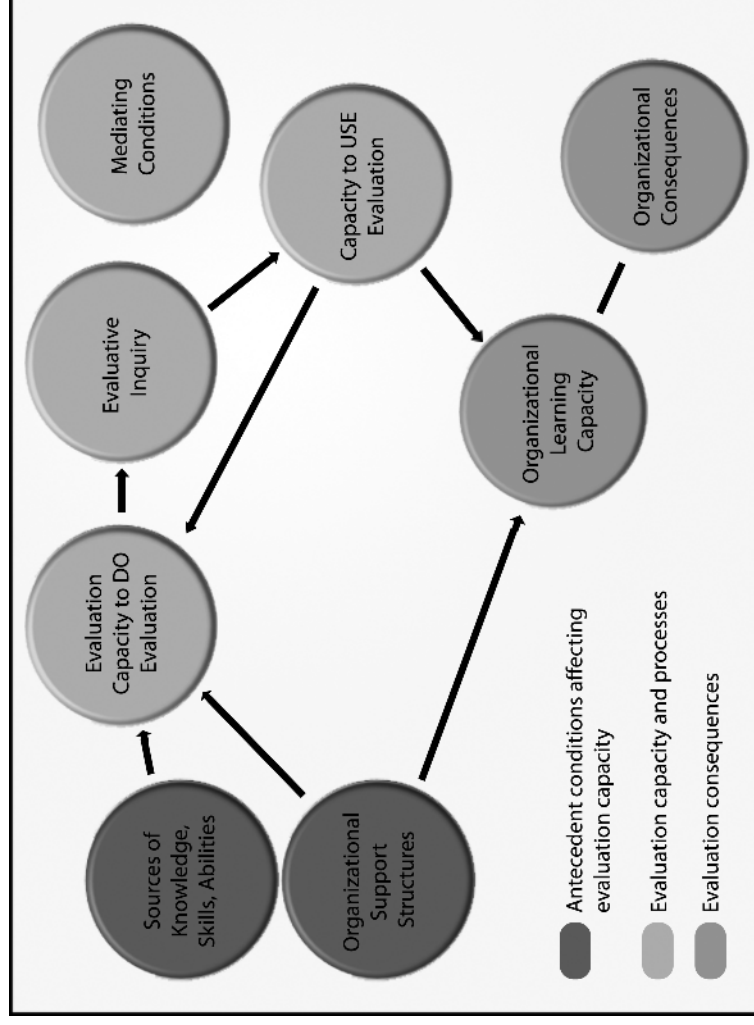
development of evaluators' competencies and most especially to pre- and in-service training. Some conception of evaluators' competencies, whether implicit and informal or explicit and formal (e.g., ECPE, CBK), underlies the provision of pre- and in-service training for evaluators. Training can take the form of formal university- or college-based coursework and even thesis work. Such opportunities are typically highly structured, coherent, multifaceted programs that are essentially achievement oriented. That is, the finishing point is contingent on successful completion of assignments, tasks, and challenges and is normally accompanied by a degree or a certificate. Other formal training opportunities may also be accompanied by a certificate of completion but might best be thought of as participation oriented. That is to say, the finishing point is contingent on successful participation in the program and associated activities without undertaking assignments that, ultimately, would be graded. Finally, training in evaluation happens in many cases informally through incidental learning or learning-by-doing. Evaluators enter the field through a wide range of career paths, many with no formal training. Learning-by-doing may arise through collaborative work on teams, mentoring arrangements, or perhaps in some instances through self-study and trial-and-error.

As shown in Figure 1.1, sources of K/S/A work to enhance the capacity to do evaluation. This would happen first, at the individual, and then at the organizational level, as the transfer of learning takes place. We would argue that for the most part sources of K/S/A would be heavily focused on evaluation methods and practice, although university-based programs might also include curriculum associated with evaluation theory, especially with regard to uses and influences. Sources of K/S/A we see as overlapping with organizational support structures, a second antecedent construct to which we now direct our attention.

Organizational support structures is an antecedent construct in our framework, originally developed by Goh and associates (Goh, 2000; Goh, Quan, & Cousins, 2007; Goh & Richards, 1997) in their work on organizational learning. Organizational structures and supports include low job formalization and the acquisition of relevant and appropriate organizational knowledge and skills by organization members. They are also represented by reward systems, in the form of formal and informal incentive mechanisms, and various communication structures within the organization, which serve to foster the horizontal and vertical flow of knowledge and information. Professional development activities, whether formal or informal, represent yet another organizational support structure. Such activities might be linked in direct ways to evaluation training, hence our representation of overlap with sources of K/S/A.

Organizational support structures are part of a conceptual framework of organizational learning capacity (Goh, 2000), a potential outcome of the capacity to do and use evaluation within the organization. We now turn to

an explication of this and other constructs associated with our evaluation capacity framework.

Organizational Capacity to Do and Use Evaluation. Represented within the upper right-hand side of Figure 1.1 are elements associated with the nature of organizational evaluation capacity and associated dimensions. Consequences of such capacity are represented in the lower part of the figure and are described below.

Capacity to do evaluation, as mentioned, arises predominantly from formal and informal training or learning opportunities. Such capacity would reflect the transfer of knowledge and skill from training to workplace applications. Application might take the form of planning and framing evaluation (including evaluation objective setting and framework development); instrument development and validation; ethical considerations; data collection; data processing, analysis, and interpretation; reporting and follow-up; and the like. The capacity to do evaluation would be represented not only by technical procedural knowledge but also by "soft skills," such as conflict resolution, interpersonal dynamics appropriate to cooperative teamwork, facilitation skills, and the like. The development of soft skills is more likely to come from practical experience in doing evaluation—learning-by-doing—as opposed to formal classroom instruction, for example. No doubt such thinking underlies the conscious choice of some university-based programs to include field experience and/or practicum components as part of their curriculum.

Evaluative inquiry is taken to imply the nature of and extent to which evaluation is actually occurring within the organization. Evaluative inquiry might take the form of internally mandated and conducted evaluation projects or those implemented by external evaluators under the oversight of suitably trained organizational personnel. They may include the development of an evaluation framework as a preliminary step, or may rely on planning and framing as part of the evaluation exercise. Depending on organizational information needs, they may be formative or summative in nature; use quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods; be completely implemented by trained evaluators; or, alternatively, be highly collaborative, even participatory. Evaluations may be comprehensive in their coverage of a program or may roll out over time in a sequenced set of projects. The number of programs evaluated per year, who is involved and in what capacity, would be good indicators of the extent to which evaluative inquiry is happening.

Evaluative inquiry may have direct and/or indirect uses and influences as represented in the framework, but such paths of influence are likely to be mediated by a host of contextual variables and conditions.

Mediating conditions will serve to temper or shape the impact of evaluation within the organization. Such conditions in our framework generally have been identified from research on evaluation use (e.g., Cousins, 2003; Shulha & Cousins, 1997) but more specifically from our own empirical

research on evaluation in government (Cousins et al., 2008). Factors and conditions supporting or intruding on organizational uses of evaluation include at least the following: timeliness, constructive nature of feedback, information needs of primary users, credibility of findings, accessibility to primary users, communicability, involvement of nonevaluator stakeholders, and relevance to decision priorities.

Capacity to use evaluation is a construct that reflects the nature of and extent to which evaluation use and influence occurs within the organization (e.g., Cousins et al., 2004; Mark & Henry, 2004; Shulha & Cousins, 1997). To what extent are key program and organizational decision makers savvy with evaluation processes and findings? Planned conscious uses of evaluation findings would include instrumental uses as decision support, whether at the level of program disposition (e.g., termination, continuance, and expansion) or program revision for improvement; conceptual or educational uses reflected by learning and discovery associated with the program itself or the effects (intended, unintended) that it is having; and symbolic or persuasive uses, such as reaffirmation of program worth, compliance with organizational or program sponsor mandates, and the like. The use of findings may be planned and/or conscious, or impact may take the form of serendipitous influence on organizational and program thinking and decision making.

Influence, and indeed use, may also arise from evaluation processes, quite apart from the nature of the findings or content messages coming from the evaluation data. Process use and influence occur through participation or involvement in evaluation, proximity to it or through relationship building between trained evaluators and nonevaluator stakeholders (Cousins, 2007; Forss, Rebien, & Carlsson, 2002; Patton, 1997, 2008). Examples would be the development of knowledge and skill in evaluation logic or the development of an inquiry-minded approach to routine organizational business and processes. Process use may be consciously planned or may arise incidentally through evaluative inquiry or exposure to it.

The capacity to use evaluation, as we suggest in Figure 1.1, will naturally have effects in and of itself within the organization. We now turn to a description of the consequences of evaluation capacity.

Consequences of Organizational Evaluation Capacity. With a focus on integrating evaluation into the organizational culture and evaluation as an organizational learning system, organizational capacity for evaluation naturally relates to organizational learning capacity. We now turn to our description of this construct and where it, in turn, may lead in terms of organizational consequences.

Organizational learning capacity (OLC) is a multifaceted construct composed of key strategic building blocks found in learning organizations. This conception was based on a synthesis and integration of the management literature (Goh, 2000). The strategic building blocks are as follows:

- *Mission and vision*. Clarity and employee support of the mission, strategy, and espoused values of the organization.
- *Leadership*. Leadership that is perceived as empowering employees, encouraging an experimenting culture, and showing strong commitment to the organization.
- *Experimentation*. A strong culture of experimentation that is rewarded and supported at all levels in the organization.
- *Transfer of knowledge*. The ability of an organization to transfer knowledge within and from outside the organization and to learn from failures.
- *Teamwork and cooperation*. An emphasis on teamwork and group problem solving as the mode of operation and for developing innovative ideas.

These building blocks are believed to be mutually supportive and interrelated factors in a learning organization although are displayed as individual dimensions. And, as we have implied, they are understood to rely on organizational structures and supports such as job formalization and the attainment of appropriate information and skills by organization members (Goh & Richards, 1997).

It would not be difficult to imagine that highly developed learning organizations would have, and may have, benefited from a well-developed capacity to use evaluation. The aforementioned building blocks of the learning organization—mission and vision, experimentation, transfer of knowledge, leadership, collaboration, and team work—depend on organizational support structures but are likely to be enhanced through systematic inquiry. Related would be the development of an inquiry habit of mind (Sutherland, 2004). That is, the more an organization experiences successful use of evaluation, the more inclined it would be to engage in such practice. This is consonant with our hypothesis that data use leads to data valuing (Cousins et al., 2005).

Naturally if we think about the learning capacity of an organization, we need to consider potential consequences for the organization. To the extent to which organizations have developed their OLC, differential consequences will be the result.

Organizational consequences of OLC would include, for example, shared mental representations or understandings of the organization and how it operates. Most theorists agree that organizational learning cannot happen in the absence of individual learning by organization members. This multidimensional construct ranges from low-level, first-order, or single-loop learning, where change is incremental, to high-level, second-order, or double-loop learning where fundamental assumptions about the organization and its operation are surfaced, questioned, and ultimately altered (Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Huber, 1991; Lant & Mezias, 1992; Lundberg, 1989).

Having described the conceptual framework to do and use evaluation, we now turn to some thoughts about its potential uses and applications.

Implications for Research and Practice

Our primary interest in developing the framework is to inform research on evaluation as suggested above. In its current form it represents a collection of constructs and tentative relationships among them that might serve to guide instrument development, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation. In essence it will serve to bound research on evaluation capacity within organizations. This is an important contribution because to date much of the conceptual work on evaluation capacity and ECB is based on thin, anecdotal evidence. Nielsen et al. (2011) suggest that much of this evidence is qualitative and does not permit generalizability. In their words: "most contributions are grounded and informed by a qualitative research design driven by case studies, only analytical generalization is possible" (p. 325). We would argue that the evidence base for ECB in general and evaluation capacity in particular is largely based on reflective case narratives, such as individual accounts of ECB efforts (such as Volkov, 2008), or the collection of "case studies" compiled by Compton et al. (2002). Such studies are unquestionably valuable and insightful but they are limited since in the absence of specification of methods, their veracity cannot be evaluated. Yet we have seen recent research on ECB that transcends the limitations of reflective case narratives. Consider, for example, the collection of empirical studies on ECB published in a special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* (Cousins, 2008). The collection included a mix of quantitative and qualitative studies, virtually all specifying the methods used for systematic inquiry. While we appreciate the argument put forward by Nielsen et al. (2011) for quantitative research, our view is that there is much to be gained from rigorous, defensible qualitative inquiry, particularly given that our conceptual understanding of organizational evaluation capacity is not very well developed.

In our current research program we have simultaneous streams of inquiry. On the one hand, we conducted a pan-Canadian survey of internal evaluators (Cousins et al., 2008) using a hybrid questionnaire that was developed on the basis of Figure 1.1. Data of this sort permit some direct tests of the validity of the framework. Specific relationships can be explored among constructs and paths of influence can be examined. The results of this exploratory analysis showed a pattern of moderately high ratings on organizational learning and support functions, the extent to which evaluation is being conducted and used, and stakeholder involvement in evaluation. Some differences across respondent roles, organization type, and evaluation knowledge were also observed in this study. Further research along these lines is currently underway.

In a related stream, the focus for the current volume, we conducted a multiple case study of eight organizations using Figure 1.1 as an overarching framework for conceptualizing the research. In this qualitative study, we are looking deeply within case organizations in government, the

voluntary sector, and educational institutions to understand the forces at play in terms of capacity to do and use evaluation. Our case organizations not only span different sectors but they also include organizations at different stages of development in terms of the capacity to do and especially to use evaluation. The results of the cross-case analyses appearing in Chapter 3 of this volume provide some keen insights into the nature, causes, and consequences of organizational evaluation capacity and will move us further toward understanding how to bring that about.

Other projects that are underway include research intended to understand in deeper ways the nature of process use, factors and conditions that foster it, and the effects that it has (Amo & Cousins, 2012). Another study is directed at the development and validation of a profile framework of organizational capacity to do and use evaluation. Bourgeois and Cousins (2008, 2013) embraced directly the notion that the capacity to use evaluation is an essential element in a broader evaluation capacity framework. They developed and validated a profile-based conceptual framework or multidimensional matrix that framed dimensions of organizational evaluation capacity in terms of levels of capacity development. The dimensions aligned with considerations of the capacity to do evaluation (human resources, organizational resources, evaluation planning, and activities) as well as the capacity to use evaluation (evaluation literacy, organizational decision making, and learning benefits). A tool that organizations can use to plot their evaluation capacity profile is the current focus for this research program (Bourgeois, Toews, Whynot, & Lamarche, 2013).

At present the framework offers only tentative advice for evaluation practice but we would expect that such considerations will be augmented through the development of research-based knowledge. Research in this vein will help us to ground ECB in organizational change theory. Potentially we will be able to offer insights as to not only what high evaluation capacity organizations look like but also how they got that way. Such understanding will move us closer to developing a theory of integration of evaluation into the organizational culture.

Of course, methodologically, many other choices and options remain, with regard to research on ECB. For example, research grounded in narrative inquiry might draw on the framework as basis for analysis and understanding organizational experiences and processes. Or, as an alternative suggestion, network analysis might be employed in a within organization investigation of flows of evaluative knowledge and processes. We are hopeful that this way of conceiving the capacity to do and use evaluation will stimulate others to take up research on evaluation or to provide a basis for interpretation and reflection. We now turn in the next chapter to an explicit application of the framework, our multiple case study of eight organizations.

Note

1. Managed by Unit Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE). Available at http://www.mymande.org/

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