EVALUATION PRACTICE IN CANADA: RESULTS OF A NATIONAL SURVEY

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Abstract: This article reports on the results of a national survey that describes the professional and practice profiles of program evaluators in Canada, their views of their working conditions, and their sense of belonging to the field of evaluation. The data were collected between May and July 2005 via a Web survey, and 1,005 respondents filled out questionnaires. Among them, 647 indicated that they were internal or external evaluation producers, the others being evaluation users, students, or researchers. The results raise several issues. First, much of the evaluation work being done in Canada appears to be driven by accountability requirements, and secondarily by an appetite for program improvement or reconsideration. Second, voluntary certification, while quite widely supported, may create or encounter significant challenges in attempting to achieve professionalization goals. Third, the survey documents the need for professional training and the low levels of satisfaction with the training received to meet the requirements of evaluation positions. Finally, based on the current configuration of the population of active evaluators, on the intent of a majority of young evaluators to leave the field in the next few years, and on the training required in evaluation, the profession is not currently in a position to sustain itself through the renewal of a stable, capable, and committed workforce. Taken together, these results suggest a need for reflection and action on the future development of the profession.

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Résumé: Cet article présente les résultats d'un sondage national qui décrit les profils professionnels des évaluateurs de programme au Canada, leurs pratiques, leurs points de vue sur leurs conditions de travail, et leur sentiment d'appartenance au champ de l'évaluation. Les données ont été recueillies entre mai et juillet 2005 par le biais d'un sondage Web; 1 005 participants ont complété le questionnaire dont 647 producteurs d'évaluation internes et externes, les autres étant des utilisateurs d'évaluation, des étudiants, et des chercheurs. Les résultats soulèvent plusieurs enjeux. Entre autres, il appert qu'une part importante du travail d'évaluation effectué au Canada est d'abord motivé par des exigences de reddition de comptes, un souci d'amélioration ou de remise en question de programmes venant en second. De plus, la certification volontaire, quoique bénéficiant d'un large appui, pourrait rencontrer des défis importants dans la poursuite d'objectifs de professionalisation. Troisièmement, le sondage documente le besoin en formation professionnelle et l'insatisfaction face à la formation reçue pour rencontrer les exigences des emplois. Finalement, basé sur la configuration actuelle de la population des évaluateurs actifs, sur l'intention d'une majorité des jeunes évaluateurs de quitter la discipline au cours des quelques prochaines années, et sur la formation requise en évaluation, la profession n'est pas actuellement à même d'assurer le renouvellement d'une main-d'oeuvre stable, formée, et engagée. Globalement, ces résultats suggèrent que réflexion et action sont nécessaires au développement futur de la profession.

███████ There have been many discussions over the past few years in the Canadian evaluation community about issues related to the practice of evaluation, and several studies have provided useful information to support these discussions. These studies have generally focused on specific issues, sometimes with reference to particular evaluator populations. For example, they include studies aiming to identify core competencies or competency profiles, based on current demands from evaluation clients, for professional evaluators in the federal government (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2002) or members of the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) (McGuire, 2005; Zorzi, McGuire, & Perrin, 2002; Zorzi, Perrin, McGuire, Long, & Lee, 2002). Training and professional development needs of evaluators have also been examined with the goal of developing strategies for CES (CES, 2004) and governments (Cousins & Aubry, 2006) to improve quality in the evaluation function. Other studies have addressed issues related to professionalization and certification, in the context of questions about strategies to enhance the status and positioning of evaluation as a profession (e.g., Gussman Associates, 2005; Long &

Kishchuk, 1997). A review of evaluation practices across jurisdictions in 2003 also addressed professional status questions in a number of ways (Gauthier et al., 2004).

While each of these studies has added to our knowledge of the field of evaluation and related issues, none has produced a complete portrait of evaluators and evaluation practice across the country. Moreover, because the issues of professionalization, competencies, and professional development are so deeply interconnected, it is not possible to develop a comprehensive understanding of the overall situation of evaluation in Canada. Nationally representative data describing the professional and practice profiles of program evaluators in Canada, their views of their professional working conditions and environments, and their level of engagement with the field of evaluation would be valuable to inform discussions about the current state and future of evaluation practice, and to facilitate decision-making by relevant professional and government bodies.

This article reports on the results of a national survey aiming to fill this gap. The study was undertaken to meet three primary objectives: to provide a portrait of program evaluators in Canada; to profile their work and work environments; and to identify key issues facing the field for the future. This study was undertaken at the initiative of the authors; it was not sponsored by any organization or professional body, although its conduct was facilitated by several.

METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed by the study team based on a list of issues that they believed to be critical to the development of the evaluation profession. The questionnaire, the English and French versions of which are available at <http://cjpe.ca/extra/2006_21_3_gauthier. pdf>, comprised the following sections:

- current professional situation (work environment and types of employment);
- evaluation practice (type of evaluation work, approaches to evaluation, subject areas, clients for evaluation work);
- working conditions (subjective reactions to working conditions, satisfaction with employment, perspectives on a five-year horizon);

- attraction and retention factors (factors that encourage or discourage working in evaluation, most and least enjoyable aspects of work);
- training (formal training, continuing education, informal training, need for training, obstacles to training);
- self-identification as an evaluator (sense of belonging to a profession, association membership, reasons for joining the CES);
- supply issues (issues related to the supply of competent evaluators);
- certification (perceived effects of certification); and
- background information (demographic variables such as age, sex, location, equity group membership, language, income).

A pretest was conducted among 10 volunteer evaluators known to members of the study team. Minor issues were identified and the questionnaire was revised. In particular, the initial questionnaire was deemed longer than feasible and was cut back by some 30%.

Sampling

The population of interest to this study was defined as all individuals involved in program evaluation in Canada at the time of the data collection. No list of this population existed from which to sample. Indeed, even the definition of program evaluation and the operational definition of involvement in program evaluation are open to debate. We attempted to sample the probable universe of Canadian evaluators by contacting the members of relevant organizations:

- The CES sent us a list of its 1,348 members in good standing and 2,947 past members; the list included information on individuals who supplied an e-mail address and whose membership application form indicated that they agreed to the CES sharing their contact information for such purpose as of May 2005.
- The Centre of Excellence for Evaluation (CEE) of the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) of Canada supplied a list of 406 federal evaluators, as of May 2005.
- The Centre for Voluntary Sector Research and Development (CVSRD) sent an invitation to take part in the study to all of its members; this included approximately 3,000 individuals.
- The Société québécoise d'évaluation de programme (SQEP) informed its members who are not members of the CES of

the study and invited them to participate; this included approximately 150 individuals.

Finally, the study was announced on the CES Web site on May 30, 2005, to invite members and interested evaluators to participate. Every person contacted directly by e-mail was invited to spread the word about the conduct of the study by forwarding the e-mail to potentially interested parties. No sample was drawn from these sources; all responses were accepted.

Data Collection

The data collection was conducted using a Web-based questionnaire. An initial e-mail invitation was sent on May 27, 2005, to all individuals for whom the study team had an e-mail address. E-mail reminders were sent to those who had not yet completed the questionnaire on June 6, June 16, and July 5, 2005. Those invited were supplied with an access code to facilitate stop-and-resume operations of the online questionnaire. Others could simply enter the questionnaire without a code. In total, between May 27 and July 27, 2005, 1,359 questionnaires were initiated and 1,005 were completed.

Respondents can be characterized by the recruitment method. Membership in the CVSRD is approximately 3,000; 19 completed the questionnaire. There are approximately 150 members of SQEP who are not members of CES; 21 respondents who completed the questionnaire indicated that they were informed of the study by SQEP. Thirty-eight respondents were informed by the CES website or a colleague. Finally, 927 respondents completed the questionnaire after receiving a direct e-mail invitation by the study team; their e-mail addresses were among the 4,487 unique addresses supplied by the CES and the CEE. It is important to note that some of the e-mail address information was obsolete, particularly the list of past CES members, as this information is not kept up to date. Out of 4,487 invitation messages, 1,223 (or 27%) were not delivered.

It is not possible to calculate a response rate for this data collection exercise because we do not know the appropriate denominator: many of the individuals invited directly or indirectly were not members of the population of interest — that is, they were not involved in program evaluation. Since no information was available on the distribution of the population of interest, no weighting scheme could be calculated. The data were left unweighted.

Data Editing

> Survey data were managed using VoxCo's StatXP software (<http://voxco.com/en/PDF/statXPMR.pdf>). The answers regarding geographical location of respondents were revised manually since there was confusion among the "Quebec," "Ontario," and "National Capital Region" (NCR) categories. Responses from federal e-mail addresses were reclassified as belonging to the NCR except those from Quebec-based federal agencies and from individuals known to the study team to be located outside of the NCR.

Data Analysis

> Most data analysis was done using basic stubs-and-banners crosstabs developed in StatXP. Percentage-based differences were tested using χ^2 tests. Differences between means were tested using Fisher's F test and two-tailed t-tests, as appropriate.

> Based on the achieved sample of 1,005 responses, assuming that it constitutes a random sample of an infinite population, the maximum sampling error is estimated at ±3.1 percentage points in the worst, complete-sample case (for a proportion of 50%, at a confidence level of 95%, without design effect). Confidence intervals are wider for sub-samples. Note, however, that the study team has used statistical inference as a guide to accept or reject the existence of differences among subgroups while taking the position that the sample represents an unusually large portion of the population of interest.

Limitations of This Research

> While this study is the largest one dealing with the Canadian evaluation profession of which the study team is aware, uncertainty still exists as to the level of coverage of the target population offered by the sample of respondents. Without knowledge of the size or composition of the pool of Canadian program evaluators, it is impossible to make definitive statements as to the representativeness of the sample used in this study — with the exception of the possible under-representation of Quebec evaluators. Meanwhile, based on personal knowledge of the field, study team members are confident that the results of the study offer an accurate picture of the program evaluation situation in 2005.

PROFILE OF EVALUATORS

Let us begin by drawing a profile of Canadian evaluators. Of all survey respondents currently employed, the plurality (42%) indicated that they are "producers of evaluation results for their own organization" — a group that we have labelled "internal evaluators." The second largest group (26%) are "producers of evaluation results for organizations other than their own," or "external evaluators." Smaller groups classified themselves as users of evaluation results (15%), researchers on evaluation (10%), or some other status (7%). All in all, 68% of respondents were producers of evaluation results (internally or externally). Many of the results presented in this article refer to this group of evaluation producers. Note that, among evaluation producers, internal evaluators outweigh external evaluators by a ratio of 8 to 5.

The federal public sector, which employs one-third of all evaluation producers, constitutes the primary work environment, followed by the private sector and the aggregate of the other public sectors (provincial, regional, municipal), each representing slightly more than one-fifth (see Table 1). Among internal evaluators, almost half work in the federal public sector whereas, among external evaluators, more than half work in the private sector. Still, there are a few external evaluators within the federal public service and internal evaluators in the private sector.

Overall, evaluation producers spend 61% of their time on evaluation work; the proportions are similar for internal evaluators and external evaluators. About one-half of evaluation producers spend the majority of their time on evaluation matters. At the other end of the spectrum, one-third of evaluation producers spend less than half of their time on evaluation work.

Evaluation producers enjoy highly placed positions in their organizations. More than one-third are managers and a similar proportion are senior officers or senior consultants. This leaves relatively few at the intermediate and junior levels (one-fifth). Levels, or at least labels, are higher among internal evaluators, since 4 out of 10 rank themselves as managers compared to about 2 out of 10 external evaluators. Conversely, half of external evaluators classify themselves as senior officers or senior consultants compared to a little less than one-third of internal evaluators.

Seven out of 10 evaluation producers are aged 30 to 54. About one-quarter are approaching retirement age (55 or more), while only 1 in

Table 1
Profile of Canadian Evaluation Producers

Categories	Evaluation producers	Internal evaluators	External evaluators
Sector of work, $\chi^2(7, N = 645) = 287.3, p < .001$			
Federal public sector	32%	45%	11%
Private sector	22%	2%	55%
Provincial public sector	19%	26%	8%
Not-for-profit sector	13%	12%	16%
College/university sector	7%	7%	8%
Regional public sector	2%	3%	1%
Other	2%	3%	2%
Municipal public sector	2%	3%	0%
Time spent on evaluation, $\chi^2(3, N = 644) = 10.4, p < .05$			
Less than 50%	32%	32%	34%
50%	15%	14%	16%
More than 50%	30%	27%	34%
100%	23%	27%	16%
Level in the organization, $\chi^2(4, N = 633) = 46.0, p < .001$			
Manager	35%	41%	24%
Senior officer/consultant	38%	29%	51%
Intermediate officer/consultant	18%	21%	13%
Junior officer/consultant	3%	3%	2%
Other	7%	5%	11%
Age, $\chi^2(2, N = 564) = 11.5, p < .01$			
Less than 30 years old	6%	6%	4%
30 to 54 years old	71%	74%	65%
55 years old or more	24%	19%	31%
Gender, $\chi^2(1, N = 629) = 5.3, p < .05$			
Female	60%	64%	54%
Male	40%	36%	46%
Highest degree, $\chi^2(3, N = 638) = 22.3, p < .001$			
Ph.D., post-doctorate	16%	12%	23%
Masters	61%	61%	63%
Bachelors	20%	23%	14%
Other	3%	4%	1%
University degree discipline, $\chi^2(8, N = 622) = 11.6, p > .05$			
Other social sciences and humanities	22%	20%	24%
Business and administration	17%	19%	15%
Political science, sociology, criminology	16%	16%	17%
Psychology	16%	16%	17%
Other	15%	13%	20%
Health sciences	10%	11%	8%
Economics	9%	10%	7%
Natural sciences and engineering	6%	7%	5%
Mathematics, statistics and information technology	2%	2%	3%
Location, $\chi^2(4, N = 619) = 12.3, p < .05$			
Atlantic Canada	11%	11%	11%
Quebec	6%	7%	5%
Ottawa/Gatineau (National Capital Region)	35%	39%	29%
Ontario	19%	18%	20%
Western Canada	29%	24%	36%

20 are relatively recent entrants to the workforce (age less than 30). External evaluators tend to be somewhat older than internal evaluators, with about one-third in the 55+ age category. Women constitute the majority (60%) of evaluation producers. There are somewhat more women among internal evaluators than among external evaluators. Virtually all evaluation producers possess a university degree and 6 out of 10 have completed a master's degree or a doctorate. External evaluators were observed to have doctoral degrees more often than internal evaluators. More than one-half of evaluation producers hold degrees in the social sciences and humanities; the second-largest group comprises graduates from business and administration. The disciplinary profile is similar among internal and external evaluators.

A large group of evaluation producers operate out of the National Capital Region (more than one-third). Western Canada enjoys the second-largest representation, with a particularly strong presence among external evaluators. Note that the low presence of Quebec in these distributions can be explained in part by the survey distribution process: SQEP informed its non-CES members in a mass e-mailing that did not have the same positive effect on survey participation as the individual and repeated mailings made to individuals on the CES and TBS lists.

Evaluation producers benefit from high individual income: the average annual 2004 work income amounted to more than $75,000. Income was higher in the federal public sector and the private sector than for those in the college and university sector ($0.88 for every $1 earned in the federal public sector and private sector); the municipal, regional, and provincial public sectors ($0.80); and the not-for-profit sector ($0.71) ($F(3, 582) = 14.11$, $p < .001$). Managers earned about $85,000 in 2004 compared to $78,000 for senior officers and senior consultants and $56,000 for intermediate staff ($F(6, 567) = 19.85$, $p < .001$). While people aged 55+ earned $84,000, those aged 30 to 54 brought in $74,000 and those less than 30 earned $51,000 ($F(2, 546) = 18.11$, $p < .001$). Income was highest in the National Capital Region ($84,000), then in Ontario ($75,000), in Western Canada ($67,000), and in Atlantic Canada ($62,000) ($F(4, 556) = 12.94$, $p < .001$). Women evaluation producers earned about $69,000 in 2004, which is 82% of what male evaluation producers earned ($84,000) ($F(1, 577) = 37.96$, $p < .001$).

In summary, Canadian evaluation producers are more likely to be women than men. They are mainly located within the organizations

managing the programs they are called upon to evaluate, although there is a strong cadre of external evaluators as well. The federal public service is the main employer followed by two equal-sized groups: employees of other levels of government and private sector employees. Around half report working the majority of their time on evaluation matters. The majority self-classify in the higher echelons of their organizations, leaving an apparent gap at the entry level. Evaluation producers are well-paid and well-educated, with the vast majority holding at least a master's degree.

IDENTIFICATION AS AN EVALUATOR

Based on the authors' observations, the professional paths that evaluation producers have taken before reaching their evaluation-related positions are varied. For some, evaluation appeared to be a conscious destination; for others, evaluation was a calculated move to improve their career; yet others reached evaluation without specifically planning for it. Consequently, we expected that there would be a variety of levels of identification as a professional evaluator among evaluation producers.

Table 2 describes seven indicators of identification with evaluation as a profession. Half of evaluators present themselves as "evaluators." Almost half feel that they belong to a community of evaluators. More than one-third consider themselves professionally an evaluator first and foremost and one-third actively pursued a career in evaluation.

Table 2
Key Indicators of Identification as an Evaluator

Identification statements (ordered by demonstrated strength of identification)	% agreeing[a]	*n*
When I'm asked what I do for a living, I say that I am an evaluator or a program evaluator	50	632
I feel that I belong to a community of evaluators	45	635
Professionally, I consider myself an evaluator first and foremost	39	633
I actively pursued a career as an evaluator	32	633
I became an evaluator through circumstances rather than by career planning	70	633
Evaluation is an area I want to leave as soon as possible	5	626
Evaluation is an area I have entered for a short time in order to develop a well-rounded resume to help me advance in my career	9	626

[a] Categories 5, 6, or 7 on a 7-point scale.

In order to develop a summary image of identification as an evaluator, we built a scale ranging from 0 to 7: respondents received one point on that scale when they expressed agreement with an item representative of an identification with evaluation or expressed disagreement with a sentence expressing the opposite feeling. We then regrouped those with scores of 0, 1, or 2 in a "low identification" category, those with a score of 3 or 4 in a "medium identification" group, and those who scored 5, 6, or 7 in a "high identification" group. This procedure resulted in the following distribution: 36% of evaluation producers were classified as possessing a low identification with evaluation as a profession, 32% a medium identification, and 31% a high identification. Factors associated with high identification include:

- Time spent on evaluation work: those spending more than half of their working time on evaluation matters or all of their time on evaluation are more likely to identify strongly with evaluation as a discipline (44% of the former and 51% of the latter belong to the high identification group); those who spend less than half of their time on evaluation are less likely (9% high identification) ($\chi^2(2, N = 638) = 78.0, p < .001$);
- Responsibility in evaluation: identification is stronger among those whose major responsibility is research (37%) rather than management (27%) or teaching (16%) ($\chi^2(2, N = 635) = 9.8, p < .01$);
- Location: identification is stronger in Quebec (51%) and in the National Capital Region (36%) ($\chi^2(4, N = 610) = 15.4, p < .01$) than elsewhere;
- Work organization: identification is stronger if evaluation producers are regrouped within an organization (39%) than if they are scattered (26%) ($\chi^2(1, N = 517) = 9.7, p < .01$); it is also stronger in units devoted to evaluation ($\chi^2(4, N = 638) = 63.3, p < .001$).

Note that no statistically significant differences in identification were found according to age, gender, number of years in the workplace or in the current job, or according to size of the organization, size of the evaluation group, or type of evaluation producer (interval vs. external).

Table 3 clarifies the proportions agreeing with the various elements of the identification scale within the identification groups. That large differences exist is not surprising; in fact, it is so by design since the identification groups were created to distinguish three levels of iden-

tification with evaluation. It is worth noting, though, that one-half of
high-identification evaluation producers indicated that they became
evaluators through circumstances rather than by career planning.
Also, few evaluation producers with low identification want to leave
evaluation, notwithstanding their lack of attachment to the field, and
few used evaluation as a stepping stone to advance their career.

Table 3
A Classification of Identification as an Evaluator

Percentage agreeing[a]		Level of identification as an evaluator (evaluation producers)					
		Low	Medium	High	F	df	p
	minimum n =	220	204	199			
	maximum n =	229	207	200			
When I'm asked what I do for a living, I say that I am an evaluator or a program evaluator		14%	48%	94%	241.97	2, 629	< .001
I feel that I belong to a community of evaluators		9%	49%	83%	183.81	2, 632	< .001
Professionally, I consider myself an evaluator first and foremost		2%	33%	87%	368.94	2, 631	< .001
I actively pursued a career as an evaluator		3%	18%	79%	246.70	2, 630	< .001
I became an evaluator through circumstances rather than by career planning		84%	74%	51%	36.83	2, 630	< .001
Evaluation is an area I want to leave as soon as possible		11%	1%	2%	68.68	2, 623	< .001
Evaluation is an area I have entered for a short time in order to develop a well-rounded résumé to help me advance in my career		18%	5%	4%	72.77	2, 624	< .001

[a] Categories 5, 6, or 7 on a 7-point scale.

In sum, one-third of evaluation producers self-report a strong sense
of identification with evaluation as a profession and one-third con-
vey little such attachment. Identification as an evaluator does not
translate necessarily into planning a career in evaluation, however,
and lack of identification does not mean that one is not interested in
evaluation work.

EVALUATION PRACTICE

Evaluation is said to be a field of much variety (e.g., in terms of set-
tings, topics, tasks, and approaches). This section describes some of
the diversity in evaluation practice while looking for common threads
that are characteristic of evaluation in the Canadian context.

The authority structures within which evaluators produce evaluations vary. Most of the time, the authority to accept evaluation results rests with committees of internal stakeholders (see Table 4). Otherwise, authority to accept results is one step removed from the organization, in committees that include individuals from outside the organization, or it is brought further into the organization with the authority resting with the program manager. The authority models appear to be related to the environment in which the evaluation takes place: federal government evaluations are more often led by committees of internal stakeholders while other levels of government favour placing the accountability for evaluation with the program manager.

Table 4
Authority over Evaluation Results According to Evaluation Producers

Who usually has the authority to accept the results of the evaluations you work on?	All $n = 630$	Private sector $n = 145$	Mun., reg., prov. sector $n = 144$	Federal sector $n = 197$	Not-for-profit $n = 85$	Education $n = 45$
Committee of internal stakeholders	38%	24%	28%	55%	32%	38%
Program manager	21%	19%	35%	14%	25%	9%
Stakeholder committee with members from outside the organization where the program is located	19%	27%	15%	13%	22%	27%
Other	12%	10%	15%	11%	13%	20%
Evaluation manager	10%	20%	6%	7%	8%	7%

$\chi^2(16, N = 616) = 83.8, p < .001$

One aspect of evaluation practice that displays little variation across settings is the motivation for entering into evaluation studies. The primary motivation or driver to initiate evaluation studies is the need to show accountability, followed by a search for ways to improve programs and the need for information to support program renewal decisions (see Table 5). This begs the following question: are we involved in evaluations by obligation or because there is a real appetite for evaluation information? The distribution of motivations is stable across settings with one exception: formative evaluations (aimed at program improvements) are less common within the federal public service and more common in the education sector.

Canadian evaluation work is mostly sensitive to multiple stakeholder perspectives, although this is more the case when the work

Table 5
Evaluation Practice in Canada According to Evaluation Producers

	All	Private sector	Mun., reg., prov. sector	Federal sector	Not-for-profit	Education	χ^2	p
minimum n =	579	134	138	186	81	40		df = 4
maximum n =	628	145	147	199	87	46		
% agreeing[a]								
Motivations for evaluations								
Your evaluation work is driven by accountability / central agency requirements	85%	85%	80%	89%	83%	80%	5.9	>.05
Your evaluation work is driven by program improvement motivations	75%	76%	79%	65%	80%	89%	18.4	<.01
Your evaluation work is driven by need for information to facilitate decisions about program renewal	70%	67%	70%	73%	65%	82%	5.0	>.05
Position of stakeholders								
The evaluations you work on generally take multiple stakeholder perspectives into account	85%	90%	78%	84%	87%	98%	14.9	<.01
Your evaluation work is participatory, i.e., involving program stakeholders including clients in key decisions about the evaluation	75%	77%	68%	73%	84%	80%	8.2	>.05
Your evaluation work is independent / arms length	51%	69%	38%	54%	43%	41%	30.8	<.001
Evaluation method								
The evaluations you work on generally produce credible evidence about the evaluation questions	83%	88%	77%	78%	92%	93%	18.1	<.01
The evaluations you work on generally use methodology that is rigorous	68%	68%	56%	72%	63%	89%	20.0	<.001

% agreeing[a]	All	Private sector	Mun., reg., prov. sector	Federal sector	Not-for-profit	Education	χ^2	p
minimum $n =$	579	134	138	186	81	40		df = 4
maximum $n =$	628	145	147	199	87	46		
The evaluations you work on generally use innovative methodology	55%	57%	51%	51%	62%	67%	7.4	> .05
Evaluation questions addressed								
The evaluations you work on generally address the most important questions about the programs	84%	85%	77%	83%	91%	89%	8.4	> .05
The evaluations you work on generally address the toughest questions about programs	71%	72%	67%	70%	71%	78%	2.5	> .05
The evaluations you work on generally address trivial questions about programs	20%	19%	22%	20%	17%	13%	2.0	> .05
Impacts of evaluation work								
The evaluations you work on generally are useful to decision-makers	85%	89%	81%	76%	97%	98%	29.0	< .001
The evaluations you work on generally result in significant improvements to the programs	67%	68%	64%	59%	80%	84%	16.9	< .01
The evaluations you work on generally result in significant benefits to program clients	65%	59%	64%	59%	81%	90%	26.3	< .001
The evaluations you work on generally build organizational capacity for evaluation	65%	59%	65%	55%	85%	93%	39.8	< .001
Your evaluation work is empowering for the programs and organizations involved	63%	61%	64%	49%	80%	87%	36.9	< .001

[a] Categories 5, 6, or 7 on a 7-point scale.

is conducted by a private sector evaluator than one associated with a municipal, regional, or provincial government. A vast majority of evaluation producers also claim that their evaluations are participatory (defined as involving program stakeholders, including clients, in key decisions about the evaluation). This is a surprisingly high proportion based on the authors' experience with actual evaluation work; the result may have been inflated by the reference to "clients" (a term that may have been construed as meaning "evaluation clients" by some, whereas the question was referring to "program clients"). Finally, only one-half of all evaluation producers qualified their work as independent — more so among private sector evaluators and less so in municipal, regional, or provincial governments, in the education sector, and in not-for-profit organizations. These relatively low proportions of "independent" evaluations put into question the traditional model of the evaluator being detached from the study object and providing disinterested analyses and advice on program performance.

More than 8 in 10 evaluation producers believe that their evaluations produce credible results. Fewer perceive that these results are produced using methodologies that they consider to be rigorous. Fewer still agree that these results are produced using innovative methodologies. Evaluation producers active in municipal, regional, or provincial governments are most critical of the methodologies they use, whereas the education sector self-characterizes itself as rigorous and credible. Evaluation producers in the not-for-profit sector are also content with the credibility of their work.

Eight in 10 evaluation producers indicate that their evaluations generally address the most important questions; 7 in 10 state that they touch upon the toughest questions about programs. It is noteworthy that those who identify most as evaluators indicate that their evaluation work is more often focused on important ($\chi^2(2, N = 633)$ $= 15.1, p < .001$) and tough questions about programs ($\chi^2(2, N = 628)$ $= 16.6, p < .001$) than is the case among those who identify least as evaluators. Since it is unlikely that the fact of addressing important and tough questions would generate self-identification with the field of evaluation, we infer that those personally closest to evaluation as a discipline are more inclined to ask the important and tough questions about programs. Note also that 20% of evaluation producers indicated that their evaluations generally address trivial questions about programs.

Evaluation producers are somewhat critical of the impact of their work. While a large proportion indicate that their evaluations are useful to decision-makers, only about two-thirds state that their work leads to improvements to programs, benefits to clients, organizational capacity for evaluation, or program empowerment. The distinction is particularly clear between evaluation producers in the federal public service (where about half signal such evaluation effects) and those in the not-for-profit and the education sectors (where the proportion approaches 90%).

Overall, evaluation practice in Canada is driven in large part by accountability requirements (rather than by an aspiration to improve situations). It is characterized by stakeholder involvement and by constrained independence of evaluation producers. Evaluation methods are credible — if sometimes questionable in rigour and innovation. Evaluations tend to address important and tough questions. However, the impacts of evaluation work, beyond usefulness for decision-makers, could be construed as disappointing: empowerment, organizational capacity building, improvements to programs, and benefits to clients, while present, are limited.

Our data depict three different worlds of evaluation practice: the municipal, regional or provincial government sector, where evaluator independence is rare and methods are considered to be less rigorous and credible; the federal government sector, where accountability motivations are key but impacts of evaluation work appear the weakest; and the not-for-profit and education sectors, where program improvement is more important, participation is more valued, evaluation credibility is high (although rigour of methods characterizes mostly the education sector), and evaluation impacts are the greatest.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Evaluators' perceptions of their working environment are key in assessing the health of the field as well as its future. The survey assessed evaluators' perceptions of their working environment using two seven-point scales, a satisfaction scale and an agree-disagree scale. For the purposes of this article, only a selected set of key indicators is reported. These include satisfaction with intrinsic job factors as well as with the conditions of employment in the context of the organization overall, including the position of the job and mobility.

As indicated in Table 6, evaluation producers are satisfied with their job overall (88% indicated 5, 6, or 7 on a 7-point scale). For this indicator and several others, the type of organization is a major determining factor of satisfaction. As shown, the satisfaction rates are higher among private sector employees and in the education sector and lower among federal public servants. Evaluators in the provincial, regional, and municipal public sectors and in the not-for-profit sector are mid-range.

Thirteen key job satisfaction indicators were chosen to further explore what evaluators think of their jobs. Interestingly, satisfaction with job content appears to be higher than satisfaction with the working environment. Satisfaction with the level of independence in the job and the variety of projects is fairly high. Satisfaction with classification, number of hours worked, and pay are rather moderate. Evaluators rate their satisfaction with training received for their job and promotion opportunities much lower.

Satisfaction on some of these indicators also varies according to the type of organization. Private sector evaluators are more satisfied with their level of independence, variety of work, and classification. Federal public servants are the least likely to be satisfied, except for their level of pay and training received, where they come second after the private sector. The level of satisfaction with the promotion opportunities within their organization is especially low for evaluators in all sectors other than the private sector.

An agree-disagree scale was also used to assess more specific dimensions of work. About one-half of evaluators agree that they can easily balance work and personal life (47%), and one-half agree that their workload is too heavy (52%). Only one-third of private sector respondents (32%) agree that they can balance work with their other activities in life ($\chi^2(4, N = 619) = 20.7, p < .001$). In terms of support from employers, about two-thirds of respondents agree that their organization provides them with the proper tools to do the job (66%) and that their employer is supportive of alternative work arrangements (72%). Federal public service evaluators are least likely to agree with these statements, while private sector respondents are most likely to agree (respectively, $\chi^2(4, N = 587) = 16.2, p < .01$ and $\chi^2(4, N = 559) = 9.9, p < .05$). In terms of employer-employee relationships, a strong majority agree that their employers treat them with respect (82%).

The survey assessed to what extent respondents expected to stay or leave evaluation in the following five years. Two-thirds of respondents

Table 6
Evaluation Producers' Satisfaction with the Working Environment

How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your current employment? (% satisfied[a])		All	Private sector	Mun., reg., prov. sector	Federal sector	Not-for-profit	Education	χ^2	p
	minimum n =	482	82	126	179	53	36		df = 4
	maximum n =	616	141	147	196	86	46		
My level of independence in my work		90%	96%	90%	82%	95%	98%	24.7	<.001
My job overall		88%	94%	86%	83%	86%	93%	10.4	<.05
The variety of projects involved in		85%	90%	83%	78%	90%	89%	13.5	<.01
My role in evaluation projects		85%	94%	79%	83%	82%	93%	16.4	<.01
The type of projects I am involved in		84%	86%	84%	81%	88%	85%	3.2	>.05
The benefits provided by my employer		80%	67%	80%	87%	71%	84%	19.2	<.001
The level of teamwork involved in my job		73%	77%	73%	66%	79%	72%	7.6	>.05
Average number of hours worked per week		67%	58%	69%	68%	74%	65%	6.9	>.05
My classification or level in organization		66%	84%	60%	58%	68%	65%	21.2	<.001
My level of pay		65%	71%	59%	66%	56%	72%	9.2	>.05
Training I receive to do the job		54%	59%	51%	55%	52%	41%	5.0	>.05
Promotion opportunities within the evaluation field		43%	49%	38%	41%	49%	50%	4.3	>.05
Promotion opportunities within my organization		41%	65%	38%	34%	40%	37%	24.2	<.001

[a] Categories 5, 6, or 7 on a 7-point scale.

(63%) said that they were likely to stay, 17% would leave, and 20% did not know. Federal public servants were the most likely to think that they would leave (32%) ($\chi^2(16, N = 924) = 102.3, p < .001$). Sixty-two percent of evaluation producers under 30 years of age, however, stated they will likely leave the field within five years ($\chi^2(10, N = 911) = 37.0, p < .001$).

To assess the various influences on the decision to remain in the field or leave it, respondents were asked whether a number of factors encouraged them to stay in evaluation or encouraged them to leave.[1] As shown in Table 7, the factors that encourage most evaluation producers to stay in the field are the intellectual challenge, the variety of the work, the level of independence, and the nature of the work — these are so-called intrinsic motivators. This is consistent with the findings on job satisfaction mentioned earlier. As for the factors that would encourage evaluators to leave, we find these to be the level of stress, the position of evaluation in the organization, and the career path of an evaluator — all of which are situational factors.

Maybe even more importantly, Table 7 highlights four factors where people who are not evaluation producers show a much more negative view of evaluation work than do actual evaluation producers.[2] These factors are clarity of the work objectives, the position of evaluation in the organization, the level of independence enjoyed as an evaluator, and working hours. On all four accounts, non-evaluators share perceptions that are at least 10 points less positive than those of evaluation producers. Redressing perceptions on these four situational factors could contribute to a more attractive image of evaluation as a profession.

To summarize, a number of trends are observed with regard to evaluators' perceptions of their working environment. First, it appears that a strong majority of evaluators appreciate the job content of their work, especially the level of independence they enjoy. However, the wider context in which they work appears to be less satisfying for a significant number of evaluators, including the promotion opportunities and the career paths offered in evaluation. Many also appear dissatisfied with their working hours and the level of stress involved in their jobs. The type of organization is associated with many of these indicators. In many cases, evaluators in the federal public sector are less likely than their colleagues in the private sector to appreciate their working environment, while evaluators working in provincial, regional, or municipal governments fall in most cases between these two groups when rating their jobs.

Table 7
Push and Pull Factors

As far as you are concerned, how discouraging or encouraging are each of the following factors with regard to working in evaluation? (% encouraging[a])	Evaluation producers (A)	Others (B)	Image deficit among non-evaluators[b] (A-B)	χ^2	p
minimum $n =$	565	185		df = 1	
maximum $n =$	637	229			
The intellectual challenge	91%	88%	3	2.3	> .05
The variety of the work	84%	81%	3	1.3	> .05
The level of independence enjoyed as an evaluator	84%	70%	14	20.1	< .001
The nature of the work	83%	77%	6	4.4	< .05
The flexibility of work arrangements	72%	63%	9	5.1	< .05
The ability to effect change	72%	66%	6	2.9	> .05
The opportunities for professional/ personal development	67%	63%	4	0.9	> .05
The availability of employment	62%	54%	8	4.0	< .05
The pay	59%	48%	11	6.0	< .05
The clarity of the work objectives	57%	40%	17	17.0	< .001
The working hours	54%	42%	12	7.9	< .01
The position of evaluation in my organization	54%	39%	15	15.1	< .001
The career path of an evaluator	52%	47%	5	1.5	> .05
The workload	49%	43%	6	2.1	> .05
The stress involved in the work	33%	26%	7	3.2	> .05

[a]Categories 5, 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale. [b]This is the difference between the proportion of evaluation producers who are encouraged by a factor and the proportion of non-evaluators who feel the same. Assuming that evaluation producers are better judges of their own situation, this deficit represents the weight of the negative image carried by the evaluation profession outside of its immediate ranks.

TRAINING-RELATED ISSUES

The vast majority of evaluation producers have had academic training in social science methods at the undergraduate (80%) or graduate level (72%). Evaluation producers who identify the most as evaluators are more likely to have had graduate-level training in social science methods (80%) than those who identify the least as evaluators (65%) ($\chi^2(2, N = 631) = 12.0, p < .01$).

Formal training in program evaluation is much rarer: only 27% of evaluation producers indicated having received such training at the undergraduate level, while 41% indicated that they received program evaluation training at the graduate level. Here again, the stronger

one's identification as an evaluator, the more likely one is to have received graduate-level training in program evaluation ($\chi^2(2$, $N = 634) = 13.6$, $p < .01$).

While academic training in social science methods is much more prevalent than academic training in program evaluation, the reverse is true of professional development (PD) courses and workshops: fully 90% of evaluation producers attended workshops and PD courses in program evaluation while 69% did the same regarding social science methods. Those with low identification as evaluators are somewhat less likely to have attended courses and PD workshops in evaluation ($\chi^2(2$, $N = 636) = 9.1$, $p < .05$). The picture is similar regarding on-the-job training which is more likely to have addressed program evaluation (69% of evaluation producers) than social science methods (49%).

The vast majority of evaluation producers identified on-the-job experience as one of their most important sources of knowledge about evaluation (see Table 8); professional development workshops were the next most frequently named source of knowledge, followed by self-directed learning such as reading journals, books, or websites. This profile of sources of knowledge about evaluation used in the past does not correspond to evaluation producers' desired sources of knowledge at present. In particular, on-the-job experience, which

Table 8
Sources of Knowledge on Evaluation among Evaluation Producers

	Most important source of knowledge about evaluation to this day (A) $n = 638$	Sources of knowledge about evaluation that would be preferred at this point (B) $n = 636$	Shortfall (excess) of supply compared to demand (B-A)
Professional development workshops	45%	69%	24
Conferences on evaluation	25%	47%	22
Other sources	2%	3%	1
Mentoring or learning from others	37%	36%	(1)
On-the-job training	13%	9%	(4)
Self-directed learning (e.g., journals, books, websites)	43%	34%	(9)
Formal college or university courses	32%	19%	(13)
On-the-job experience (learning by doing)	78%	21%	(57)

Note. Respondents could select up to three responses in each question, which means that total percentages can exceed 100%.

may have been key in the respondents' past, appears to not meet current learning needs, as only one respondent in five identifies it as one of their preferred ways to learn about evaluation. Two-thirds of evaluation producers would prefer to attend professional development workshops, and one-half would prefer conferences on evaluation, but many fewer have had the opportunity to tap into these sources in the past.

Evaluation producers have an appetite for more training relevant to their functions: one-half (52%) feel they *need* training to carry out their responsibilities and even more (71%) *would like* additional training, whether or not they consider that they need this training to conduct their evaluation affairs. The cross-classification of these two views allows us to conclude that one-half (49%) of evaluation producers feel they need training and want to get such training; about one in six (16%) feel that they need no training and are not interested in any; and another 13% feel they do not need training to carry out their responsibilities but are interested in additional training nonetheless.

Demand for training is lower in the federal public sector ($\chi^2(1, N = 618) = 6.0$, $p < .05$), among males ($\chi^2(1, N = 620) = 8.3$, $p < .01$), and among evaluation producers who self-define as managers (rather than researchers) ($\chi^2(2, N = 629) = 13.3$, $p < .01$); it is higher among those interested in professional certification in evaluation ($\chi^2(2, N = 596) = 21.8$, $p < .001$).

If evaluation producers would like to receive ongoing training, why is it that actions do not meet these preferences? Limited access to training does not tend to stem from lack of employer support (except for 26% of evaluation producers). It is mainly related to the time available for training (63%), the availability of training on advanced topics (60%), and the availability of training in the substantive area of the evaluator (58%).

Some particular subgroups of evaluators expressed specific needs.[3] Evaluators from Western Canada claimed that there are too few training opportunities locally ($t(288) = 6.9$, $p < .001$), as did those in their current job for less than two years ($t(168) = 2.0$, $p < .05$). Training on advanced topics was seen as more problematic by evaluators from Western Canada ($t(291) = 3.1$, $p < .01$). Availability of training on evaluation applied to the evaluator's content area was signalled more often by evaluators in the federal public service ($t(313) = 2.4$, $p < .05$) and internal evaluators ($t(676) = 2.6$, $p < .05$). Lack of a men-

tor was a more important barrier among evaluation producers with 11 to 20 years of experience ($t(235) = 2.2, p < .05$), women ($t(359) = 4.0, p < .001$), and those with low identification with the field ($t(376) = 4.0, p < .001$).

In brief, evaluation producers are highly educated individuals: the vast majority possess at least one graduate degree. Formal training in social science methods tends to have taken place in a university setting, while formal training in evaluation has been more frequent in the context of professional development courses and workshops. Evaluation producers value learning about evaluation via professional development workshops and conferences, but real-world factors limit many of them to the less desirable (from their own account) option of on-the-job training. The main barriers to access to training are the time available, the availability of training on advanced topics, and the availability of training in the substantive area of the evaluator. Lack of mentoring opportunities were felt particularly strongly by those with low identification with the field.

SUPPLY ISSUES

One-half or more of all evaluation producers have encountered supply issues in the field of evaluation. A majority indicated that they have experienced difficulty finding qualified personnel in evaluation (63%) or consultants qualified for the work (49%). Similar proportions indicated that they had hired individuals (45%) or consultants (51%) who had turned out not to be as qualified in evaluation as they represented themselves to be.

The frequency of supply issues may explain in part the significant demand for some type of recognition of evaluation abilities among staff and consultants. Fully 80% indicated that clients would prefer to hire certified consultants and 78% think that employers would prefer hiring certified individuals. Three-quarters of respondents (74%) wished there was a way to identify people qualified to conduct evaluation work — more so among those who are not evaluation producers (e.g., users) ($\chi^2(1, N = 771) = 6.2, p < .05$).

CERTIFICATION

Certification of professional evaluators has been a topic of intense discussion in Canada and in the United States in the past few years. The CES commissioned a report on this issue (Long & Kishchuk, 1997)

and has recently retained the services of a research team to examine ways of implementing credentialing in evaluation. The present study was also seen as an opportunity to address the certification issue from the point of view of evaluation practitioners.

Do current producers of evaluation in Canada support certification? Are they interested in investing personally to obtain a professional designation? According to the results of this study, the answer is yes, for two-thirds of evaluation producers: 64% wished there was a way to identify themselves as qualified evaluators and 62% indicated they would likely pursue the requirements of certification if this was available to Canadian evaluators. Note that certification was presented to survey respondents in the following manner: "While there are many ways that such certification could be offered, we would like to focus on voluntary certification rather than licensing. That is, certification would not be a mandatory requirement for involvement in evaluation, but instead, a designation that individuals could choose to obtain to demonstrate expertise in evaluation. Absence of the designation would not prevent involvement in evaluation, however." Among those who feel close identification as an evaluator, almost three-quarters (72%) declared that they would likely pursue the requirements of the designation ($\chi^2(2, N = 601) = 27.2, p < .001$).

Beyond addressing issues with the supply of qualified evaluators, certification is seen as a way to improve the quality of evaluation work (see Table 9). Indeed, two-thirds of respondents believe that certification of evaluators would improve evaluation quality; evaluation users are more likely than evaluation producers to take that stand. Certification is also seen (more so among users) as a way to protect the general public, although fewer than one-half think that certification will help ensure an adequate supply of qualified evaluators. A minority of respondents held negative views about certification, seeing certification as mainly serving the interests of individual evaluators, making evaluation practices rigid, having the effect of limiting organizations' ability to develop their evaluation capacity, focusing on policing rather than learning, or as stifling evaluation innovation.

On four of eight indicators related to the potential effects of certification, evaluation users held more positive views of certification than evaluation producers and they never held less positive views — evidence that demand for certification of evaluation practitioners may be more a pull from the demand side than a push from the supply side.

Table 9
Likely Impacts of a Professional Designation

(% agreeing[a])		All	Evaluation producers	Evaluation users	χ^2	p
minimum n =		714	585	129	df = 1	
maximum n =		752	614	139		
Certification of evaluators would improve the quality of evaluations being conducted in Canada		67%	64%	78%	10.3	< .01
Certification of evaluators would offer a way to protect the general public		55%	53%	62%	3.9	< .05
Certification of evaluators would help ensure an adequate supply of qualified program evaluators in Canada		46%	45%	50%	1.1	> .05
Certification of evaluators would mainly serve the interests of individual evaluators		33%	36%	24%	7.0	< .01
Certification of evaluators would make evaluation practices rigid		34%	35%	33%	0.1	> .05
Certification of evaluators would limit the ability of organizations to develop their own capacity for evaluation		28%	30%	19%	6.9	< .01
Certification of evaluators would work against development of evaluation by focusing on policing and control rather than growth and learning		27%	28%	22%	1.8	> .05
Certification of evaluators would stifle innovation in evaluation practice		24%	25%	21%	1.2	> .05

[a] Categories 5, 6, or 7 on a 7-point scale.

In order to develop a summary picture of support for certification, we built a scale ranging from 0 to 13 based on the items presented earlier. Where the respondent expressed agreement with an item suggesting support for certification or disagreement with an item associated with rejection of certification, one point was added to the respondent score. We then regrouped those with scores from 0 to 3 under the "low support" category, those with a score between 4 and 8 in a "medium support" group, and those who scored 9 to 13 in a "high support" group.

Along this scale, fully 43% of respondents were categorized as highly supportive of certification. The medium support category was composed of 37% of evaluation producers and 37% of evaluation users. Finally, only 19% of all respondents fell in the group indicating low support for certification. Support for certification of evaluators was

higher among users of evaluation ($t(221) = 2.2$, $p < .05$); municipal, regional, and provincial employees ($t(429) = 3.3$, $p < .01$); private sector employees ($t(228) = 2.5$, $p < .05$); those with fewer than 11 years of work experience ($t(211) = 2.3$, $p < .05$); Atlantic Canada respondents ($t(162) = 2.1$, $p < .05$); and those with high identification as an evaluator ($t(392) = 2.7$, $p < .01$).

In sum, many have experienced difficulties with the supply of individuals in the field of evaluation. The vast majority is of the view that professional certification in evaluation would be well received by employers and by those hiring consultants. A clear majority of evaluation producers indicated that they would likely pursue certification if the option existed — a position even more frequent among those with high identification as professional evaluators. Beyond addressing issues with the supply of qualified evaluators, certification is seen as a way to improve the quality of evaluation work. Evaluation users hold more positive views of certification than evaluation producers; they are also more likely to be highly supportive of professional certification than evaluation producers.

KEY ISSUES IN CANADIAN EVALUATION PRACTICE

This profile of Canadian evaluators and evaluation practice in Canada raises critical issues in at least four key areas: (a) the drivers of evaluation; (b) the professionalization of evaluation practice; (c) training and professional development needs; and (d) the renewal of evaluation cadres. Our views of the implications of the survey findings in each of these areas are presented below.

Evaluation Drivers

Much of the evaluation work being done in Canada appears to be driven by accountability requirements, with program improvement or renewal decisions as secondary goals. For us, this observation raises a concern about the extent to which evaluation is truly part of ongoing cycles of intelligent and critically informed program and policy design and adjustment. It suggests that the overarching focus on central agency accountability demands may be constraining evaluators' contribution to program re-thinking or policy agendas, and perhaps that today's evaluators may be not be positioned, professionally and/or structurally, to contribute as much as they could to program improvement. This raises a fundamental question about the very

purpose of program evaluation as it is being practised today, and the extent to which it corresponds to the idealistic vision of evaluation as an instrument for social and economic progress. This question is also key to how the issues of professionalization, professional development, and renewal are to be articulated.

Professionalization of Evaluation Practice

One-third of evaluation producers feel a close professional connection with evaluation as a discipline, and two-thirds indicated that they would be willing to pursue the requirements of a certification process, suggesting a desire for closer connection. This provides the clearest empirical support to date for evaluation's professional associations — namely CES and its provincial chapters — to move in this direction. The disturbing finding that many evaluators assess their own methods to be lacking in rigour, along with the clearly expressed need for additional training (discussed further below), confirms an urgent need for attention to quality improvement, perhaps through professionalization strategies such as certification. Meanwhile, survey responses suggested that many practice contexts do not value evaluation very highly: almost half of evaluators find the position of evaluation in their organization to be a significantly discouraging factor in their work. These findings lead us to suggest that there is a significant opportunity for the field in enhanced professionalization through certification or other strategies, with potential benefits in terms of improved quality of evaluation practice as well as enhanced status of the evaluation function.

However, our data also suggest that certification, while quite widely supported, may create or encounter significant challenges in attempting to achieve professionalization goals. For example, the data reveal that there is a significant pocket of practising evaluators — about one-third of those who are currently producing evaluations — who are loosely connected to the field, who may fail to see the need to subscribe to enhanced professionalization goals and whose practices would not likely be influenced by the implementation of voluntary certification. Increasing these individuals' professional identification as evaluators may be a necessary precursor to the success of certification as a professionalization strategy. A second challenge may underlie the survey findings on perceived levels of rigour: while insufficiently rigorous methods may be partly due to inadequate expertise among evaluators, they may also reflect problems that certification alone cannot address, such as inadequate resources to conduct rigorous

studies, external pressures to avoid tough questions, a culture of "good enough to satisfy," information systems that fail to produce useful and valid performance data, ill-informed perceptions about some research methods, and the like. Another challenge that certification may create is in the area of supply. A majority of respondents stated that they have had difficulty finding qualified personnel in evaluation. While certification could help qualified evaluators obtain recognition for their skills, and help those seeking evaluators to distinguish qualified evaluators from other proponents, it is not clear that it will actually increase the supply of evaluators. It may in fact reduce it if it becomes an additional barrier to the profession. Indeed, a majority of survey respondents agreed that certification will not address the supply issue. The expected high turnover rate in the profession in the next few years will only add to this problem.

Training and Professional Development Needs

The survey showed that more than half of evaluation producers feel that they need additional training to carry out their evaluation responsibilities, and more than half are dissatisfied with the training they have received to do their jobs. This is clearly an area of pressing concern for the profession as a whole, especially given the relationship between training and professional identification and engagement in evaluation. The data also suggest that there are numerous stakeholders to be considered in the development of a comprehensive response to training and professional development needs, including employers, academic institutions, and mentors, but most especially purveyors of professional development workshops and conferences, namely CES and its chapters. Other data from this survey identified key barriers to training; these and previous data (CES, 2004) can fortunately provide a foundation for developing such a response.

Renewal of Evaluation Cadres

The survey data show there to be a relative dearth of entry-level evaluators in Canada. This may be partly attributable to a prevalent career path whereby established professionals come to occupy evaluation positions incidentally — nearly 70% of evaluation producers surveyed did not actively pursue careers in evaluation. However, as evaluation has evolved into a specialized practice requiring knowledge of research methods, systems thinking, and many other areas (Zorzi, Perrin, et al., 2002), it now demands specialized training as

well as continuing education. The lack of young evaluators with formal training in evaluation and in social science research methods and the intent of a majority of young evaluators to leave the field in the next few years suggest that the profession is not currently in a position to sustain itself through the renewal (attraction and retention) of a stable, capable, and committed workforce. Although this survey identified some attraction and retention factors for current practitioners, we know little as yet about how the evaluation field could attract junior personnel, or how professionalization strategies such as accreditation of training programs or evaluator certification might encourage or discourage recruitment. The responsibility of seasoned personnel in ensuring that new evaluators become engaged in the profession also, in our view, calls for reflection. Moreover, the survey data also showed that there are important disincentives to retention, notably in terms of working hours, promotion opportunities, and stress levels, and that these disincentives are strongest among the most frequent employer of evaluators: the federal government. Some comparison with other occupations such as auditors and engineers in government may shed some light on the extent to which these findings are specific to evaluation or shared with other professionals working in government. Finally, the data show that non-evaluators have a more negative image than do practising evaluators of at least three aspects of the evaluation work context: clarity of the work objectives, the position of evaluation in the organization, and the level of independence enjoyed by evaluators. More effective advocacy of the evaluation function and better promotion of evaluation within organizations would likely stimulate increased interest in the evaluation profession.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided the first comprehensive, representative national portrait of evaluation practice in Canada. Overall, the survey data tell us that while our evaluation practice has many strengths, there are also several issues of critical concern: about what is driving evaluation, and perhaps about what is driving it away from being able to fulfill a promise about bettering programs for Canadians; about a clear momentum toward certification and enhanced professionalization in the presence of significant barriers and challenges, not the least of which is a lack of professional identification with the field among a substantial proportion of its practitioners; about unmet needs for training and professional development; and about securing the engagement of future generations of evaluators. Happily, the

data suggest that many avenues toward addressing these problems could be fruitfully pursued, including certification or credentialing; increased access to training and professional development; tracing, supporting, and marketing career paths in evaluation; advocacy of the evaluation function; and development of an identification with a professional community. It is clear that all of us who are committed to the development of program evaluation in Canada can and should have a role to play in these pursuits.

POSTSCRIPT

To date, the results of the survey, including some multivariate analyses, have been discussed at several CES conferences and other presentations (Borys, 2006a, 2006b; Borys, Gauthier, Kishchuk, & Roy, 2005; Kishchuk, 2006; Roy & Gauthier, 2006), and the authors submitted a position paper on future investment priorities for CES to CES National Council in May 2006. We are now making this database publicly available (please contact the corresponding author for details); 90% ($n = 902$) of survey respondents gave permission for their responses to be included in an anonymous public database. We invite interested CJPE readers to pursue further analyses and contribute to greater understanding and ideas for action.

NOTES

1.   In this section, we present results contrasting views of evaluation producers (the focus of the data presented so far) on the one hand, with views of evaluation users (15% of total respondents), researchers on evaluation (7% of respondents), and respondents who are involved with evaluation in "other" ways (7% of respondents) on the other hand, using a single seven-point scale, where 1 means "encourages to leave" and 7 means "encourages to stay." Results are expressed as percentages having selected categories 5, 6, or 7 on that 7-point scale.

2.   Arguably, the group of non-evaluators is a composite of a diversity of individuals (users of evaluation, evaluation teachers, etc.), which makes drawing conclusive statements about their views somewhat difficult. We report these data nonetheless, because that group is the closest proxy we have to a group of people who could potentially enter the field and whose views on the field tell a story on the attraction and distancing factors.

3.   Tests in this paragraph are conducted on the means of the responses on the 7-point scale.

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APPENDIX

LA PRATIQUE DE L'ÉVALUATION AU CANADA EN 2005

Cet article présente les résultats d'un sondage national décrivant les professionnels de l'évaluation au Canada, leurs pratiques, leurs opinions sur leurs conditions de travail, et leur sens d'appartenance au champ de l'évaluation. L'étude identifie les enjeux clefs que l'évaluation confronte.

Méthodologie

Le questionnaire a été développé par l'équipe de recherche à partir d'une liste d'enjeux vus comme centraux au développement de la profession d'évaluateur. Le questionnaire comportait des questions sur les thèmes suivants : la situation professionnelle actuelle, les pratiques en évaluation, les conditions de travail, les facteurs d'attraction et de rétention dans la discipline, la formation, l'auto-identification comme évaluateur, les enjeux reliés à l'offre d'évaluateurs, la certification professionnelle, et les informations factuelles.

La population de l'étude comprenait l'ensemble des personnes impliquées en évaluation de programme au Canada au moment de la collecte de données. Comme il n'existe aucune liste de cette population, nous avons posé que les listes suivantes en constitueraient un substitut acceptable : la liste des membres de la Société canadienne d'évaluation (SCÉ), la liste des anciens membres de la SCÉ, la liste des personnes associées au Centre d'excellence en évaluation du Secrétariat du Conseil du Trésor du Canada, et la liste des membres du

Centre de recherche et de développement sur le secteur bénévole. Le questionnaire était aussi librement accessible aux personnes informées de son existence par d'autres moyens. Tous les questionnaires complétés ont été acceptés.

La collecte de données a eu lieu sur le Web du 27 mai au 27 juillet 2005; 1 005 questionnaires ont été complétés. Il n'est pas possible de calculer un taux de réponse puisque nous ne connaissons pas le diviseur approprié (la taille de la population, dans le cas présent). Parce que le profil de la population est inconnu, nous n'avons pas calculé de facteur de pondération pour nos données.

Sur la base de l'échantillon complet de 1 005 participants, prenant pour acquis que ce groupe constitue un échantillon aléatoire d'une population de taille infinie, la marge d'erreur échantillonnage maximale est de ±3,1 points de pourcentage pour une proportion de 50 % à un niveau de confiance de 95 %, sans effet de plan. Les intervalles de confiance sont plus grands pour les sous-échantillons.

Profil des évaluateurs

Les producteurs canadiens d'évaluation sont davantage des femmes que des hommes. Plus fréquemment qu'autrement, ils travaillent dans les organisations dont ils évaluent les programmes, quoiqu'il existe un important groupe d'évaluateurs externes. La fonction publique fédérale est le principal employeur, suivi par les autres fonctions publiques et le secteur privé, ces deux derniers employant des nombres équivalents d'évaluateurs. Environ la moitié des producteurs canadiens d'évaluation investissent la majeure partie de leur temps en évaluation. La majorité se classe elle-même aux plus hauts échelons des organisations, ce qui suggère qu'il existe un manque de personnel de premier niveau en évaluation. Les producteurs canadiens d'évaluation se disent généralement bien rémunérés et profitent d'un haut niveau d'instruction—la grande majorité détient un diplôme d'études de deuxième cycle ou de troisième cycle.

Identification comme évaluateur

Le tiers des producteurs canadiens d'évaluation ressent un fort sentiment d'appartenance à la profession d'évaluateur et un autre tiers, un sentiment moins puissant. L'identification comme évaluateur ne se traduit pas nécessairement par un souci de planification d'une

carrière comme évaluateur, cependant, et un manque de sentiment d'appartenance à la profession d'évaluateur n'est pas nécessairement associé à un manque d'intérêt pour le travail en évaluation.

La pratique de l'évaluation

La pratique de l'évaluation au Canada est soumise en grande partie aux exigences de reddition de comptes (plutôt qu'à un espoir d'améliorer les programmes et leurs cibles). Elle est caractérisée par l'implication des parties intéressées et par l'indépendance limitée des producteurs d'évaluation. Selon les évaluateurs eux-mêmes, les méthodes d'évaluation qu'ils utilisent sont crédibles, même si elles sont parfois discutables sur le plan de la rigueur ou de l'innovation. Les évaluateurs disent soulever les questions importantes et difficiles. Cependant, au delà de l'utilité pour les décideurs, les impacts du travail d'évaluation peuvent être perçus comme décevants : l'autonomisation et l'accroissement de la capacité organisationnelle, les améliorations aux programmes et les bénéfices pour les clients, s'ils ne sont pas absents, sont limités.

Nos données permettent d'identifier trois mondes de la pratique évaluative : les fonctions publiques locales, régionales, et provinciales où les évaluateurs jouissent d'une indépendance limitée et où les méthodes d'évaluation sont jugées moins rigoureuses et moins crédibles; la fonction publique fédérale où les préoccupations de reddition de comptes sont cruciales mais où les impacts du travail évaluatif semblent moindres; et les secteurs sans but lucratif et de l'éducation où l'amélioration des programmes est une motivation importante, la participation est valorisée, la crédibilité de l'évaluation est élevée (quoique la rigueur des méthodes est particulière au secteur éducatif), et les impacts de l'évaluation sont importants.

L'environnement de travail

Plusieurs tendances ressortent des perceptions des évaluateurs en regard de leur environnement de travail. D'abord, une importante majorité des évaluateurs apprécie le contenu de leur travail, tout particulièrement le niveau d'indépendance dont ils jouissent. Cependant, le contexte plus large dans lequel ils évoluent est moins satisfaisant pour nombre d'évaluateurs—y inclus les occasions de promotion et les cheminements de carrière qui leur sont disponibles. Plusieurs sont aussi insatisfaits de leurs heures de travail et du niveau de stress

qui accompagne leur emploi. Le type de milieu de travail est associé à plusieurs de ces indicateurs. Dans plusieurs cas, les évaluateurs de la fonction publique fédérale sont moins susceptibles d'apprécier leur milieu de travail que leurs collègues du secteur privé, alors que les évaluateurs actifs dans les autres fonctions publiques se situent quelque part entre ces deux groupes en ce qui a trait à leurs perceptions de leur emploi.

Enjeux relatifs à la formation

Les producteurs d'évaluations détiennent une formation de haut niveau : la grande majorité détient au moins un diplôme de deuxième ou de troisième cycle. La formation officielle sur les méthodes des sciences sociales est plus susceptible d'avoir eu lieu dans une université alors que la formation officielle en évaluation tend à avoir pris la forme de cours et d'ateliers de perfectionnement professionnel. Les producteurs d'évaluation valorisent l'apprentissage sur l'évaluation par le biais d'ateliers de perfectionnement et de congrès mais les contraintes de la réalité font en sorte que plusieurs se contentent de l'option moins désirable (selon eux) de la formation en emploi. Les principales barrières à l'accès à la formation sont le temps disponible, la disponibilité de formation avancée, et la disponibilité de formation dans le domaine de pratique de l'évaluateur. Le manque d'occasion de mentorat a été relevé plus fréquemment par les évaluateurs qui ont un faible niveau d'identification avec le domaine de l'évaluation.

Enjeux reliés à l'offre d'évaluateurs

La majorité des évaluateurs a déjà eu de la difficulté à recruter du personnel ou des consultants qualifiés—un problème soulevé plus fréquemment par les évaluateurs qui s'identifient le plus étroitement au domaine de l'évaluation. Une majorité importante d'évaluateurs croit que les employeurs et les donneurs d'ordres préféreraient traiter avec des employés et des fournisseurs certifiés dans le domaine de l'évaluation; des proportions équivalentes aimeraient qu'il existe une façon d'identifier les personnes qualifiées pour prendre en charge des travaux d'évaluation.

Certification professionnelle

Plusieurs évaluateurs ont vécu des difficultés en lien avec l'offre de personnel en évaluation. La grande majorité pense que la certification

professionnelle en évaluation serait bien reçue par les employeurs et les donneurs d'ordres. Une majorité claire de producteurs d'évaluations a indiqué qu'ils entameraient une démarche de certification si une telle désignation professionnelle existait. Cette position était plus fréquente chez les personnes s'identifiant le plus étroitement au champ de l'évaluation. La certification professionnelle est vue comme un moyen d'améliorer la qualité du travail évaluatif. Les utilisateurs d'évaluations ont des vues plus positives par rapport à la certification professionnelle que les producteurs d'évaluations, et ils en sont des défenseurs plus vigoureux.

Enjeux cruciaux relatifs à la pratique de l'évaluation au Canada

Ce profil des évaluateurs canadiens et de leur pratique évaluative soulève des interrogations sérieuses dans au moins quatre domaines : (a) les motivations de l'évaluation, (b) la professionnalisation de la pratique de l'évaluation, (c) les besoins de formation professionnelle et de perfectionnement, et (d) le renouvellement des effectifs. Notre analyse des implications des résultats de notre étude dans chacun de ces domaines est présentée ci-après.

Motivations de l'évaluation

Une part importante du travail d'évaluation effectué au Canada semble motivé d'abord par des exigences de reddition de comptes et ensuite par des soucis d'amélioration ou de remise en question de programmes. Cette observation nous préoccupe en ce qu'elle remet en question le rôle de l'évaluation dans le cycle continuel de la planification et de l'ajustement intelligent, informé, et critique des programmes et des politiques. Elle suggère que l'attention importante accordée aux desiderata des agences centrales limite peut-être la contribution des évaluateurs à la redéfinition des programmes et à l'établissement des politiques prioritaires. Il est aussi possible que les évaluateurs soient aujourd'hui mal placés professionnellement ou sur le plan organisationnel pour contribuer autant qu'ils le pourraient autrement à l'amélioration des programmes. Tout cela soulève la question fondamentale des objectifs poursuivis par l'évaluation de programme telle que pratiquée en 2005 et de la mesure dans laquelle cette pratique correspond à la version idéaliste de l'évaluation comme outil de progrès social et économique. Cet enjeu conditionne aussi l'articulation des questions reliées à la professionnalisation, au perfectionnement professionnel, et au renouvellement des effectifs.

Professionnalisation de la pratique

Le tiers des producteurs canadiens d'évaluation ressent un fort sentiment d'appartenance à la discipline et les deux-tiers ont indiqué qu'ils seraient prêts à se plier aux exigences d'une certification professionnelle en évaluation si telle chose existait, ce qui laisse entendre qu'il existe un désir de plus grande affiliation à la profession. Ces données fournissent l'appui empirique le plus clair à date en faveur d'un engagement dans ce sens des associations professionnelles en évaluation (essentiellement, la SCÉ et ses sections régionales). Cette observation se conjugue toutefois avec d'autres faits troublants : la fréquence à laquelle les évaluateurs jugent que leur travail manque de rigueur et le besoin clairement exprimé de formation additionnelle (davantage sur cette question plus bas) confirment l'urgence de la nécessité de porter attention à l'amélioration de la qualité, peut-être par le biais de stratégies de professionnalisation comme la certification professionnelle. Concurremment, les réponses au sondage suggèrent que l'évaluation souffre de sous-estimation dans plusieurs contextes de pratique : près de la moitié des évaluateurs trouve que la position de l'évaluation dans leur organisation est un facteur de découragement dans leur travail. Ces résultats nous amènent à suggérer que l'évaluation vit actuellement une occasion rare d'améliorer le niveau de professionnalisation grâce à la certification professionnelle ou à d'autres stratégies. Les bénéfices potentiels devraient se mesurer en termes de qualité de la pratique évaluative et d'amélioration de la position de la fonction d'évaluation.

Toutefois, nos données suggèrent aussi que la certification professionnelle, quoique bénéficiant d'un large appui, pourrait rencontrer des défis importants dans sa quête d'objectifs de professionnalisation. Par exemple, les données indiquent qu'il existe des groupes importants d'évaluateurs actifs (peut-être le tiers des producteurs actuels d'évaluation) qui se sentent faiblement associés à la discipline et qui pourraient ne pas voir de bénéfice à souscrire aux objectifs de professionnalisation et dont les pratiques ne seraient probablement pas influencées par la mise en oeuvre d'un programme de certification volontaire. Accroître l'identification professionnelle de ces individus comme évaluateurs pourrait être une étape nécessaire au succès de la certification comme stratégie de professionnalisation. Un autre défi pourrait provenir des résultats de notre sondage en ce qui a trait aux niveaux perçus de rigueur : quoiqu'il soit possible que l'utilisation de méthodes insuffisamment rigoureuses découle en partie d'une expertise inadéquate chez les évaluateurs, elle pourrait aussi refléter des

problèmes que la certification professionnelle ne peut pas redresser seule, comme des ressources inadéquates pour mener des études d'évaluation rigoureuses, des pressions externes pour éviter les questions difficiles, une culture du travail simplement satisfaisant, des systèmes d'information qui ne produisent pas d'information de rendement utiles, et autres situations de ce genre. La certification professionnelle pourrait aussi créer des problèmes d'offre de main-d'oeuvre. La majorité des participants au sondage ont indiqué avoir eu des difficultés à trouver du personnel qualifié en évaluation. Si la certification pourrait aider les évaluateurs qualifiés à obtenir la reconnaissance de leurs habiletés et les utilisateurs d'évaluateurs à distinguer les évaluateurs qualifiés des autres, il n'est pas clair qu'elle conduirait à un accroissement de l'offre d'évaluateurs. La certification professionnelle pourrait en fait réduire l'offre si elle devenait une barrière additionnelle à l'accès à la profession. La majorité des participants au sondage pense que la certification ne résoudra pas le problème de l'offre de main-d'oeuvre. Le haut taux de roulement attendu dans la profession au cours des prochaines années ajoutera au problème.

Besoins de formation professionnelle et de perfectionnement

Le sondage démontre que plus de la moitié des producteurs d'évaluation pensent avoir besoin de davantage de formation pour mener à bien leurs responsabilités et plus de la moitié sont insatisfaits de la formation reçue pour rencontrer les exigences de leur emploi. Il s'agit d'un domaine de préoccupation majeure pour la profession, surtout compte tenu de la relation entre formation, identification professionnelle, et engagement en évaluation. Les données suggèrent aussi qu'il faut tenir compte de plusieurs parties intéressées dans le cadre du développement d'un plan complet de formation professionnelle et de perfectionnement : employeurs, institutions d'enseignement, mentors, et surtout les fournisseurs d'ateliers de perfectionnement et de congrès (en particulier, la SCÉ et ses sections régionales). Notre sondage identifie les principales contraintes à la formation; ces données et celles provenant d'autres études (CES, 2004) fournissent heureusement le fondement requis pour développer une réponse à ce besoin.

Renouvellement des effectifs

Les données du sondage documentent le petit nombre d'évaluateurs de premier rang au Canada. Cela pourrait être associé au cheminement professionnel habituel des évaluateurs selon lequel des professionnels

établis sont de passage dans des positions en évaluation — presque 70 % des producteurs d'évaluation participant au sondage n'ont pas planifié leur carrière en évaluation. Pourtant, l'évaluation est maintenant un champ de pratique spécialisé qui requiert une connaissance des méthodes de recherche, une pensée systémique, et plusieurs autres connaissances et habiletés (Zorzi et al., 2002b). Ce champ spécialisé exige une formation structurée et officielle tout autant que de la formation continue. La faible présence de jeunes évaluateurs possédant une formation officielle en évaluation et en méthodes de recherche en sciences sociales et l'intention d'une majorité des jeunes évaluateurs de quitter la discipline au cours des quelques prochaines années suggèrent que la profession n'est pas actuellement à même d'assurer le renouvellement (l'attraction et la rétention) d'une main-d'oeuvre stable, formée, et engagée. Malgré l'information fournie dans notre étude sur les facteurs d'attraction et de rétention des évaluateurs actifs, nous avons peu d'information sur les actions possibles pour attirer de jeunes évaluateurs dans la profession ou sur les effets d'encouragement ou de découragement de stratégies de professionnalisation comme l'accréditation des programmes d'enseignement ou la certification professionnelle. La responsabilité des évaluateurs d'expérience à l'égard des jeunes générations est claire. De plus, les données de notre sondage identifient des désincitatifs à la rétention qui sont particulièrement présents chez le plus important employeur en évaluation (la fonction publique fédérale) : les heures de travail, les occasions de promotion, et les niveaux de stress. Il serait éclairant de comparer la situation des évaluateurs avec celle d'autres occupations comme les vérificateurs ou les ingénieurs au sein des fonctions publiques, pour vérifier si ces résultats sont particuliers aux évaluateurs ou s'ils sont partagés par les autres professionnels travaillant dans ces milieux. Finalement, les données indiquent que les non-évaluateurs possèdent un point de vue plus négatif que les évaluateurs eux-mêmes en regard d'au moins trois aspects du travail d'évaluation : la clarté des objectifs de travail, la position de l'évaluation dans l'organisation, et le niveau d'indépendance. Des activités de promotion de la cause de l'évaluation et une meilleure promotion de l'évaluation au sein des organisations pourraient stimuler un intérêt accru pour la profession évaluative.

CONCLUSION

Cette étude fournit le premier portrait complet et représentatif de la pratique de l'évaluation au Canada. Dans l'ensemble, les données du sondage documentent de nombreuses forces de la pratique de l'évalua-

tion, mais elles identifient plusieurs enjeux de grande préoccupation. Ces enjeux concernent les motivations de l'évaluation et ce qui empêche peut-être l'évaluation de remplir ses promesses d'amélioration des programmes pour les Canadiens; ils concernent un mouvement clair en faveur de la certification professionnelle et de la professionnalisation en présence de barrières et de défis importants, dont le manque d'identification professionnelle d'une part importante des praticiens; ils concernent des besoins non assouvis en formation professionnelle et en perfectionnement; ils concernent la nécessité d'assurer l'engagement d'une nouvelle génération d'évaluateurs. Heureusement, les données suggèrent aussi des stratégies qui pourraient permettre de faire face à ces problèmes, y inclus la certification professionnelle et la reconnaissance de la formation, l'accès accru à la formation professionnelle et au perfectionnement, l'étude des cheminements de carrière en évaluation et la promotion de la profession, la défense de la cause de l'évaluation, et le développement d'une identification à une communauté d'évaluateurs. Il est clair que nous tous qui sommes engagés dans le développement de l'évaluation de programme au Canada avons un rôle à jouer dans ces projets.

POSTFACE

À date, les résultats de ce sondage, y inclus plusieurs analyses multivariées, ont été discutés dans des congrès de la SCÉ et dans d'autres contextes; les auteurs ont aussi soumis un document de réflexion sur les investissements prioritaires pour la SCÉ au Conseil national de la SCÉ en mai 2006. Nous rendons maintenant les micro-données du sondage disponibles publiquement (contactez l'auteur responsable pour accès); 90 % ($n = 902$) des participants au sondage ont accordé leur permission d'inclure leurs réponses dans une version publique et anonyme de la base de données. Nous invitons les lecteurs à faire leurs propres analyses et à contribuer dès lors à une meilleure compréhension de l'évaluation au Canada et à un plan d'action plus efficace pour la profession.

Benoît Gauthier (M.A., MPA, CMC, CMRP) specializes in strategic and organizational research and intervention, in market research, in program evaluation, in applied social research, and in policy analysis. He was an evaluator and evaluation director in federal departments and agencies before joining the private sector in 1989 and founding Circum Network Inc. in 1996. Mr. Gauthier was awarded the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) Award for Service to the Society in 2002, the CES-NCC Leadership Recognition Award in 2003, and the CES Award for Contribution to Evaluation in Canada in 2006.

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