
The Program Evaluation Standards in Evaluation Scholarship and Practice

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Background: The Program Evaluation Standards that were developed and approved by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation have served as a resource to the broader evaluation field for over four decades. However, little evidence has been collected regarding the extent to which the standards have influenced the field through scholarship or professional practice.

Purpose: This study seeks to estimate the prevalence of the Program Evaluation Standards in evaluation scholarship and professional practice.

Setting: Not applicable.

Intervention: Not applicable.

Research Design: The study combines a systematic review of evaluation literature with a survey of American Evaluation Association (AEA) and Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) members.

Data Collection and Analysis: A systematic review of articles published in 14 evaluation-specific journals from 2010 to 2020 was conducted to identify and typify articles citing the standards. Additionally, AEA and CES members were surveyed, with a focus on knowledge and use of the standards. Descriptive analyses are presented to quantify the prevalence of the standards in evaluation scholarship and practice, respectively.

Findings: The systematic review revealed that 4.48% of the 4,460 articles published in 14 evaluation-specific journals from 2010 to 2020 contained some use of the standards. Survey results show that 53.14% of AEA members and 67.12% of CES members are familiar with the standards and that, among those with knowledge of the standards, most AEA (67.67%) and CES (71.74%) members use them at least "occasionally" in their professional work, education, and scholarship activities.

Keywords: *program evaluation standards; Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation; American Evaluation Association; Canadian Evaluation Society; systematic review; research on evaluation.*

Background and Introduction

During the nearly 50 years that have elapsed since its founding, the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE) has developed, approved, and updated multiple sets of standards for personnel evaluation (JCSEE, 1988; Gullickson & Howard, 2009), classroom assessment (Klinger et al., 2015), and program evaluation (JCSEE, 1981, 1994; Yarbrough et al., 2011). The personnel and classroom assessment standards are primarily intended for school-based evaluations. In contrast, the Program Evaluation Standards are designed for use with all programs aiming to change “human motivation, attitudes, knowledge, skills, and performance” (Yarbrough et al., 2011, p. xxiv) and taking place in nearly any setting. As a result, the Program Evaluation Standards are the Committee’s most widely used set of standards.

Despite the longevity of the Program Evaluation Standards, little is known about the degree to which they are used in practice, taught to aspiring evaluators, or included in evaluation scholarship. Currently, the JCSEE must approach revisions without the benefit of strong evidence regarding how its standards are used or what programs or research exists to inform evaluators about how and why to employ the standards in practice. The study addresses this shortcoming by measuring the relative presence of the standards through systematic review and a survey of professional evaluators.

Study Objectives and Questions Investigated

The primary objective of this study is to determine the extent to which the Program Evaluation Standards (hereafter, “the standards”) are included in formal evaluation education, reflected in evaluation scholarship, and used in professional evaluation practice. The questions investigated, and their respective sub-questions, are as follows:

1. How prevalent are the standards in evaluation scholarship?
 - a. What proportion of articles published in peer-reviewed, evaluation-specific journals from 2010 to 2020 cite the standards?
 - b. In articles that cite the standards, what settings or research topic domains are addressed?
 - c. What proportion of articles in evaluation-specific journals that cite the standards

focus on the standards as a primary topic or research subject?

2. How prevalent are the standards in professional evaluation practice?
 - a. How knowledgeable are American Evaluation Association (AEA) and Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) members regarding the standards?
 - b. What proportion of AEA and CES members who report knowledge of the standards use them in their professional evaluation practice?
 - c. Among AEA and CES members who report having knowledge of the standards, where did they receive their training or knowledge of them?
 - d. Among AEA and CES members who use the standards in their evaluation practice, how and when do they use them?

Methodology

To investigate the first research question, a systematic review of scholarly literature was conducted. The process was guided by the general approach put forth by Petticrew and Roberts (2006). The number of articles discussing or citing the Program Evaluation Standards was used as the key measure of prevalence in evaluation scholarship. A period of measurement from 2010 to 2020 was used for the review, which captures the years immediately before and after publication of the third and most recent edition of the Program Evaluation Standards (Yarbrough et al., 2011). The authors also feel that the period of measurement is enough time to capture any changes or trends in the use of the standards.

To investigate the second research question, two surveys of professional evaluators were conducted. The survey design was cross-sectional in that it addressed the prevalence of standards usage only at one, recent point in time. A sample of members of AEA and CES were selected and asked to answer six questions addressing their familiarity with the standards, how they learned about the standards, and the manner and frequency of use of the standards in their professional practice.

Samples

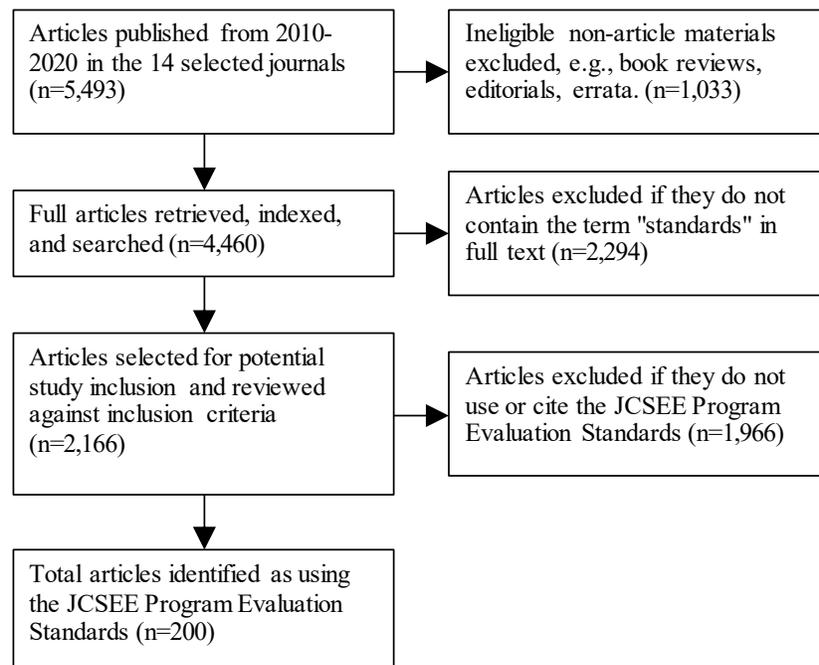
For the systematic review of scholarly literature, the following criteria were used to select academic journals: they publish peer-reviewed content, have a stated focus on evaluation, and are published in English. Publications that are not primarily focused on evaluation, but occasionally publish articles on

evaluation theory or practice, were excluded since they are numerous and not representative of the core of evaluation scholarship. In total, 14 evaluation-specific journals were used in the review: (1) *African Evaluation Journal* (AEJ), (2) *American Journal of Evaluation* (AJE), (3) *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* (CJPE), (4) *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* (EEPA), (5) *Evaluation: The International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice* (EIJTRP), (6) *Evaluation & the Health Professions* (EHP), (7) *Evaluation and Program Planning* (EPP), (8) *Evaluation Journal of Australasia* (EJA), (9) *Evaluation Review* (ER), (10) *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation* (JMDE), (11) *New Directions for Evaluation* (NDE), (12) *Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation* (PARE), (13) *Research Evaluation* (RE), and (14) *Studies in Educational Evaluation* (SEE).

To conduct the review, a multi-step sampling process was used to identify relevant articles. Figure 1 illustrates the review steps and number of journal articles screened during each step of the selection process. First, a list of all journal entries was identified ($n = 5,493$) for the 14 selected journals during the period of 2010 to 2020. From this initial list a population list ($n = 4,460$) was

developed by identifying articles, which were defined to be all published entries excluding book reviews, commentaries, editorials, technical notes, corrections, or contents tables. Next, an electronic text search was conducted in every article; if the term “standards” was identified, the article was set aside for secondary screening. This initial screening identified 2,166 articles as possibly using the standards. In the third stage, articles were randomly distributed to three reviewers to determine if the content of the article referred to the JCSEE program evaluation standards. Articles were considered to meet the study inclusion criteria if they either (1) cited the JCSEE program evaluation standards in the references section, or (2) included a discussion of the standards that clearly referenced the JCSEE or elements of the program evaluation standards (as opposed to standards of other types or organizations). The reviewers were instructed that clear discussions of the standards should include either mentions of specific aspects of the standards (e.g., standards domains such as “utility” or “feasibility”) or a clear misattribution of the standards to another related source (e.g., “the program evaluation standards created by AEA”).

Figure 1. Flowchart of Article Selection Process



The final number of articles included in the study is 200, which represents 4.48% of the full articles ($n = 4,460$) identified during the first step of the review process.

For the investigation of the prevalence of standards in professional evaluation, a random sample survey was conducted with members of the two major professional associations for evaluators in North America: the American Evaluation Association (AEA) and the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES). Each organization has its own application process and rules for granting permission to survey its membership.

The policy of AEA is to restrict membership surveys to research projects that are of quality and interest to the organization, as determined by a review panel. Researchers whose studies are approved by the committee are then provided with a list of contact information for a sample of current members who meet the study criteria. For this study, AEA provided the authors with a sample of 1,000 individuals drawn from the general membership population, along with specific language and opt-out instructions to include in the survey invitation. Of the 1,000 initial email invitations that were sent on March 14, 2022, 11 were returned as undeliverable or invalid. Therefore, the total size of the survey was 989. When the survey closed on March 24, 2022, 207 valid survey responses had been recorded, a response rate of 20.93%.

The policy of CES is that member contact information may not be stored on computer servers outside of Canada; therefore, the organization did not provide a list of email addresses. The CES secretariat sent out the survey link with an invitation message that was provided by the research team. Per CES policy, the sample consisted of all members who had not opted out of receiving survey mailings. On January 19, 2022, CES reported that a total of $n = 1,137$ invitations were emailed to members. A reminder email was sent by the CES secretariat to the same group of members on January 27. The online survey was closed at the end of the day on January 31. A total of 222 valid responses were recorded, a response rate of 19.53%. The response rate for the AEA and CES surveys was within the 15% to 25% range observed by Coryn et al. (2020) for evaluation survey response rates in recent years.

Survey Instruments and Procedures

The survey instruments used with the AEA and CES populations were identical except for introductory language, which was specific to each organization. At the start of the survey, an introductory page provided information on the purpose of the survey and contact information for participants to use if they had any questions or concerns regarding the study. The information on the first page followed guidelines set by the Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, which approved this study. After the introduction, the first question screened participants on whether they had heard of the JCSEE program evaluation standards. Participants who answered no were directed to the end of the survey. Participants who answered yes were presented with four multiple choice questions and one open-ended question, each addressing a different aspect of standards knowledge or use. At the end of the survey, all participants were offered the opportunity to enter a contest to win a gift card as an incentive for participation. To maintain the anonymity of participants, those who opted in to the contest were redirected to a separate form to enter their contact information, so that it would not be recorded with the survey responses.

Institutional Review

This study was reviewed and approved by the Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The introduction and consent language for each survey was also provided or approved by the respective membership organizations as a condition of contacting their members.

Analysis

Articles that met the systematic review criteria for inclusion were qualitatively analyzed by the reviewers to (1) determine whether the Program Evaluation Standards were used as a main topic and (2) categorize the articles by type. The standards were considered to be a main topic of the article if either the standards were a part of the title of the article or the purpose of the article involved testing, comparing, assessing, or describing how or why to use the standards. The categories for coding the type of each article are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Categories Used for Coding Articles by Type

Article type	Description
Research on evaluation	Articles presenting research results describing how evaluation is conducted, how evaluations are used, trends in evaluation practices, or the views of evaluators or evaluation consumers on some aspect of evaluation. Research on evaluation may use any systematic methodology.
Review	Articles that utilize an established review process, such as systematic reviews, meta-analyses, meta-evaluations, or literature reviews. The purpose is to examine or summarize existing research and data.
Methods	These articles present a new research or evaluation methodology, modify an existing methodology, or provide evidence regarding the strengths or weaknesses of a methodology.
Theory	The theoretical discussion of issues within evaluation. Ideas or reasoning may be discussed, or other research cited as part of proposing an idea or theory. These articles do not utilize a systematic research methodology.
Evaluation results	Articles presenting results of a program evaluation conducted by the authors.
Historical review	Discussions related to the history of evaluation or the background behind the development of new ideas, methods, or tools in evaluation.
Other	Articles that do not fall into one of the above categories.

To ensure consistency in the data, an initial set of articles was assigned to all three reviewers for the purpose of familiarizing them with the coding process. A meeting was held to compare the results and discuss any differences, with all reviewers coming to a collaborative agreement on how articles should be correctly coded. The remaining articles that met inclusion criteria were then randomly assigned to the reviewers for a first round of coding. Next, to ensure the accuracy of the ratings, a secondary review process was conducted wherein the articles initially screened by each reviewer were assigned to a different member of the review team. The overall level of agreement during the secondary screen was 63.76%. The major source of inter-rater disagreement was in the coding of the types of articles (67.69% theme coding agreement), while agreement on coding of whether the article includes the PES was over 95%.

After the secondary coding, all instances of inter-rater disagreement were reviewed through a collaborative adjudication process involving all reviewers and the lead author. At the end of the process all review ratings were agreed upon by all reviewers and the final decision or rating was recorded into the data. The coding for each article was recorded by the reviewers on a single, shared master spreadsheet, which was then exported to SPSS for analysis.

Data from the surveys of AEA and CES members were downloaded from the online survey platform in SPSS file format. Prior to analysis, the data were examined and cleaned to remove any completely blank responses, which may be recorded by the survey system if a respondent previews the survey to see the questions before deciding to participate. All partial responses were recorded and included in the analysis.

Results

Standards in Scholarship

The review of journal articles found that 4.48% ($n = 200$) of the 4,460 articles published in the 14 evaluation-centric journals from 2010 to 2020 contained some use of the standards. As shown in Table 2, both the number and the percentage share of articles that use the Program Evaluation Standards vary greatly across journals. The two journals that most frequently published articles that use the standards, the *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* and the *American Journal of Evaluation*, are both produced by the respective professional evaluator association in Canada and the United States.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of articles published each year from 2010 to 2020 that used

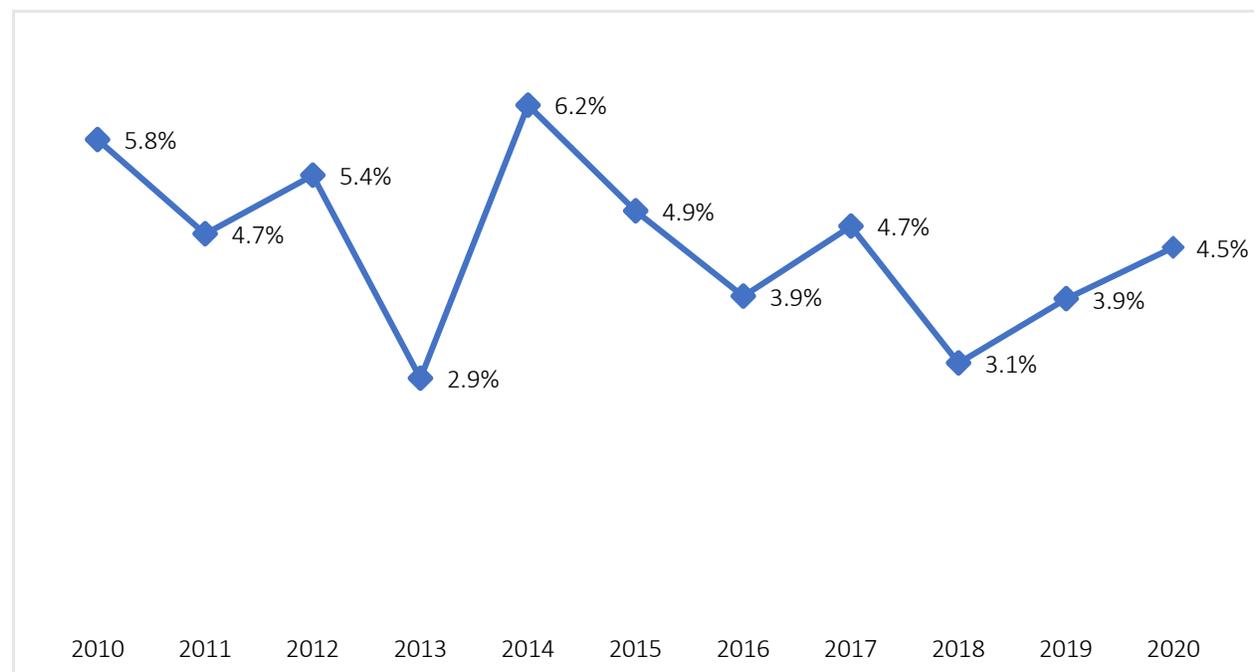
the Program Evaluation Standards. The proportion ranges from a low of 2.88% in 2013 to a high of 6.22% in 2014. The proportion of articles

that use or cite the standards declined slightly over time, despite increases during the three most recent years, 2018 through 2020

Figure 2. Share of Articles Including the Standards by Journal

Journal	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation (CJPE)</i>	199	30	15.08
<i>American Journal of Evaluation (AJE)</i>	377	50	13.26
<i>Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation (JMDE)</i>	151	15	9.93
<i>Evaluation Journal of Australasia (EJA)</i>	140	12	8.57
<i>New Directions for Evaluation (NDE)</i>	390	28	7.18
<i>Evaluation: The International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice (EIJTRP)</i>	292	12	4.11
<i>Evaluation and Program Planning (EPP)</i>	967	39	4.03
<i>African Evaluation Journal (AEJ)</i>	108	3	2.78
<i>Practice Assessment, Research and Evaluation (PARE)</i>	167	2	1.20
<i>Studies in Educational Evaluation (SEE)</i>	500	5	1.00
<i>Evaluation & the Health Professions (EHP)</i>	302	2	0.66
<i>Research Evaluation (RE)</i>	364	2	0.55
<i>Evaluation Review (ER)</i>	207	0	0
<i>Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis (EEPA)</i>	296	0	0
Total	4,460	200	4.48

Figure 2. Proportion of Articles Using the JCSEE Program Evaluation Standards, 2010–2020



The review found that the standards are rarely the primary focus of articles published in the 14 evaluation-centric journals. Only 0.5% ($n = 1$) of the

200 articles that use the standards met the review criteria to be coded as having featured the

standards as the main topic. All other articles used the standards as part of a larger study or discussion.

Articles that feature the standards do not vary considerably by type; approximately half of all articles fall into two categories: results of research

on evaluation and papers that discuss or introduce evaluation methodologies. Table 3 shows the distribution of articles that use the standards by article type

Table 3. Types of Articles Using the JCSEE Program Evaluation Standards, 2010–2020

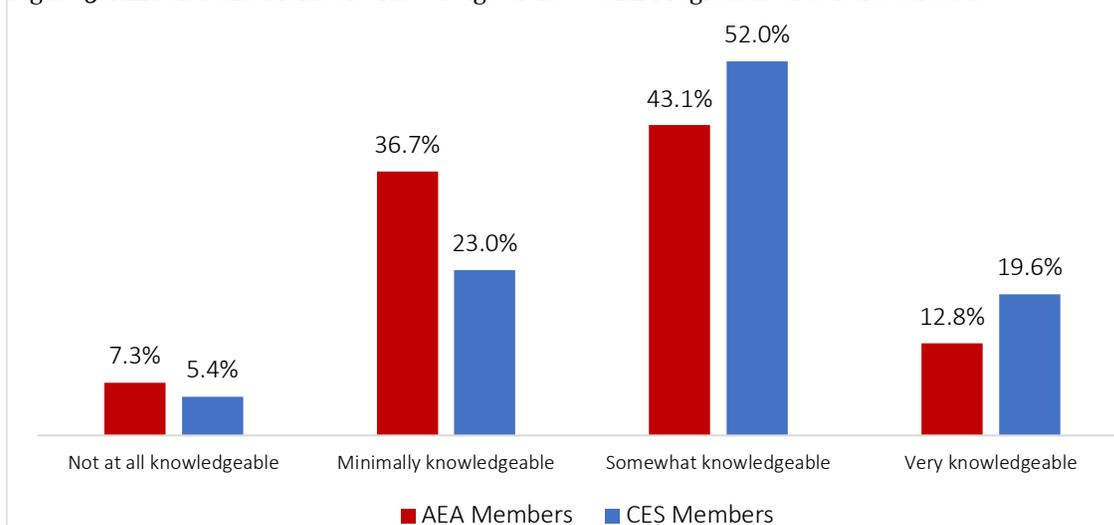
Article type	n	%
Research on evaluation	51	25.50
Methods	48	24.00
Theory	37	18.50
Review	23	11.50
Other	18	9.00
Historical review or discussion	14	7.00
Evaluation results	9	4.50
Total	200	–

Standards in Professional Practice

The survey responses indicate that most professional evaluators are familiar with the JCSEE program evaluation standards. A total of 53.14% ($n = 110$) of respondents to the AEA survey and 67.12% ($n = 149$) of respondents to the CES survey indicated that they had heard of the standards. Among those who know about the standards, the self-rating of knowledge was moderate. As shown in Figure 3, a plurality (43.12%, $n = 47$) of AEA respondents and a majority (52.03%, $n = 77$) of CES

respondents rated themselves as being “somewhat knowledgeable” about the standards. The surveys indicate that those who are knowledgeable about the standards learned about them in a variety of ways (Table 4). Among AEA respondents, the most common sources of knowledge regarding the standards include college courses on program evaluation (35.45%, $n = 39$) and professional conferences (35.45%, $n = 39$), whereas CES respondents are most likely to have learned about the standards during the process of attaining the CES Credentialed Evaluator designation (45.64%, $n = 68$).

Figure 3. AEA and CES Members' Knowledge of the JCSEE Program Evaluation Standards



Note. A total of 109 AEA participants and 148 CES participants responded to this question.

Table 4. Evaluators’ Sources of Knowledge about the JCSEE Program Evaluation Standards

Source of knowledge	AEA members		CES members	
	<i>n</i>	% ^a	<i>n</i>	% ^a
During the process of attaining the CES Credentialed Evaluator designation ^b	–	–	68	45.64
During a college course on program evaluation	39	35.45	32	21.48
At a conference	39	35.45	27	18.12
Through a peer, colleague, or mentor	33	30.00	34	22.82
By reading a journal article that discussed the standards	33	30.00	27	18.12
By reading the official standards book from JCSEE	32	29.09	37	24.83
As part of a training or professional development session	30	27.27	40	26.85
By reading a book on evaluation that discusses the standards	26	23.63	32	21.48
Other	15	13.63	28	18.79
I have never learned anything about the Program Evaluation Standards	0	0.00	1	0.67

Note. A total of 108 AEA participants and 141 CES participants chose at least one source.

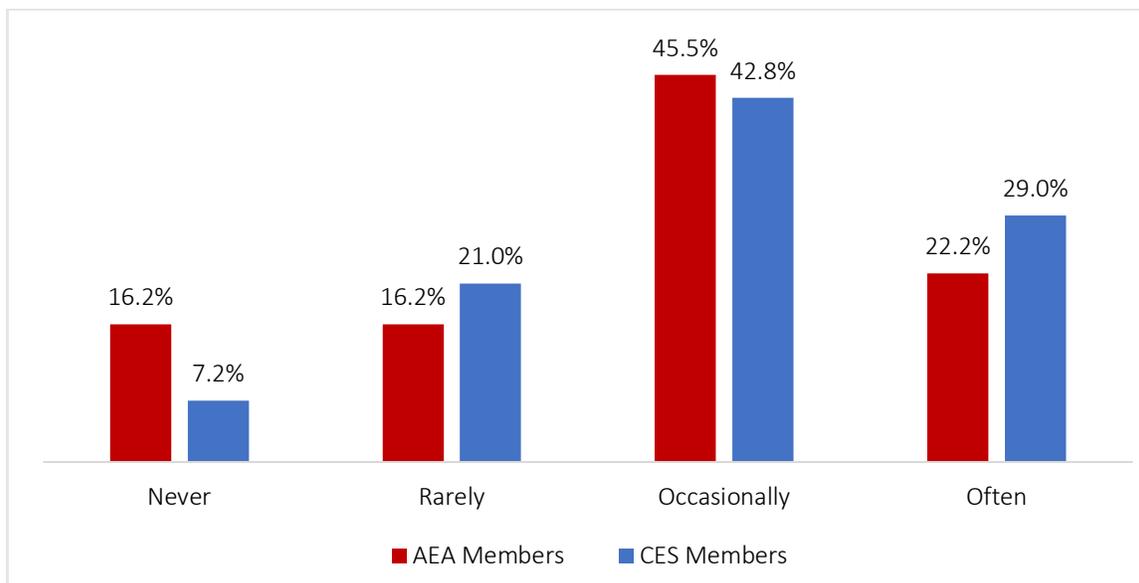
^a Percentage of the total participants who were presented with the question (AEA *n* = 110; CES *n* = 149). ^b Response option offered only for CES participants.

Use of the standards in professional practice or scholarship is relatively common amongst those evaluators who are familiar with the standards. As shown in Figure 4, the share of professional evaluators who use the standards “occasionally” or “often” is 67.67% (*n* = 67) among respondents from AEA and 71.74% (*n* = 99) among CES respondents.

The survey also asked respondents to identify all the ways that they have previously utilized the standards in their professional work or scholarship.

Most respondents to both the AEA (57.27%, *n* = 63) and CES (69.80%, *n* = 104) surveys selected more than one method they use to apply the standards in their work. The most common application of the standards by AEA (55.45%, *n* = 61) and CES (61.74%, *n* = 92) members is “to guide the development of evaluation plans.” Table 5 lists all the uses of the standards selected by the professional evaluators in the AEA and CES surveys.

Figure 4. Frequency of Use of the JCSEE Program Evaluation Standards in Professional Practice



Note. A total of 99 AEA participants and 138 CES participants responded to this question.

Table 5. Uses of the JCSEE Program Evaluation Standards in Professional Practice and Scholarship

Use of the standards	AEA members		CES members	
	<i>n</i>	% ^a	<i>n</i>	% ^a
To guide the development of evaluation plans	61	55.45	92	61.74
To inform clients about how program evaluations are conducted	42	38.18	74	49.66
To educate students or aspiring evaluators about how evaluations are conducted	36	32.72	58	38.93
To assess evaluations conducted by other evaluators	27	24.54	39	26.17
To assess the quality of my completed evaluation projects	26	23.63	50	33.56
To cite knowledge of evaluation standards for evaluation or grant proposals	25	22.72	49	32.89
I have not used the standards in my professional practice	21	19.09	13	8.72
I have cited the evaluation standards in journal articles or other publications	16	14.54	28	18.79
Other	9	8.18	18	12.08

Note. A total of 84 AEA participants and 128 CES participants selected at least one use. Some use descriptions have been truncated to fit the table.

^a Percentage of the total participants who were presented with the question (AEA *n* = 110; CES *n* = 149).

At the end of both the AEA and CES surveys, respondents were asked, "How could the Program Evaluation Standards be improved to better serve professional evaluators?" A sizeable number of survey participants provided some form of response to the question (AEA *n* = 64; CES *n* = 94).

Table 6 summarizes the qualitative themes identified in the open-ended responses. The most common themes regard how the standards are promoted and disseminated or suggest the development of supplemental resources that show how to use or understand the standards in practice.

Table 6. Response Themes for How the Standards Can Better Serve Professional Evaluators¹

Theme and description	Example quotes	AEA members		CES members	
		<i>n</i>	% ^a	<i>n</i>	% ^a
Promotion and dissemination					
Suggestions that the standards be more widely advertised and distributed to evaluators	"Promote through evaluation associations. Include in basic training programs on evaluation." "The [PES] needs to be part of all evaluation curriculum and training programs."	18	28.1	16	17.0
Alternative and supplemental resources					
Recommendations concerning the development of resources that facilitate evaluators' understanding and use of the standards	"Distilling the standards in different ways (e.g., short videos, vignettes/examples)." "Simple to use tools and checklists or templates would ease the work even further for evaluators."	9	14.1	21	22.3

¹Note. Percentages do not total 100% because some responses did not include recommendations for improvement. The coding scheme permitted responses to be categorized under multiple themes.

^aPercentage of the total participants who provided a response to this question (AEA *n* = 64; CES *n* = 94).

Breadth and inclusivity					
Suggestions that the standards statements and/or dimensions be broadened to meet current trends in evaluation practice	“Ensure the Program Evaluation Standards also take a decolonial, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive stance on evaluation.”	7	10.9	9	9.6
	“More emphasis on stakeholder involvement in evaluation—especially underrepresented populations being evaluated.”				
Examples and presentation					
Recommendations that the official text present more practical examples of how to apply the standards	“Provide examples of how the standards are fulfilled / attended to.”	7	10.9	7	7.5
	“I think practical examples are helpful for evaluators to understand each standard.”				
Clarity and accessibility					
Comments regarding the specificity of the standards and the language used in the official text	“Create a more user-friendly user guide / explanation of the standards”	5	7.8	10	10.6
	“Clarify how these are / are not supposed to be used in line with the AEA Ethical Standards.”				
Length and simplicity					
Comments regarding the brevity of the standards	“I think it would help if they were simplified—perhaps with fewer standards”	5	7.8	10	10.6
	“Simplified! There are so many, it’s complicated!”				
Frequency of review and revision					
Comments regarding how often the standards are reevaluated and republished by the JCSEE	“By reviewing [the standards] continuously. By conducting regular surveys.”	2	3.1	8	8.5
	“[Continue] to monitor and update the Standards so they remain current and reflect best practices.”				

Discussion

The results of the systematic review show that the standards are not prevalent in evaluation scholarship. Most evaluation articles published from 2010 to 2020 (95.52%, $n = 4,260$) did not mention, use, or otherwise cite the standards. Among journal articles that did use the standards, the primary focus was almost never on the evaluation standards themselves; the review identified only one article solely dedicated to the standards (see Yarbrough, 2017). More commonly, the standards were cited as influencing the development of other methods or as being used in the quality assessment of evaluations being studied.

The standards are found more frequently in professional practice. The survey results show that most evaluation professionals in both AEA and CES are familiar with the standards. Additionally, large

portions of those who are familiar with the standards consider themselves to be at least “somewhat knowledgeable” about the standards (see Figure 3). Application of the standards in professional practice is substantial as well, with a majority of those who are familiar with the standards indicating that they use them at least “occasionally” in their own work or scholarship (see Figure 4). It seems that evaluators find the standards particularly useful in guiding the development of proposals and when talking to clients about how evaluations are conducted—both activities that are only relevant in the realm of real-world evaluation practice.

It is also interesting to note that the use of the standards evident in scholarly publications is highest in the journals published by AEA and CES, respectively: the *American Journal of Evaluation* (AJE) and the *Canadian Journal of Program*

Evaluation (CJPE). As publications of the two largest associations for professional evaluators in North America, both journals are publicized and targeted to practitioner audiences. Additionally, as noted earlier, both AEA and CES were early supporters of the development of the standards when the JCSEE first formed and voted to include organizations representing evaluation practitioners (Sanders, 1999).

When considered in the context of how the JCSEE might improve the standards and increase their use, the findings of the systematic review and survey seem to suggest that the focus should be on professional evaluators. Some ideas may be found in the suggestions that AEA and CES members provided regarding future improvements to the standards (see Table 6). Among the AEA respondents, the most common suggestions were related to how information about evaluation standards is disseminated in the field; for example, respondents suggested more promotion of the standards through professional associations and broader inclusion in evaluator training programs. Respondents to the CES survey provided more suggestions related to improving the quality and availability of resource materials, which could help them to better understand the standards and how to apply them in practice.

Finally, another factor to consider is the different characteristics found within the primary user markets for the standards: the United States and Canada. For example, AEA members generally report being less familiar with the standards than the CES survey respondents (see Figure 3), which may suggest a greater need for promotion and training opportunities for evaluators in the United States. Conversely, many CES respondents reported learning about the standards through the Credentialed Evaluator program or professional development sessions, suggesting that training options are more developed for Canadian evaluators. To address these and other differences between the U.S. and Canadian evaluation contexts, the JCSEE may need to tailor the revised standards products to better reach each audience. One possibility could be to promote learning the standards in the United States, while developing supplemental materials specifically targeted to the needs of Canadian evaluators.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The examination of the use of the Program Evaluation Standards in scholarship was limited to

articles published in English-language evaluation-focused academic journals. Use of the standards may be evident in publications outside our sample, such as discipline-specific journals (e.g., *Educational Research and Evaluation*; *Journal of Social Service Research*), as well as gray literature, which includes sources such as evaluation or research reports, conference proceedings, and government publications (see Alberani et al., 1990).

The examination of the use of the Program Evaluation Standards in professional practice only queried members of two professional evaluator associations: AEA and CES. As such, the study misses the views of professional evaluators who primarily work outside of the United States or Canada and are members of associations in other geographic regions (for a list of associations for evaluators see BetterEvaluation, 2021). It is reasonable to conclude that the memberships of AEA and CES do not fully capture all professional evaluators, since membership is voluntary and fee-based. Finally, it is worth noting that there is insufficient information to assess whether the survey data are representative of the population of AEA's and CES's memberships, or to determine the reasons behind differences in the responses from each group. Current membership demographics were not provided by either association, and the survey was not designed to study response differences between the two populations.

Given that little research has been conducted on the standards, there are opportunities to further expand on this study and address some of its known limitations. To fully measure use and application of the standards, surveys should be conducted across a sample of evaluators that is representative of the broader population of evaluation practitioners—not just those who are members of AEA or CES. Additionally, further inquiry is needed into why and how evaluation professionals learn about the standards. The findings from this study suggest that U.S. and Canadian evaluators tend to learn about the standards in different ways. For example, most AEA respondents reported learning about the standards through academic experiences, such as college or conference attendance, versus CES respondents, who were more likely to learn by completing professional activities such as the Credentialed Evaluator program or a professional development session. Understanding how U.S. and Canadian evaluators differ and how best to reach each group with information has the potential to help JCSEE improve its approach to designing and sharing standards that are useful to the field.

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