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Understanding How Evaluators Deal with Multiple Stakeholders

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Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

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Although many leaders in evaluation advise evaluators to address the diverse needs of stakeholders, very little is known about how or if practicing evaluators address this injunction. Understanding how practicing evaluators address the needs of multiple stakeholders could inform evaluator training. The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe what practicing evaluators do when faced with conflicting stakeholder values. This study invited five evaluators to share their experiences working with multiple stakeholders while reflecting on how they deal with multiple and often conflicting values as they seek to serve the stakeholders. One implication from this study was the need for clarification of two documents covering evaluation standards: *The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation* and the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators.* A second implication was the need for consistency among and expansion of evaluation training programs. Practical tips for evaluators included (a) selecting stakeholders with similar values, (b) working with stakeholders who shift evaluator thinking, (c) having early discussions of evaluation expectations, (d) reporting results objectively, and (e) dealing with the complex nature of conflicting values among stakeholders. The results presented in this study are intended to help evaluators better understand and thoughtfully use the many suggestions from theorists by providing concrete examples of evaluator-stakeholder interaction, specifically within the context of dealing with the conflicting values of multiple stakeholders. The results of this study may be used in curriculum development for helping evaluators in training and professional development environments.

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The dissertation of Michelle Elyce Baron is acceptable in its final form including (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory and ready for submission.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The nature of evaluation involves making value judgments regarding the merit or worth of something (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). According to many evaluation theorists, two important tasks of all evaluators involve clarifying the relevant values of people who care (stakeholders) about a particular program, product, process, or person (evaluands); and identifying the criteria and standards associated with stakeholders' values for use in judging that evaluand (Alkin, 2004; Bryk, 1983; Chen, 2005; Coghlan, Preskill, & Catsambas, 2003; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Gold, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; House & Howe, 1999; Patton, 1997; Preskill & Coghlan, 2003; Stake, 2004). Because types of stakeholders and their values likely differ within any given evaluation, logic dictates that evaluators must make decisions regarding the prioritization and accommodation of conflicting values and associated criteria and standards.

Very little literature describes how evaluators actually work to understand stakeholders' values, how they translate values into criteria and standards that can be used to judge how well evaluands are performing, how they attend differentially to multiple stakeholders' values, how they negotiate conflicting values among relevant stakeholders, or if and how they balance stakeholders' conflicting values in order to conduct an effective evaluation that serves all stakeholders appropriately. This study explored this problem through case studies of five evaluators.

Problem

Although many leaders in evaluation advise evaluators to balance the needs of the client and other stakeholders, one problem is that very little is known about how or if practicing evaluators address this injunction. To help practicing evaluators better understand and

thoughtfully use the many suggestions from theorists, they need descriptions of how practicing evaluators deal with issues in day-to-day practical situations. The evaluation literature has very few descriptions of people practicing evaluation and, in particular, describing what they do when dealing with stakeholders with conflicting values. Understanding how practicing evaluators address the needs of multiple stakeholders could inform evaluator training.

Another problem is that there is a plethora of literature that links theory and practice (Alkin, 1991; Alkin, 2003; Alkin & Ellett, 1985; Christie, 2003; Fitzpatrick, 2004; Schwandt, 2005; Shaw & Faulkner, 2006). However, few authors (e.g., Tourmen, 2009) document how evaluators actually practice evaluation. This study addressed the challenges of completing an evaluation that involves multiple stakeholders (e.g., identifying and addressing issues, taking on different roles), and the way evaluators deal with conflicting values among stakeholders in terms of the degree and nature of attention and heed they pay to various stakeholders within the context of serving those stakeholders through particular evaluations. This study will help evaluators when making decisions about how to deal with the conflicting values among stakeholders by providing them with real-world examples.

The benefit of this research from a practical standpoint is that describing what evaluators actually do in given situations may greatly enhance current evaluation curriculum and training by helping evaluators understand the foundations of evaluation practice, and the associated fine art of wrestling with those building blocks (Schwandt, 2005). Up-and-coming evaluators from academia need actual scenarios documenting evaluation in action: how real evaluators make decisions on bona fide issues in dealing with conflicting values among stakeholders. Evaluation students and professors together can analyze those scenarios to

uncover best practices in evaluation, and to develop examples that evaluators may readily

extract on demand as they face similar transpirations in their evaluation careers.

Purpose and Questions of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe what practicing evaluators do

when faced with conflicting stakeholder values. This research study focused on documenting

the lived experience of evaluators as they address conflicting values of multiple stakeholders

they seek to serve. Specifically this study addressed the following questions:

1. What is the experience of evaluators in dealing with multiple stakeholders?

2. What does it mean for an evaluator to deal with conflicting values among stakeholders?

3. What roles do evaluators take on to resolve conflicting values among stakeholders?

4. What *reasoning* is used by evaluators in dealing with conflicting values among

stakeholders? Here the word *reasoning* refers to how evaluators make decisions, and not to the

cognitive psychology aspect of thinking.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter compares and contrasts evaluation standards in terms of the experience of evaluators in dealing with multiple stakeholders, the meaning for an evaluator to deal with conflicting values among stakeholders, the roles evaluators take on to resolve conflicting values among stakeholders, and the reasoning used by evaluators in dealing with conflicting values among stakeholders. The chapter also explains the concept of values as it relates to evaluation, and describes what evaluation theorists have said about working with stakeholders.

Evaluation Standards Documents

The evaluation literature has made it clear that stakeholders and their values are central to evaluations of all kinds (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 2008; Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). Guidelines and standards have been established to encourage evaluators to attend to stakeholders' values for ethical as well as practical reasons.

Two prominent documents summarize several guidelines and standards that have evolved in the evaluation field to guide evaluators in dealing with situations among multiple stakeholders: the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*, which describe the daily activities evaluators should be engaged in, and the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, which contain 30 standards by which to judge the soundness of specific evaluations.

The Guiding Principles for Evaluators. In 1994, the American Evaluation Association (AEA) formed its *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* (Newman, Scheirer, Shadish, & Wye, 1995), which include standards of systematic inquiry, competence, integrity and honesty, respect for people, and responsibilities for general and public welfare. The following are the places in the document that address stakeholders.

Section C: Integrity/Honesty. Listed under Section C: Integrity/Honesty, the Guiding Principles offer some guidance to evaluators in dealing with stakeholder issues. Point one in that section advises evaluators to "negotiate honestly with clients and relevant stakeholders" (Newman et al., 1995, p. 23), but does not identify who the client and relevant stakeholders are.

Point three advises evaluators "to determine, and where appropriate be explicit about, their own, their clients', and other stakeholders' interests concerning the conduct and outcomes of an evaluation (including financial, political, and career interests)" (Newman et al., 1995, p. 23). Who are the "other stakeholders"? How does the evaluator weigh these interests against each other, or does the evaluator attempt to accommodate everyone?

Section E: Responsibilities for General and Public Welfare. Section E: Responsibilities for General and Public Welfare, looks at the scope of considerations for the evaluators to keep in mind. Point one advises evaluators to "consider including important perspectives and interests of the full range of stakeholders in the object being evaluated" (Newman et al., 1995, p. 25). The operative word here is *including*, which could mean anything from simply making a mental note of the perspective to actively weighing and balancing stakeholder interests when designing the evaluation plan. How does the evaluator know which perspectives to include, and how to disseminate evaluation information?

Point three puts information dissemination at the forefront, advising evaluators to "allow all relevant stakeholders to have access to evaluative information and should actively disseminate that information to stakeholders if resources allow" (Newman et al., 1995, p. 25). While evaluation reporting and dissemination is a basic part of the evaluation process, this point also raises a few questions: How does the evaluator discern who the relevant stakeholders are? If the evaluator receives information requests from an irrelevant stakeholder, should the

evaluator still grant him or her access to the information? What should the evaluator do if a stakeholder seeks to prevent information dissemination of the evaluation results?

Point four advises evaluators to "maintain a balance between client needs and other needs" (Newman et al., 1995, p. 25), and to engage in conflict identification and resolution for any issues. This point, however, does not explain how to maintain that balance, thus opening up a wide area for interpretation.

Overall, the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* essentially put the burden of proof on the evaluator to discern situations where values conflict, disclose potential conflicts in the evaluation, defend sometimes unpopular solutions to the conflict, and decline evaluations if necessary. While this responsibility does not release the stakeholders from responsibility, evaluators must initiate appropriate conversations to resolve each situation, according to the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*.

The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. Created in 1975 to address the quality of evaluation for Western cultures, the committee now includes seventeen different organizations who continually clarify evaluation standards for various facets of evaluation. In particular, the committee has developed three sets of standards: personnel (Stufflebeam, 1988), program (Sanders, 1994), and student (Gullickson, 2003). All three sets of standards address four main topics: propriety (i.e., ethics and legality), utility (i.e., information and influence), feasibility (i.e., implementation and efficiency), and accuracy (i.e., technical and logical). The committee continually reviews, revises, and develops new standards as occasions warrant. While the evaluation community has not formally adopted these standards, the standards serve to guide numerous evaluation organizations in their pursuit of judging the worth

or merit of evaluands. Out of thirty standards, only four address stakeholders directly, though several others imply the importance of addressing stakeholders and their values.

Utility Standard One: Stakeholder Identification. Utility Standard One: Stakeholder Identification, states, "Persons involved in or affected by the evaluation should be identified, so that their needs can be addressed" (Sanders, 1994, p. 23). Sanders offers some guidelines to evaluators: including using stakeholders to find other stakeholders, discussing needs within the evaluation constraints with each stakeholder group, and involving the client and other stakeholders in the design and conduct of the evaluation (reflective of a participatory approach). How and to what extent should all of these activities be accomplished? Should there be a point where inclusion stops and evaluation begins?

Feasibility Standard Two: Political Viability. Feasibility Standard Two: Political Viability, advises evaluators to plan the evaluation with the interests of different stakeholder groups in mind so "possible attempts by any of these groups to curtail evaluation operations or to bias or misapply the results can be averted or counteracted" (Sanders, 1994, p. 71). This includes identifying and documenting these different perspectives. How does the evaluator keep track of all these perspectives, let alone integrate them into the evaluation process?

Propriety Standards Six: Disclosure of Findings, and Seven: Conflict of Interest. Propriety Standards Six and Seven parallel that of the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* by encouraging disclosure of the evaluation results and discussion of conflicts openly in order to avoid thwarting the evaluation. Must the evaluator accommodate every stakeholder within a certain political, social, economical, or organizational radius? How does the evaluator ascertain which conflicts should be addressed and which stakeholders should be given evaluation results?

In summary, the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* and the *Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation* identify much of the accumulated wisdom of many theorists and practitioners who have thought and written about evaluators and stakeholders and lay some ground rules for evaluation planning and execution. However, they do not describe evaluators dealing with conflicting values among stakeholders and raise many questions that need further exploration and clarification.

Values of Evaluators and Stakeholders

Values are beliefs held about people, things, events, or emotions. People acquire values based on upbringing, education, life experiences, or any combination thereof (Goldthwait, 1996). Examples of values may be found within the family (e.g., patriotism, work, and responsibility), the military (e.g., the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage), and business organizations (e.g., hard work, sacrifice, quality).

When people speak of values, they often refer to moral values - or conditions of right and wrong. There are also many other types of values. Cohen (1985, pp. 4-7) describes seven types of values:

1. Intrinsic–a state or condition of being (e.g., health, freedom)

2. Extrinsic–an activity or state of affairs (e.g., going to the dentist is good for maintaining oral health)

3. Use–the utility of a physical object (e.g., a hammer is good for pounding nails)

4. Inherent–the perception of value (e.g., a beautiful painting)

5. Moral–conditions of right and wrong (e.g., stealing is morally wrong)

6. Personality–qualities that people ascribe to each other (e.g., boisterous, penitent, admirable)

7. Epistemic–related to the act of believing (e.g., warranted, justified)

Other authors (Bahm, 1993; Goldthwait, 1996) break down values into more descriptive categories such as beliefs and claims, good and bad, ends and means, actual and potential, subjective and objective, apparent and real, pure and mixed. Each of these categories can be further broken down by degrees, with ultimate judgment based on the beholder of the value. A value judgment, therefore, is a statement about the value of a person, thing, or event based on its context. Statements such as, *that was a great movie*, or, *I think I ate some bad food*, are examples of judgments of a situation based on a set of circumstances.

In evaluations, evaluators have a responsibility to proclaim a value judgment on the evaluand (Worthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, 2004). Statements such as, *The program is not effective in achieving the learning outcomes*, or *The community development strategy has had a profound effect on reducing the influence of gangs* stem from the common evaluation procedure of weighing the criteria and standards against what is actually happening in a given program (Worthen et al., 2004). By developing criteria and standards together with stakeholders, evaluators work with stakeholders to clarify their values for the particular evaluand (Shadish, 1998).

However, not all stakeholders hold the same values. While an evaluation may pass through the criteria and standards development phase fairly smoothly, situations among stakeholders or between the evaluator and associated stakeholders may arise during the course of the evaluation that may create conflicts. While some conflicts may be minor, others may prevent the evaluation from taking place at all, create an abrupt end to the evaluation, or taint

the evaluation results and may ultimately lead to program decisions based on inaccurate information (Sanders, 1994). How do evaluators wrestle with these situations? The current evaluation literature says very little about how evaluators actually work with stakeholders and their values, especially when these are in conflict.

Working with Stakeholders

In the following sections, I will briefly describe ways the current literature fails to address the content in the research questions. The literature presented here will later be compared to actual evaluator experiences gathered during this study.

Roles of the evaluator. All the roles an evaluator may assume are context dependent (MacNeil, 2002). Some roles may differ, for example, if the evaluator serves an external versus an internal function. Some roles may be influenced by stakeholder familiarity with evaluation concepts and procedures. These roles may exist in any combination. Of the changing nature of evaluator roles, Lau, Netherland, and Haywood (2003) state (in reference to a youth program),

> Once the youth workers and agency gain facility with self-evaluation techniques, the role of the evaluator changes to one of collaboration, with youth practitioners in the lead, to engage youth in evaluation. At that point, the evaluator lends credibility to the program and evaluation processes by demonstrating how best to find measurable data, use findings for improvement, and share results to build support for newly defined program successes. (p. 57)

The current literature describes many roles of the evaluator. These roles may be divided into the categories of researcher, consultant, teacher, and judge.

As a researcher (a.k.a., improver, innovator), the evaluator gathers, analyzes, synthesizes, and disseminates information about the evaluand and the associated evaluation.

Some of this information includes stakeholder values surrounding the evaluation, which then facilitates the development of the context, criteria, standards, and procedures for the evaluation (Jenness & Barley, 1995).

As a consultant, (a.k.a., negotiator, facilitator, mediator), the evaluator provides an environment conducive to evaluation (Jenness & Barley, 1995; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Shulha (2001) describes a typical facilitation process:

> The evaluator highlights differences in expectations, potential unintended outcomes, and assumptions about causal linkages, and offers alternative explanations and decisions, all with the goal of accurately capturing the intentions, assumptions, and theories of stakeholders. This role requires that the evaluator immerse herself/himself into the deliberations concerning the program while avoiding input that would shift the ownership for the program away from clients (p. 114).

As a teacher (a.k.a., coach, mentor, educator, assessor), the evaluator models appropriate evaluation practice of helping stakeholders understand basic evaluation principles and how to develop their evaluation capacity for the current and future evaluands (Jenness & Barley, 1995). These roles surface throughout the evaluation. Coaching, for example, is a process that emerges as the evaluation unfolds, as trust builds, and as people are willing to collaborate and be trained. The evaluator identifies what current practices are most important to the evaluation, capitalizing on what is working to foster evaluation success (Hendricks, 1993; McColskey, Parke, Harman, & Elliott, 1995). As an educator, Shadish, Cook, and Leviton (1991) make the following proclamation:

> Evaluators are active information brokers who bring information to bear and provide interested participants with it. This information might throw new light on assumptions

about the nature of a social problem or about the theory implicit in program activities; it might teach stakeholders what is known about a program or programs of its type (p. 341).

As a judge, we imagine an expressionless evaluator sizing up everything and everyone in an effort to compare them against the dreaded standard (Hendricks, 1993; McColskey et al., 1995). Evaluation boils down to judging the merit or worth of the evaluand. The evaluator must work with the stakeholders from the onset to formulate criteria and standards and then hold the evaluand to those aspects of accountability.

Many current evaluation approaches combine many of these roles to foster sound evaluation processes. The stakeholder-based approach (Bryk, 1983), for example, interprets the role of the evaluator as those of researcher, negotiator, and teacher–weighing the demands of stakeholder groups against those of the program itself. However, the approach also distributes the evaluation responsibility among all groups involved in the evaluation (i.e., the evaluator and stakeholder groups). The approach grants stakeholder groups a say in the inner workings of the respective program, and allows the consideration of multiple perspectives in a movement toward program representation (Bryk, 1983; Gold, 1981; Weiss, 1998).

In empowerment (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005) evaluation, the evaluator is primarily a facilitator, but also functions as a researcher to help the organization gather and analyze data associated with the evaluand. Utilization-focused (Patton, 2008) evaluation takes on more of a researcher and facilitator role in promoting use of the evaluation results.

While various evaluation theories describe roles of the evaluator, they do not specifically guide the evaluator in addressing or resolving conflicting values among stakeholders.

Types of Reasoning. Evaluation reasoning includes both working and general logic (Fournier, 1995). Working logic is specific to a given evaluation approach, and describes the particular tactics involved in executing that approach (Fournier, 1995).

General logic is not necessarily specific to any one evaluation approach. The general logic of evaluation (i.e., that which is common to all approaches), is "the pattern of reasoning that builds defensible arguments [about the evaluand]" (Rog, 1995, p. 97). This includes a foundations level (i.e., defining and clarifying concepts) and an application level (i.e., developing working principles–not to be confused with theories, which, according to Scriven, are separate from logic) (Scriven, 1995). General evaluation logic includes four steps:

1. Establishing criteria of merit

2. Constructing standards

3. Measuring performance and comparing it to standards

4. Synthesizing and integrating data into judgments of merit

(House & Howe, 1999, p. 17)

Although evaluators would consider the four steps of general logic as a normal part of evaluation development, each of these steps involves some degree of reasoning. House and Howe (1999) state that "evaluators work within context to produce an overall evaluation that provides coherence from the information available from various sources" (p. 27). This involves engaging in the above steps in conjunction with stakeholders to produce a coherent evaluation. This deliberation with stakeholders may include conflict resolution via restating established criteria and standards, and providing related examples to bring clarity to the minds of stakeholders (House & Howe, 1999).

When we refer to the *reasoning process*, we mean "a study of the systematic means for arriving at evaluative conclusions" (Rog, 1995, p. 1), or how the evaluator undertakes some type of decision making or problem solving in working with multiple stakeholders, particularly when dealing with conflicting values. This process is particularly critical in order "to make judgments throughout an evaluation that continue to lead us in the direction of drawing relevant, useful, and sound conclusions" (Rog, 1995, p. 94). Although there is prevalent literature on evaluative reasoning as a whole (Blair, 1995; Fournier, 1995; House, 1995; House & Howe, 1999; Rog, 1995; Scriven, 1981), evaluation approaches differ in their reasoning with regard to working with conflicting values among stakeholders. The evaluation literature on reasoning may be most easily discussed in terms of internal and external reasoning.

Internal. With internal reasoning, the evaluator reasons internally to identify various needs. Some examples of internal reasoning that evaluators often find themselves engaging in include reasoning about kinds of information needed and how to obtain it (I need this information, therefore I should contact this person or I thought this person would be a good informant, but their comments were devoid of any useful data), reasoning about appropriate data collection activities (The program director is unresponsive to my requests to collect data, therefore I need to get permission from other sources), and reasoning about the worth or merit of the evaluand (Based on the evaluation results, it appears that the program should be canceled or at least scaled down).

External. In external reasoning, the evaluator talks to people and reasons with them in various ways. The evaluator then takes the results of those discussions and engages in more internal reasoning, making this a cyclical process. With regard to dealing with multiple

stakeholders, the evaluator and the stakeholders undergo a negotiation process to figure out what to pay attention to.

Depending on what approach(es) the evaluator subscribes to, the negotiation process may involve different people (and numbers of people). Degrees of reasoning range from basic understanding of stakeholder interests and equivalent evaluation strategies, such as with the CIPP (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007) or program improvement (Wholey, Hatry, & Newcomer, 1994) approaches, to active deliberation conducted by the evaluator with certain stakeholders, such as with the fourth generation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), or program theory-driven evaluation science (Chen, 2005) approaches, or whole stakeholder populations, such as with appreciative inquiry (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003), empowerment (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005), or participatory (Cousins & Earl, 1995) approaches.

In appreciative inquiry (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003), for example, the evaluator importunes the stakeholders to discuss the positive aspects of the evaluand and what can be done to make the program move toward the ideal, and then develops the evaluation based on that information. Examples of reasoning in appreciative inquiry may include understanding the stakeholders' perspectives regarding the evaluation and knowing what questions to ask or what direction to take during a brainstorming session, or understanding how stakeholders' ideas fit into the overall evaluation during the execution phase (Coghlan et al., 2003; Preskill & Coghlan, 2003).

Since the CIPP approach (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007) is made up of four components (i.e., Context, Input, Process, and Product), initial reasoning would lead the evaluator to select the most appropriate components for a given evaluand. After talking to stakeholders and reviewing applicable documentation, the evaluator formulates a strategy with

regard to initial criteria and standards, which would be validated after conversations with respective points of contact (Alkin, 2004; Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007).

Based on prior research and communications, there is a clear and useful mode of reasoning that permeates the utilization-focused evaluation approach (Patton, 2008). Some reasoning methods include clarity, specificity, prioritization, explicitness, empirical support, fact and interpretation distinctions, deductive and inductive reasoning, and program operationalization. The evaluator uses these external reasoning methods to study and weigh the factors involved in order to make clear, logical decisions regarding these and other areas of the evaluation. These decisions facilitate "enhancing shared understandings, supporting and reinforcing the program intervention, increasing engagement, self-determination, and ownership, and program and organizational development" (Patton, 2008, p. 157) among the evaluator and stakeholders alike.

In the deliberative democratic approach (House & Howe, 2000), for example, the evaluator uses his or her own reasoning when discovering and clarifying stakeholder interests. Mentally the evaluator assesses the applicability of those interests to the evaluand and associated evaluation. In addition, as the deliberation phase indicates, the evaluator gains an understanding of the stakeholder reasoning (i.e., what led them to have their respective interests and position with regard to the evaluand) (House & Howe, 1999).

With ties to logic modeling (Frechtling, 2007; Knowlton & Phillips, 2009), program theory-driven evaluation science (Chen, 2005) systematically analyzes program resources, activities, and outcomes in order to link scientifically generated results back to the program roots. Here the evaluator must understand how each component in the approach relates to the

others, and hypothetically create possible scenarios if one or more components are removed (Chen, 2005).

What is not known among the approaches is the deliberation process the evaluator embarks on as he or she struggles to provide clients with an efficient and coherent evaluation with results stakeholders can use to improve the worth or merit of the given program. How do evaluators resolve these situations while still maintaining the integrity of the particular evaluation and of the evaluation field as a profession? The literature only provides general guidance, but fails to acknowledge how evaluators handle these situations in practice.

Addressing Stakeholders

While the current literature addresses ways evaluators deal with multiple stakeholders in terms of integration, negotiation, and facilitation, it still only provides vague guidance in terms of resolving conflicting values among stakeholders. Evaluation approaches provide different guidance for dealing with stakeholders.

CIPP Evaluation. The CIPP approach (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007), for example, charges evaluators to "search out all relevant stakeholder groups and engage at least their representatives in hermeneutic and consensus-building processes to help affirm foundational values, define evaluation questions, clarify evaluative criteria, contribute needed information, help interpret findings, and assess evaluation reports" (p. 330). The evaluator must not only keep these stakeholders informed of evaluation events, but must effectively integrate stakeholders at all levels into the context, planning, data collection and analysis, results, conclusion, and recommendations of the evaluation. This integration gives all stakeholders a voice in the evaluation and helps the evaluator to take these views into account when interpreting evaluation results (Alkin, 2004).

Negotiation involves acknowledging bias and moving toward conflict resolution. Bias comes in many forms, including non-compliance with standards, and the inclusion or exclusion of too many or few stakeholders. The CIPP approach, for example, postulates that evaluation should be objectivist in nature such that evaluation results and conclusions are based on the particular performance of the evaluand and not on the views of the evaluator or associated stakeholders. Qualities such as honesty in reporting, control of bias, and assessment of the evaluand against appropriate standards permeate the CIPP model. Evaluators are charged with adhering to requirements of utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy as specified in *the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation* (1994) and refusing to conduct evaluations that do not meet these standards (Alkin, 2004; Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007).

Fourth Generation Evaluation. Fourth generation evaluation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) concentrates on both tangible (directly measurable) and intangible (the meaning that stakeholders ascribe to the evaluand or other aspects of the evaluation) areas of evaluation .While fourth generation evaluation seeks to identify and integrate the context and meaning that stakeholders have with regard to the evaluand, the approach seems to pigeonhole evaluators and stakeholders into prescribed roles:

Evaluators teach stakeholders what kinds of information needs are critical to the evaluation effort from the perspective of program managers and funders; subsequently, stakeholders teach evaluators which kinds of claims, concerns, and issues are most critical for their needs to be met (Alkin, 2004).

In addition, although the evaluator automatically sides with managers and funders, with other stakeholders as participants whose values are filtered through the evaluator's lens, the goal is still "addressing the issues of all stakeholders" (Alkin, 2004, p. 229).

Participatory Evaluation. Implementing participatory evaluation involves selected stakeholders in the nuts and bolts of the evaluation, including defining the evaluand, developing criteria and standards, formulating evaluation questions, creating data collection methods, performing data analysis, interpreting the results, and prescribing recommendations. With the evaluator in a trainer role, this involvement helps the stakeholders to understand the evaluand from a different point of view, thereby gaining a better appreciation for the program being evaluated and being more willing to work with other stakeholders for future program improvement (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998).

The concept of having an external evaluator denotes a desire for an unbiased judgment of the evaluand for funding, policy, or other decision-making purposes. Adding personnel indigenous to the evaluand in participatory evaluation poses some risk of bias. Therefore, it behooves the evaluator, as he or she works with the primary stakeholders, to take steps to minimize bias. Steps may include having more than one evaluator rate a given segment or check a given module (to increase inter-rater reliability), limited use of self-reporting, and avoiding excessive staff interaction (Alkin, 2004; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998).

Stakeholder-Based Evaluation. By definition, the stakeholder-based evaluation approach (Bryk, 1983) seeks to address the needs of the stakeholders involved in a particular aspect of the evaluand. The evaluator meets with respective stakeholder groups to understand their viewpoints regarding the evaluand and what areas of the evaluation are of most importance.

The stakeholder-based approach grants stakeholders a greater role in evaluation planning. "Here evaluators assume responsibility for carrying out technical evaluation tasks, and stakeholders are involved predominantly in the definition of the evaluation problem, scope-

setting activities, and, later, interpreting data emerging from the study" (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998, p. 7). The approach also attempts to resolve issues of unfairness, irrelevance, unusability, unrealism, and narrowness that have pervaded the evaluation field previously by addressing multiple points of view (Bryk, 1983).

Utilization-Focused Evaluation. Yet some approaches choose to limit stakeholder involvement. Because utilization-focused evaluation (Patton, 2008), for example, calls attention to identifying, training, and involving primary users in the evaluation (in order to foster use), by definition many stakeholders are excluded from this practice because they do not have the power or influence to use the evaluation findings and process. However worthy other interests are in the evaluand, they are subordinated in favor of those who use information to influence programs, processes, products, or performance.

Under utilization-focused evaluation (Patton, 2008), ethical considerations include the morality of "limiting stakeholder involvement to primary intended users and working closely with those users" (p. 546). Evaluators may serve in multiple roles decided largely by the evaluator's own values and ethics (Patton, 1997). Honest or corrupt, diligent or slothful, tactful or inept, the choice is largely borne by the evaluator. Nevertheless, that choice has crucial consequences important to the reputation of the individual evaluator and to the evaluation field as a whole. Patton advises evaluators to know where they stand ethically, be selective in evaluation projects, and clarify whose interests are represented. Evaluators may then be above reproach with regard to their evaluation conduct and can provide an unbiased view of the evaluand (Patton, 2008).

Program Improvement Evaluation. Additionally, the program improvement approach (Wholey, Hatry, & Newcomer, 1994) stresses working with management stakeholders "who

most directly influence a program" (Shadish et al., 1991, p. 247-248), empowering them with

vital decision-making tools. By emphasizing managing stakeholders, the evaluation process and

subsequent results can be readily understood and used by those most influential to the evaluand.

However, this focus on management forfeits program representation in favor of funders and

managers. Rather than seeking values and information from everyone associated with the

program, the evaluator solicits a possibly biased program view from those at the top, and

"sacrifices accuracy and precision for timeliness and relevance" (Shadish et al., 1991, p. 249).

Not only are the views of stakeholders such as those affected by the program unaccounted for in

this approach, but that lack of information can severely alter the evaluation results, possibly

injuring those most in need of that program (e.g., denying government benefits).

Deliberative Democratic Evaluation. In judging whether an evaluation is unbiased and

objective according to the deliberative democratic approach (House & Howe, 1999), the

evaluator investigates the integrity and honesty (e.g., Is full disclosure and understanding of

evaluands, criteria, standards, procedures, etc. present during the evaluation process?), respect

for people (e.g., Are ethical standards being met during the course of the evaluation?), and

responsibilities for general and public welfare (e.g., Do stakeholders have access to evaluation

information as applicable?) of the respective evaluation. Given this inquiry, the evaluator may

then proceed in working with informed stakeholders and audiences.

Knowledge Utilization Evaluation. While Owen directly refers to ethical

considerations as a limitation that influences the negotiation process in his knowledge

utilization approach (Alkin, 2004), one possible inference is the possible bias introduced by

only focusing on key stakeholders. Additionally, by focusing on program funders and managers

in the program improvement approach, the evaluator is actually creating bias and is not

importuning the interests and perspective of a "full range of stakeholders in the object being evaluated" (Newman et al., 1995, p. 25). The *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* admonish the evaluator to provide proper justification for excluding some perspectives in favor of others (Shadish et al., 1991). The program theory-driven evaluation science approach (Chen, 2005) also focuses on relevant stakeholders, which may be defined differently by different evaluators. There is thus the risk of excluding key or otherwise crucial stakeholders in the evaluation process.

The knowledge utilization approach (Alkin, 2004) involves negotiating with key stakeholders, implementing the decided plan, and then disseminating the findings to respective audiences. Evaluators work with stakeholders to set constraints on the program and explore opportunities in light of those constraints. Why only key stakeholders? Does working with a select group of people facilitate negotiation and focus?

Appreciative Inquiry Evaluation. One example of conflict resolution is with appreciative inquiry (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). This approach earnestly strives to build a balance of multiple perspectives and information sharing. With so many stakeholders being a part of the evaluation to some degree, there may be conflicting issues and values among those groups. One possible ethical issue may be the need to balance possible conflicts while maintaining the experiential and expertise benefits of the participation of those stakeholders (Coghlan et al., 2003; Preskill & Coghlan, 2003).

In a facilitator capacity, the evaluator in appreciative inquiry (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003) attempts to engage as many stakeholders as possible into the evaluation process. While other approaches may gravitate toward funders or policymakers, appreciative inquiry takes the whole stakeholder spectrum into account. Having flavors of other approaches such as

collaborative inquiry, empowerment, and participatory evaluations, appreciative inquiry motivates stakeholders to brainstorm what the evaluand means to them, focusing on what works in the creation of an ideal program (Preskill & Coghlan, 2003).

Responsive Evaluation. Under responsive evaluation (Stake, 2004), evaluators have a duty and an obligation to attempt to resolve ethical conflicts if possible. While the Joint Standards (Sanders, 1994) advise full disclosure of the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluand, responsive evaluation seeks to minimize the wrongs via conflict resolution. This resolution process also helps the evaluator and associated stakeholders come to a better understanding of and the viewpoints surrounding the evaluand.

Responsive evaluation addresses the needs of stakeholders and audiences by seeking to understand their point of view. The evaluator then negotiates with the respective stakeholders in an attempt to address their needs for the evaluation. Nevertheless, it is unclear exactly how those needs are addressed, given that "responsive evaluation does not directly try to serve these groups…other than to help them become better acquainted with the quality of the program" (Stake, 2004, p. 196). The evaluator is primarily investigating the quality of the program as the evaluand, with the observations and opinions of stakeholders and audiences as evidence of such quality. By interacting with stakeholders, the evaluator is able to find out what the standards of quality are for a particular evaluand, and then can properly and informatively judge the worth of that program based on how well the program met those standards.

Empowerment Evaluation. By gathering stakeholders together to address issues of mission, prioritization, and goal setting, the empowerment evaluator (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005) acts as a facilitator to address the needs of multiple groups within an

organization. Zimmerman (2000) attempts to paint a picture of how the evaluator interacts with stakeholders during this empowerment process:

An empowerment approach to intervention design, implementation, and evaluation redefines the professional's role relationship with the target population. The professional's role becomes one of a collaborator and facilitator rather than expert and counselor. As collaborators, professionals learn about the participants through their cultures, their worldviews, and their life struggles. The professional works with participants instead of advocating for them. The professional's skills, interest, or plans are not imposed on the community; rather professionals become a resource for a community (p. 44-45).

Empowerment evaluation creates a working relationship with stakeholders. The evaluator is not forced to choose among the needs of many stakeholders. Instead, the evaluator acts as a facilitator for stakeholders to understand different perspectives among their colleagues, and to balance themselves (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005).

Summary

This chapter compared and contrasteds evaluation standards in terms of the experience of evaluators in dealing with multiple stakeholders, the meaning for an evaluator to deal with conflicting values among stakeholders, the roles evaluators take on to resolve conflicting values among stakeholders, and the reasoning used by evaluators in dealing with conflicting values among stakeholders. The chapter also explained the concept of values as it relates to evaluation, and describes what evaluation theorists have said about working with stakeholders. The literature illustrated how the evaluator is influenced by competing values. How the individual evaluator deals with these competing values is the focus of this study. The existing evaluation approaches described earlier do not offer many details regarding how practicing evaluators

apply them to real-world evaluations in dealing with conflicting values among stakeholders. While it is apparent in any evaluation that the evaluator deals with stakeholders to some degree, most evaluation theorists say very little about how evaluators work with stakeholders within the confines of their particular evaluation approach.

What is missing from the literature mentioned above is an analysis of the process by which evaluators attempt to address these issues in dealing with the values of multiple stakeholders. Having descriptions of practice should be helpful to practicing evaluators and may also be helpful to people who develop approaches for others to consider. This study is designed to begin filling this void.

Chapter 3: Method

This chapter outlines the method rationale, describes the participants and their recruitment, reviews the data collection and analysis procedures, discloses assumptions of the study, attempts to acknowledge and use those assumptions, and explains the standards for judging the study that guided its implementation.

Steps in Addressing the Research Questions

To address the research questions, this study invited evaluators to share their experiences working with multiple stakeholders while reflecting on how they deal with multiple and often conflicting values as they seek to serve the stakeholders. The study sought to understand evaluators' experiences and associated meanings from a phenomenological perspective by inviting evaluators to share how they decide to include or exclude stakeholders' values in particular evaluation studies.

I interviewed evaluators using the three-interview series as described by Seidman, (2006) and originated by Schuman (1982). I analyzed the data using thematic analysis (Van Manen, 1997) and domain analysis (Spradley, 1979). I validated data collection and analysis techniques using standards by Williams (2007) as originated by Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1986), and Guba and Lincoln (1989).

Method Rationale

The use of phenomenological interviews is meant to provide details and insight into how evaluators deal with multiple stakeholders. Rich, descriptive case studies are presented to help the reader to distinguish relevancy to individual circumstances, and provide enough flexibility for multiple data interpretations (Shadish et al., 1991).

I chose to use phenomenology in order to get at the heart of the reasoning behind what the participants do (i.e., how they handle multiple values of stakeholders). The phenomenological approach is used to describe and understand the lived experience of an individual. In order to understand how evaluators deal with the values of multiple stakeholders, it is important to understand what it is like for the evaluator to be in circumstances where they must decide which stakeholders they will pay attention to (or how they will pay attention to all of them), and from the evaluators' perspective, what consequences emerge from those decisions.

I also chose phenomenology because that method focused on the contextual experiences of the participant. Phenomenology helps the researcher create a more complete picture of the experience, and to recognize how the experience contributes to and affects the participant's life. I then selected areas of focus from the collected data for further thematic analysis.

I chose the three-interview series as my data collection method in order to build contextual clarity, understand key details in light of the context, and understand participant reflections on their experience.

Participants

Recruitment. In order to understand as fully as possible experiences of evaluators in dealing with the values of multiple stakeholders, the research included evaluators in a variety of settings. I selected participants based on journal publications of their evaluation experiences dealing with stakeholders in university education settings, and on maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2002). This recruitment was not age or gender specific. See the Participant Recruitment Announcement and Interview Confirmation Email in Appendices A and B.

Based on the nature of the data collection (i.e., in-depth interviewing) and the time constraints of this study, a sample of five to seven evaluators was the goal. That range provided

enough experiences for comparison and contrast, while keeping the amount of interviewing time (i.e., fifteen to twenty-one 1-hour interviews) manageable. In order to obtain that range of participants, I sent recruiting announcements to 27 evaluators (after discarding non-education and non-evaluation articles, and removing from the list those whose contact information was not readily available either within the journal article or on the Internet, with the understanding that not all evaluators may be willing or able to participate).

While eight participants expressed interest in this study, only five participants completed the interview process due to scheduling conflicts. I conducted the interviews via telephone, Skype, and in person, and audio recorded all of them for analysis purposes. For in-person interviews, I obtained signed consent forms. I also audio-recorded every participant's verbal consent prior to the start of the interviews.

In the participant recruitment announcement, I also specified the requirement to complete all three 1-hour interviews in order to participate. While Seidman (2006) states that the duration and spacing for each interview are not absolutes, the timeframe should be decided upon prior to the interview process and should be consistent among participants to the degree possible.

Demographics. Using maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2002), I selected journal articles in the American Journal of Evaluation (AJE) and the New Directions for Evaluation (NDE) published from 2005-2009 from evaluators in the education field and with a wide range of experience. I chose this date range because the participants may not recall specific circumstances of the evaluation in earlier publications, and there may be smaller participant availability with a shorter date range. This sampling helped identify trends and illustrate how evaluators dealt with multiple stakeholders in different circumstances. I sent all evaluators

selected based on their publications an email message inviting them to participate in the study, and I afforded them ample time to respond and flexibility of interview scheduling. As applicable, I asked participants (using snowball or chain sampling) for referrals to other evaluators who may have experiences of interest to this study to broaden the sampling field and introduce cases that may otherwise have gone unnoticed.

Data Collection

I collected the lived experience descriptions of the participants using the three interview series described below. See the Evaluator Interview Questions in Appendix C, and the Data Collection and Methods and Analysis Chart in Appendix E for additional details.

Three-interview series. The three-interview series is a phenomenological form of interviewing in that the interviews, both individually and collectively, seek to establish meaning from the background and experiences of the participants (Seidman, 2006). This meaning then fostered understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The first interview explored the background context from which the experiences of the participant originate. Here I discovered the process or sequence of events leading up to the present status of each participant. The concern was not so much with why the respective events occurred as with how the events came to be (i.e., the context within which subsequent comments may be situated).

The second interview elicited the details of the experiences of the participant. This interview was a purely descriptive occurrence through which the intricate details of the experience were manifest. I did not look for opinions or reflections, for those components are present in the third interview. Instead, I acquired every detail possible in order to paint a complete picture of the participant and his or her experiences.

The third interview was where reflection came to the forefront. After providing the context and details of the experience in the first two interviews, the participant reflected on the previous information to uncover meaning of the experience. Both the participant and I discovered previously unknown connections and significance. These connections helped to clarify and facilitate understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Crucial components of the three-interview series are structure and sequence. A delicate balance exists between allowing the participant to freely articulate information and staying on course. While Seidman (2006) acknowledges the temptation to let the participant speak unbridled about their experiences, he cautions the researcher to hold fast to the original three-interview structure, in that:

Each interview provided a foundation of detail that helped illuminate the next. Taking advantage of the interactive and cumulative nature of the sequence of the interviews requires that interviewers adhere to the purpose of each. "There is logic to the interviews, and to lose control of their direction is to lose the power of that logic and the benefit from it" (p. 13).

During all data gathering, I took field notes and audio recorded the conversations for reference in composing a lived-experience description of each participant. To preserve confidentiality, I created pseudonyms for each participant. After each interview, I went through an iterative analysis process, in which I reviewed the field notes, audio recording, and transcription, noting any additional questions or thoughts that came to mind to be clarified during the next interview.

Analysis

I used the phenomenology approach described below to isolate thematic elements of the experiences. I used thematic and domain analysis to categorize and contextualize the respective themes and identify trends in approaches to evaluators' work (i.e., how they make decisions, how they approach the evaluation process, how they deal with the values of multiple stakeholders).

Components of Phenomenology. Van Manen (1997) defines phenomenology as "gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences" (Van Manen, 1997, p. 9). Phenomenology has eight components:

1. The study of lived experience

2. The explanation of phenomena

3. The study of essence

4. The description of experiential meanings

5. The human scientific study of phenomena

6. The attentive practice of thoughtfulness

7. A search for what it means to be human

8. A poeticizing activity

The study of lived experience. Simply writing about something from an external point of view leaves the reader distanced from the topic and possibly unable to truly relate to the experience. Phenomenologically studying lived experience, on the other hand, puts the researcher within the life world in order to comprehend experiences from the participant's point of view. The three-interview series elicited those participant experiences and helped me understand the decision making process of the evaluator.

The explication of phenomena. By describing a phenomenon in detail, researchers can increase awareness of that phenomenon and its relationship to the surrounding world by linking that phenomenon with contextual information and experiences.

The study of essence. In the "systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience" (Van Manen, 1997, p. 10), researchers come to understand the vital components of the particular phenomenon, what factors are involved, and the circumstances surrounding its purpose.

The description of experiential meanings. Deriving meaning from daily activities is the heart of phenomenology. Introspection plays a vital role in this knowledge process. Through the interviews and thematic analysis, I analyzed the meaning of the experiences of the evaluator and connected those meanings to the research questions.

The human scientific study of phenomena. The particular techniques, principles, and procedures used in phenomenology create a human science atmosphere whereby researchers can understand the particular facets that govern human action. I identified these facets in each evaluator in the study through the detailed description and reflection parts of the interview process.

The attentive practice of thoughtfulness. Considering what it means to live within a certain context, in a particular human realm, forms a noteworthy sense of caring, love, and understanding toward people in similar circumstances. This caring and understanding came through the reflection part of the interview process as the evaluator and I discovered reasoning and decision making characteristics that guide the process of working with multiple stakeholders.

A search for what it means to be human. Understanding what it means to live a certain way, to experience something unique, even to live daily life, promotes human bonding so that others may follow the example. The detail and reflection interviews painted a picture of the evaluator and helped make the connection between theory and practice for evaluators, who represent all humans who engage in evaluation practices in daily life.

A poeticizing activity. Analyzing the original experiences of others while indirectly formulating conclusions is a key component of phenomenology. Researchers actively document the lived experiences, describe applicable themes associated with these experiences, but then leave the main lessons and applications to the discretion of the reader. Through thick description of the experiences of the evaluators, I provided the reader with information to guide transferability and facilitate future evaluator training.

Thematic analysis. I analyzed the interviews and literature reviews using thematic analysis in order to discover themes and patterns among the acquired data. This thematic analysis was part of the discussion section as I created wholistic statements and provided applicable quotations from the participants to help understand the meaning of their experience. The analysis included the holistic approach, and the selective or highlighting approach.

The wholistic approach. I constructed statements that reflected the essence of the interviews based on the research questions, and then synthesized those statements to generate conclusions and implications of the experiences. For example, I asked the evaluators questions regarding stakeholder selection. The evaluators indicated that in some situations, hiring authorities select stakeholders, so the wholistic phrase was stakeholders are selected by hiring authorities, others in leadership positions, or by the evaluator along with team members or primary stakeholders.

The selective or highlighting approach. I extracted particularly relevant statements from the interviews that described the meaning of the experiences. Continuing with the above example, an excerpt from an interview that particularly stood out was:

With educational products, the deciding criteria are "Will the product has an impact on someone?" and "Do they care about that product?" If the answer to both questions is yes, they're a stakeholder; If the answer to both is no, they are not a stakeholder.

In compiling this information, I also conducted a negative case analysis for each theme, whereby I identified commonalities among the participant responses based on the majority of the cases, with later statements being modifications based on variations within some individuals' experiences.

Domain analysis. Spradley (1979) describes the use of domain analysis as "a search for the larger units of cultural knowledge" (p. 94). He does this by forming semantic relationships or linking together words and phrases in distinct orders. Like various ethnic cultures that communicate by structured combinations of words and phrases, groups of evaluators have their own unique word definitions and language. Part of understanding what it means for an evaluator to deal with conflicting values among stakeholders involves becoming familiar with their language. It is therefore appropriate to create a domain analysis of the respondents' responses to research and interview questions to link those to the overall goal of understanding how evaluators deal with multiple stakeholders.

Spradley provides a guide to forming nine possible relationships (p.111):

1. Strict inclusion (X is a kind of Y)

2. Spatial (X is a place in Y, X is a part of Y)

3. Cause-effect (X is a result of Y, X is a cause of Y)

4. Rationale (X is a reason for doing Y)

5. Location for action (X is a place for doing Y)

6. Function (X is used for Y)

7. Means-end (X is a way to do Y)

8. Sequence (X is a step or stage in Y)

9. Attribution (X is an attribute, or characteristic, of Y)

For each research question, I selected the overall relationship that most closely matches that situation. Then using that same pattern, I applied that relationship to each interview question. The resulting discussion helped the reader make sense of the study results and illustrated how each part contributes to the overall research topic.

Assumptions of the Study

In order to avoid bias in this study as warned by Van Manen (1997), I must disclose personal assumptions about the study and the phenomenon under consideration, and identify ways to question those assumptions in order to collect and interpret the lived experiences of participants in their terms (i.e., an emic perspective). The following are assumptions and possible ways to question them.

Assumptions about the research project. This section describes assumptions about the qualitative study as a whole. These assumptions include the need for obtaining a sample of evaluators with diverse experiences, having access to evaluators, and learning from experiences.

Need to obtain a sample of evaluators with diverse experiences. Based on maximum variation sampling, I have a sample of evaluators who have worked with multiple stakeholders in various ways. I documented those results and incorporated them into the study implications.

Ways to access evaluators. By contacting evaluators directly, after selecting authors of evaluation journal articles in a variety of different education settings, the evaluators were able to decide whether to participate in the study based on their own constraints (e.g., organizational policies governing participating in studies, time, resources, desire to participate).

Importance of Learning from experiences. I assumed that the evaluation community would be able to learn from a study of these situations and integrate discovered principles into their own evaluation experiences. This is really a question of transferability, which is judged by the reader, based on my efforts to describe the context and experiences of the participants sufficiently to facilitate transferability. As long as the information from the study is well documented, the readers can make their own conclusions and applications as appropriate.

Assumptions about ways evaluators deal with multiple stakeholders. This section describes assumptions about how evaluators deal with the values of multiple stakeholders. These assumptions include awareness of reasoning practices and integration of reflection.

Need to be aware of reasoning practices. I assumed that some people were more aware of how they make decisions than others. In some instances, evaluators offered considerable information based on their self-awareness of their reasoning processes. In other instances evaluators required more time and prompting to discover and elaborate on their reasoning process. I did not make any rush to judgment or try to coax information out of an evaluator, but I asked appropriate questions that served as prompts to foster discussion.

Need to integrate reflection. I assumed that people automatically integrated reflection into their descriptions of people and experiences. The third interview in the three-interview series served as a basis for the participants to reflect on how they deal with multiple stakeholders, and what they would do differently to accommodate a wider range of stakeholders

in a given evaluation. I documented the evaluator experiences in order to present a more complete picture of the experiences of how the evaluators deal with multiple stakeholders.

Evaluation of Research Quality and Rigor

Van Manen (1997) distinguishes phenomenological studies from other research by stating "…human science strives for precision and exactness by aiming for interpretive descriptions that exact fullness and completeness of detail, and that explore to a degree of perfection the fundamental nature of the notion being addressed in the text" (Van Manen, 1997, p. 17).

When the reader can convert the text of the lived-experience descriptions into the ideas, thoughts, emotions, and livelihood of the people involved, when the reader can be enveloped in the experience to the degree of reliving the experience, and when the reader feels he or she can demonstrate the strategy and techniques discerned through the experiential descriptions, then there are proper quality and rigor within the study.

In order to facilitate and adequately judge the rigor of this particular phenomenological study, the dissertation committee served as an expert panel. The panel used the Research Quality Evaluation Checklist found in Appendix D, which is a modified version of the checklist found in Williams (2007). These standards are recommended for most qualitative inquiry studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 1986; Guba & Lincoln, 1989), and therefore I applied them to this study's phenomenological case studies via interpretive descriptions.

Credibility. The following are the ten criteria for judging the credibility of a research study:

Persistent observation.

Standard. "Exploring details of the phenomena under study to a deep enough level that [the researcher] can decide what is important and what is irrelevant and focus on the most relevant aspects" (Williams, 2007).

Method. I selected evaluators based on their publications regarding dealing with conflicting values among multiple stakeholders. I interviewed them using the Three Interview Series (Schuman, 1982; Seidman, 1998), which uncovered significant detail regarding the context, details, and reflections on their given experience.

Triangulation.

Standard. "The verification of findings through (a) referring to multiple sources of information (including literature), (b) using multiple methods of data collection, and often (c) acquiring observations from multiple inquirers (Williams, 2007).

Method. I used multiple sources of information via the literature review and the accounts of practicing evaluators regarding their experiences. I used multiple data collection methods (i.e., interviews and document reviews of evaluation reports) with the evaluators.

Peer debriefing.

Standard. Peer debriefings are "meetings by the inquirer with a disinterested peer (someone who is willing to ask probing questions but who is not a participant in the setting where the study is being conducted) in which the peer can question the methods, emerging conclusions, biases and so on of the inquirer" (Williams, 2007).

Method. A fellow graduate student interviewed me three times throughout the study with regard to the background research, methods, results, conclusions, and implications of the

study. The graduate student prepared summaries of the details and overall thoughts on the credibility of the study.

Negative case analysis.

Standard. Negative case analysis is "an analytical procedure that is meant to refine conclusions until they 'account for all known cases without exception'" (Williams, 2007).

Method. I generated conclusions based on the collected data from the interviews, and identified and confirmed (or disconfirmed) patterns throughout the interviewing process. After each interview, I compared the information with previous interviews to look for patterns and any possible evidence to counter those patterns. However, although one dissertation is not comprehensive enough to "account for all known cases without exception," this study provided plenty of patterns to be tested by future studies.

Progressive Subjectivity Checks.

Standard. Progressive subjectivity checks "involve archiving the inquirer's changing expectations for the study" (Williams, 2007).

Method. I documented assumptions, biases, and general thoughts on the study throughout the course of the dissertation via field notes, and included this information in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Emic or Folk Perspectives of the Participants.

Standard. Emic perspectives are "the viewpoints held by the people [being] studied" (Williams, 2007).

Method. Participant descriptions formed the basis for the study. Thematic analysis aligned those descriptions to the research questions. I documented the lived experiences of the evaluators from their point of view (i.e., discover how evaluators deal with multiple

stakeholders) and then compared those descriptions with the current literature regarding how the participant descriptions could enhance evaluator training.

Member Checks.

Standard. "The data record, interpretations, and reports of the inquirer are reviewed by the members or participants who provided the data" (Williams, 2007).

Method. The participants reviewed the data to be presented in the final report and provided a brief reaction to the information. There was no disagreement from the participants regarding the interview data.

Transferability.

Standard. Transferability is "the applicability of findings in one context (where the research is done) to other contexts or settings (where the results might be transferred)" (Williams, 2007). Degree of transferability to their situation is judged best by the reader, not the researcher, who does not understand all potential contexts to which application of results might be made.

Method. Van Manen states that qualitative studies are not meant to be generalizable in a statistical sense, but they can be transferable. The whole idea of this study is that other evaluators can learn from the described experiences of others and apply or transfer results and themes to their own contexts. I attempted to clearly present all data in concrete language using direct quotations where applicable. I made conclusions and inferences based on evidence from interviews in order to allow the reader to make an informed decision regarding the transferability of the findings to their particular situations.

Dependability.

Standard. Dependability is "the stability or consistency of the inquiry processes used over time" (Williams, 2007). One or more individuals check the researcher's work for errors.

Method. The dissertation committee served as the independent auditors for this study. I wrote the explanations of procedures, data, and results thorough enough so the readers can understand the study, validate the study in their own minds as being dependable, and replicate the study if possible or practical for future research.

Confirmability.

Standard. *Confirmability* "refers to the quality of the results produced by an inquiry in terms of how well they are supported by informants (members) who are involved in the study and by events that are independent of the inquirer" (Williams, 2007).

Method. I achieved *confirmability* through member checks in which the evaluators examined the quality and accuracy of their responses, and through comparisons with the current literature.

Authenticity. The following are the five criteria for judging the authenticity of a research study:

Fairness.

Standard. Fairness is "a balanced view that presents all constructions and the values that under girds them" (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 20).

Method. I achieved fairness through value clarification during the contextual phase and recommendation discussion during the reflection phase of the interview process. Fairness uncovered the values that drive the evaluation reasoning process regarding how evaluators deal with multiple stakeholders.

Ontological Authentication*.*

Standard. Ontological authentication involves "improvement in the individual's (and group's) conscious experiencing of the world" (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 22). Here the evaluator (or researcher) and the participants are continually shaped by their world experiences: choices, consequences, opportunities, and interactions

Method. I ascertained the presence of ontological authentication by asking about the participant's values and how those values have changed over time. Additionally, having the participant describe their lives up until, and including, their evaluation experiences revealed contextual detail about how their lives are progressing based on their past and present value system.

Educative Authentication*.*

Standard. Educative authentication refers to an "increased understanding of (including possibly a sharing, or sympathy with) the whats and whys of various expressed constructions" (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 23). Here the evaluator and associated stakeholders have the opportunity of learning from each other's experiences and value systems during the course of the evaluation.

Method. I validated the presence of educative authentication by having the evaluators describe the interactions with the various stakeholders in a given evaluation and then reflect on what the evaluator learned from these interactions.

Catalytic Authentication*.*

Standard. Catalytic Authentication involves "facilitating and stimulating action" (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 23). This refers to the evaluator before, during, and after the

evaluation in terms of stakeholder involvement and empowerment to make appropriate decisions about the evaluand.

Method. By discussing the actions and interactions of the evaluator, I developed a perspective of how the evaluator has fostered use of the evaluation process and results.

Tactical Authenticity.

Standard. Tactical authenticity is associated with the empowerment of one or more aspects of the evaluation by the stakeholders involved (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Method. Through participant interviews, I attempted to understand how the evaluators empowered the stakeholders with whom they associated to use the evaluation results to make appropriate decisions regarding the evaluand.

Other Criteria Additional criteria for judging the quality and rigor of a research study include the following:

Meaningful.

Standard. The study must "address a meaningful problem or issue. There should be a rationale providing justification for the study" (Williams, 2007).

Method. This research should benefit study participants and the evaluation community as a whole by providing descriptions of how evaluators deal with stakeholders during the course of their evaluation work as outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation. Evaluators may be able to use this information to improve their evaluation practices and thus serve stakeholders better.

Ethical Treatment.

Standard. "Participants in the inquiry should be treated ethically" (Williams, 2007).

Method. I did not engage in any unethical treatment of the participants in the study. I conducted interviews with evaluators regarding their experiences in dealing with multiple stakeholders. I obtained both IRB approval and informed consent.

Use of these standards offers direct evidence of the trustworthiness and authenticity of the research, allowing the committee and readers opportunity to judge the quality of the study and results.

Chapter 4: Participant Vignettes

This chapter presents vignettes summarizing the experience of each participant, answers to the four research questions, and a thematic analysis of the evaluation results based on the answers to the research questions. Written transcripts of each participant interview are not presented here, but are available from the author upon request. Through brief vignettes of each study participant, including their background, the issues they faced in a particular evaluation, and how they handled those issues, this section provides a contextual overview of the participants' experiences to help the reader understand later analyses of all the cases. In order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, all names used are pseudonyms.

Vignette 1: Daniel

Daniel has been an evaluator for over 25 years, focusing predominantly on program evaluation and the integration of technology into classroom settings. Having a degree in computer science and a degree in teaching, Daniel first gained experience as a high school computer science teacher for the private school system in the area where he worked. Daniel describes the computer science environment at the time:

> This is just at the start of when computers were getting into the high schools. Most of the teachers wouldn't have had one on their desk. You might have had a computer lab with fifteen or twenty [computers] in there. They weren't really great computers, but they were getting to be good computers. Most teachers were not computer literate in terms of having had [computer] courses. [The math or computer teachers] may have been given a computer, but they weren't really familiar with the full use of them. It was

a priority at that time that schools become more technologically literate and that they

have [Internet-accessible computers].

Because of his direct experience in computer literacy and teaching interventions to

promote technology in the schools, he was selected to conduct evaluations of the school's

computer literacy programs in the district. His selection to be the evaluator was based on his

extensive background and expertise with school technology. Daniel comments on the

importance of subject-matter expertise:

As you gain expertise and experience in those things, people recognize that and ask you

to come back for other things. I got into the first evaluation because I had expertise and

ability in a certain area that other people didn't have. They were hiring me because of

that expertise, to come in and give my expert opinion about what it was that they were

doing. The funny thing is, now I look back and I realize that's what it was, but I didn't

have really the expertise that I have now on that same thing. [Now] I have much better

expertise and understanding of how to do evaluation and how it should be done, even

though I was teaching it and was involved directly with it in terms of educational

technology.

Later Daniel went back to school to obtain a PhD in instructional design to capitalize on

his teaching experience and desire to provide educational materials to accommodate different

types of learners. During this time he increasingly saw the need to evaluate his work and

subsequently changed his PhD focus to an evaluation-related field. Daniel describes his thought

process during this time of transition:

I wanted to be an instructional designer. I had a class situation where I was trying to be

flexible for everybody who came into the class. Rather than teach everybody lock step

what they were doing, I had groups of students all doing different things at the same

time in a classroom of about 30 students. I was designing instructional materials–little

booklets that kind of guided them through these modules. I didn't know what I was

doing.

I figured it was a good thing that I maybe come and figure out what instructional

design was all about. I started doing instructional design and loved it. I started taking

some evaluation courses. Because I was into technology, programming, and things like

that, I also had an interest in that area. But I realized that the technology changes really

quickly, and it's hard to keep up with the expertise of doing it all the time and learning

all the new stuff. I [also] saw this other need to evaluate whether or not it was being

used and how it was being used. It's a combination research-evaluation interest of not

just judging the quality, but really understanding what it is.

Since then Daniel has had many opportunities for evaluation in technology and teaching

interventions within the schools, and in working with non-profit agencies supporting

educational endeavors.

While some evaluators may enter the situation with pre-conceived values, Daniel

considers the values implied by the objectives and aims of the evaluand. He concentrates on

conducting a useful, coherent evaluation based on what the stakeholders intend the evaluand to

do. Here Daniel elaborates on the distinction between what he considers moralistic and

preference values:

How I feel about certain things depends on the role that I'm asked to play. It really

comes down to an issue of how you define values. [You may] define values

simplistically as the things that I value, versus a moralistic explanation of it, which is,

this is right and this is wrong. This is the way it should be done and this is the way it shouldn't be done, and for moral reasons or whatever value system you have in that way, then it's different. I don't see most of the things that I do as moralistic values, but rather values in terms of aims and objectives versus trying to do what's right and trying to figure out what is right.

For example, sometimes I try to direct [stakeholders] a little bit in some of the evidences that might be more appropriate for those kinds of situations. Like if a school district was putting in an implementation for bullying or character-development that was being funded, and they tried to implement it and see what effect it had. Quite often they'll say, "We think it will improve test scores, so that it will improve their reading and their writing and their science." The only test scores that they usually had that were standard were the state tests that they're mandated to give every year. While those are all good things, they weren't necessarily direct indicators of the success of their program. The fact that they decreased bullying or increased character–honesty or kindness, or whatever it is that they're trying to improve, doesn't mean that necessarily the test scores will be affected. Certainly, you can argue that if students feel safer, if they are kinder, and they're trying harder, then maybe their test scores will go up. However, that's not a direct indicator of the success of the program. In that sense, again, it's not a moralistic value, it's just a value of what is more appropriate given a specific circumstances, given the theory and knowledge that we know.

The evaluation Daniel selected to discuss during his interviews focused on the impact of a learning initiative program being implemented in a school district. Daniel worked with the client (in this case, the school superintendent) on the evaluation purpose. Daniel collected data

from various sources and stakeholders including school administrators, staff, teachers, and training professionals. Together, he and the client took into consideration those directly funding, implementing, benefiting from, and impacted by the program as stakeholders. They also examined the degree of access the Daniel had to those people. Daniel had the strongest relationship with the funder due to Daniel's prior association with that individual, as well as having the greatest access to him. The funder in turn helped gain access to other stakeholders that Daniel needed to speak with for the evaluation. Daniel explains this unique situation:

> [The funder] actually went with me to every site visit, observation, and interview. He was there with us. It was interesting because in some ways, that was a limiting factor, and in some ways, it was a benefit. He took me places where he wanted to go or could go. He made sure that I talked to certain people who he knew wanted to talk about it. If you want to talk about it, it's usually because you really love it or you really hate it, and most of these people really hated it. He didn't agree with what the superintendent had done. It was clear that he wanted to make sure that I knew what was being done. He didn't try to hide any of that.

While the evaluation process went smoothly, negative evaluation results caused some consternation for the stakeholder who provided the program and the training. As a result, that individual complained to the administrators. Daniel relates the tense situation resulting from a mismatch of desires and data:

> They were angry at the end because this report did not show that the program was making a difference. I think what [the provider] was hoping for was something very different from what she got. Although she didn't pay for it, she was being paid to provide this training because it was supposed to be beneficial. We didn't find out they

were mad until they went to the president of the university and complained. The evaluation was done, the presentation was given, the reports were given to them, and then the provider of the training came in and only saw the executive summary. The bottom line was, based on these evidences that we have, on these statistical data that we've gathered and looked at, there wasn't any indicator that, in fact, on these success indicators that you've identified, that they're all working.

The evaluators later explained the objective nature of the evaluation to the administrators, and the need for the evaluators to provide an accurate description of the evaluand. This stakeholder's underlying motive for having the program evaluated differed considerably from the motive and purposes set out by the funder of the program.

For Daniel, value issues often dealt with the disparity between the data and how stakeholders felt about the program personally. In this case and in general, although Daniel feels that the values of all stakeholders are real and may be important to the individual stakeholders, not all stakeholder values are equally important to the evaluation. He tries to focus on the mission and purpose of the evaluation. Daniel considers himself a reporter of the evaluation results, sets aside potentially conflicting stakeholder values, and tries to report the evaluation findings in a fair and neutral way.

In order to resolve conflicting values, Daniel considers the relevance of the conflicting value to the overall objective of the evaluation. He often finds some values to be irrelevant or unimportant to the evaluation, so he simply sets that issue aside and concentrates on the main objectives of the program in question. Daniel summarizes this balancing act with these concluding comments:

A lot of it was the perception of the people involved, they had key things like "effect on attendance"–the perceived and then what the data actually says. "Effects on test scores"–perceived and what actually the data says. When I would look, quite often, they'd say, "I think this is being effective; it's making a difference." Then you look at the data, and [say], "Well, according to this data, statistically, there's no difference in since you started four years ago and now. There hasn't been a huge change in where we were."

The data shows one thing, but then, you talk to the people and they [say], "I think there was a positive effect, and this is working and everything's good." It comes down to the match between what the program was meant to do and what they were trying to force it to do. The program was really trying to get people to interact in better ways, talk to each other, and have better relationships–understanding, speaking, and communicating. They gained a new awareness or insight into some of their students but that didn't really change the way they were teaching, and it didn't change the outcomes of the attendance and violence. We simply reported [the results], and we tried to report [them] fair and in a nice way.

Vignette 2: Samuel

Samuel has been an evaluator for over 30 years, which followed a course of four different careers: military service, financial management, information systems management, and instructional technology. His most recent evaluation endeavor began as he sought to combine his teaching and technology experiences. Samuel relates his entry into evaluation:

The way that I formally came to evaluation as my second career, was my wife had a Fulbright Fellowship. I took a leave of absence, went with her, taught some classes at

the university she was teaching at on web stuff and html, and taught a lot of seminars on culture issues. [At that point, I asked myself], "How can I combine my technology background with education?" I ended up applying to a PhD program in instructional technology. In the process of going through that program, I gravitated toward the evaluation aspect of the instructional design process. I enjoyed that a lot.

In reviewing what I'd previously done, I realized [that] I've been an evaluator for a long time, [but] I just didn't know it. That's when I recognized the educational term that we call evaluator. You'd think evaluation is not jargon, but it is. [In this case], it's education-specific jargon. It may be psychology-specific jargon, [since] they have evaluation within the psychology field as well. Other social sciences use that term evaluation. Although a lot of the terms that they use are the same, they're not always used the same. However, if you break down the jargon, I've been an evaluator almost my entire professional, post-college life doing evaluation-type of activities.

Because of his many evaluation experiences over the years, Samuel's values pervade personal (e.g., the desire for the welfare of others) and professional (e.g., learning experiences, working independently) realms in order to help empower stakeholders and evaluators. Samuel elaborates on his concept of values:

I try to understand what the values are of the stakeholder. That term [values] itself is charged. Many people think that is simply referred to [as] social values or moral values rather than, "This is what drives us as a business. This is what drives us as an educational unit. This is what drives us as teachers of this course." When I engage in evaluation, I help people to understand that, so that they understand their perspective

and I understand their perspective. If they can't elaborate [on their perspective], then we're both in trouble.

The things that I observe and the recommendations that I will make are based on not just the professional values that I have, but the personal values that I have. [Basic welfare principles] influence the way that I conduct evaluations. It's not just the greatest good for the greatest number, but look underneath it and say, "Does this recommended evaluation action empower or dis-empower people?" As I look back over the evaluations that I've done over the years, without realizing it, those values were infused in the recommendations that I made. It's not just the greatest good for the greatest number, but how do you get there? It's not just the ends that matter, but the means also.

Samuel's evaluation focused on the effectiveness of an NGO program. The stakeholder issue in this case was that the involvement of a key stakeholder during the data collection process threatened to taint the evaluation results.

Stakeholders included the program director, other administrators, and program participants. Samuel selects stakeholders in a group setting with his evaluation team, and then solidifies who the stakeholders are when meeting with the client. His two main criteria to determine if someone is a stakeholder are whether the person is impacted by, and cares about, the evaluand.

While in this case the director did not feel he was imposing on the situation, and genuinely wanted to observe in order to understand the evaluation process better, his presence made program participants reluctant to share information for fear of reprisal. Samuel often encounters issues where values of the evaluator and/or stakeholders are compromised. He

recognized this situation as an issue because that situation threatened to skew the evaluation results. Samuel describes this issue:

> [The stakeholder] wanted to be present when we were doing the evaluation, and we felt that greatly tainted the results. After we explained why we thought that, then he agreed not to accompany us anymore. His value was he wanted to be on site–he wanted to observe what was going on so he could understand the evaluation better. That's one value that he has, but that conflicts with another value that we have, which is that the evaluation would be not influenced by outside pressure, and he's very much a pressure to the people being evaluated because he's giving them stuff [for the program]. If he's there, they will want to say the right things that they want him to hear, so he [would have] tainted the results.

When conducting an evaluation himself, Samuel meets with stakeholders frequently throughout the evaluation process to clarify expectations, gather data, and discuss evaluation results. Samuel prefers to quickly identify and resolve issues through negotiation. Samuel engages in open dialogue with the stakeholders to identify and bracket his own biases toward the evaluation. In this way, the issues come to the attention of the evaluator and stakeholders, and together they are able to come to resolution. Samuel details this resolution process:

> The first thing I try to do is identify my own bias with regard to whatever project it is I'm evaluating, and try to understand how that may skew how I look at things. [In that way] I can make accommodations upfront, so that the numbers of issues that arise during the course of the evaluation are reduced. The reason why I say that is often issues that need to be resolved in evaluation are associated with misunderstandings. A lot of those misunderstandings are based on the evaluator's perception of things. If you think

about that upfront, and think about how you might be biased or prejudiced in your view about certain things, you can account for that upfront and appropriately deal with that before it comes up in the evaluation. That's probably the most important thing for me to do right up front.

[I need] to take a look at things and say, "How could I possibly be biased? How could I possibly misinterpret data? What kind of data am I gathering? What kind of information is being provided to me? How can I misinterpret that, based on my own experience?" If I think about that upfront, then I'm less likely to actually to make that error in judgment.

Samuel spoke with the director about the need to be objective and to allow participants to voice their opinions. The director then understood and chose to not be present during the data collection process. Samuel often plays the role of clarifier in order to acknowledge conflicts, but ultimately seek commonalities among stakeholders. Samuel describes his roles when dealing with conflicting values during the evaluation process:

I was going to say arbitrator, but it's not really arbitrator because we're not trying to change, generally speaking, people's conflicting values, so that they're not conflicting anymore, by changing them into the same values. It's more clarifier. You say, white, you say, gray. What you're both saying is a color, and you have different perspectives on the color. As long as you can help people understand that, then you can move forward with the evaluation. It's a clarifying role, not an arbitration role.

Samuel has learned that conflicting stakeholder values are not easy to resolve, but half the battle is understanding the perspectives of everyone involved. Samuel elaborates on this conclusion:

Conflicting values don't mean that the evaluation is doomed to failure, as long as everyone understands what everyone else's conflicting values are. In some cases, it might even be preferable because then you have multiple perspectives on things. You're doing triangulation without trying.

Vignette 3: Frances

Frances has been an evaluator for over 28 years, focusing on extension education. As a program agent in extension education, Frances began her evaluation career at the prompting of her supervisor to evaluate the impact of the work she did. Frances relates the experience of becoming an evaluator:

I remember when I had my first annual review with my district director, and he said, "You do great programs, but you need to evaluate them." He was the first person who ever used the term with me. [He] said, "You need to understand what difference you're making in the work that you do." That was the first I heard of the term. I started taking workshops and going to [evaluation events]. As a community-based educator, I started to do some program evaluation.

That prompting struck her curiosity regarding the evaluation field, which led to her obtaining a PhD and becoming more involved in professional development opportunities as well as in greater evaluation of programs she works with.

Her values as they relate to evaluation have shifted from evaluating out of obligation to creating usefulness and meaning for the stakeholders with whom she works. That in turn drives her decision-making with regard to the evaluation process. Frances describes this shift in values:

I started out more doing evaluation because I was told I needed to. Originally, the major use for evaluation was first to please my supervisors and the other stakeholders, [and

second] for individual gain–to get tenure. It was more of an individual intrinsic focus of doing evaluation, more of a value of obligation or being a good citizen.

Over time, that value shifted more to be the utilization and meaningfulness value. It's almost on a continuum of doing it for someone else, versus doing it for me and my clientele and making it useful in daily life. I would say that I started out doing the vast majority of my evaluation alone and that has become more and more collaborative and more and more empowerment evaluation over time as I see the benefits of that type of work. [Now] it's not just about me. It's more about changes in other people or other people's needs and issues to be helped with.

Frances' evaluation focused on the impact of 4-H camp in developing problem solving, decision-making, and communications among youth. Her stakeholders included the youth, camp directors, camp counselors, and 4-H agents over the camps in her state and in surrounding states.

Frances feels that the person who hires her is the one in charge of selecting the stakeholders for the particular evaluation. In more flexible situations, Frances takes into account political, contextual, economic, and practical factors when determining stakeholders. Frances illustrates this analysis:

Since it was the agent from this particular county who asked me to do the evaluation, I considered him the lead stakeholder, and I asked him who he wanted involved. He said he only really wanted to involve the people from his office and his campers. It didn't need to go any wider than them. If I were to have been a hired evaluator, I would have said the person hiring me defined the stakeholders.

Every project is different. Oftentimes, it's based on the political factors or contextual factors, like time–how much time do we have? Because involving secondary stakeholders oftentimes takes more time. The other would be how much do we have in the way of resources. Sometimes we really can't do a deep empowerment model if we don't have a lot of resources. Then the other is the purpose of the evaluation. If the evaluation is something that's just being done because it has to be done, then I don't usually involve tons of stakeholders. It's really a contextual situation.

In this case, Frances dealt with human interaction issues (i.e., dealing with interpersonal communications) and contextual issues (i.e., assessing the political environment of the evaluation). Frances relates the complexities of human interaction issues:

I'm a lifelong learner and am interested in learning what other people think and why they think that. That helps in building rapport. That's the fun side of it for me: watching the themes come out of all these different people across their differences. The hard part is trying to deal with all of the basic human nature stuff. In a focus group, [for example], when one person just keeps yapping and yapping, and you have to try to get them to be quiet and pull information out from other people. You [may have] someone who just wants to boast about themselves or someone who's rude to someone else. It's that human interpersonal stuff that can be tough.

As a result of building relationships with the stakeholders over time, Frances gained greater access to stakeholders and the information they possessed than she otherwise would have. Because of her deep background in camping, her knowledge of the subject matter of the evaluand helped further solidify the bond between her and the stakeholders because "they know you've had a similar experience to theirs."

Depending on the situation, Frances confronts the issue, avoids it and settles for a compromise, or plans what to do to avoid the situation in the future. Frances illustrates this process:

[For example], where people are not allowing others to speak, I will just confront it right up and say to the person, "I've heard you say quite a few things. Hold on a second. I'd like to ask so and so over here to tell me about what they think." I'll actually do a direct intervention to try to bring it back to the values that I value.

Sometimes, if that's not a smart thing to do–if it's not politically correct–I may do nothing and go with the compromise because I can't see that I have a choice–if it's not going to be a win-win situation. Other times, what I will try to do is change the situation so it does not happen again in the future. Hitting it head-on, totally avoiding it, or trying to improve on it next time.

Frances internally assesses possible repercussions of the conflict on others, then based on her assessment she uses common decision-making skills to resolve the issue. Frances recounts this process:

There are some standard things I take into consideration. One is, "what is this going to do for the current work environment with the stakeholders?" Addressing this issue– dealing with it, or not dealing with it. "How is it going to change the relationship we have with each other?" That's clearly a criterion. The other one is, "can I live with myself with what I have just done or am going to do? Would mom and dad still be proud of me if I did the following?" It's that personal piece of, "What will this do to me or my reputation or my situation, as well as the group?"

Then there is a piece in there about, "What does it mean for the others as individuals?" For example, when I put my hand in front of that person, basically put my back to him and trying to get him not to talk that is pretty radical in a group where you have not met people before. That is a pretty stern response. "What is that going to do to him as an individual? Am I going to hurt him in any way?" That is probably the third thing I think of. One is the group and then me and then him. The other thing that I will think about is the institution that I represent and to what degree the actions I'm going to take affect that institution–"How does that effect who I represent? As a public servant, what does that mean?" The same thing would be true for the organizations or entities that the stakeholders represent.

Frances has learned to select stakeholders with similar values to hers if possible. She also tries to work with stakeholders who shift her thinking regarding the evaluand. Frances often plays the roles of protector (i.e., protecting one stakeholder against harsh criticism or treatment by another stakeholder) and peer for the stakeholder (i.e., forming stakeholder relationships by relating past experiences in an effort form a bond with those stakeholders). She also discusses expectations for the evaluation early on in the evaluation process in order to avoid any misconceptions about the evaluation.

Vignette 4: Tonya

Tonya has been an evaluator for approximately 5 years, focusing on extension education. Evaluation more prominently came to fruition in her career as she had a change in job responsibilities. Tonya explains the entrance of evaluation into her life:

I started my career in cooperative extension doing mostly programmatic work in agriculture, and it became increasingly needful to collect data regarding impacts of the

work that we did. I became interested in doing a little more of that, helping other colleagues, and requesting to have some additional training. It really evolved over a time and from the work that I did.

She later pursued additional schooling. Her formal education was in higher education, but she took some courses in program evaluation as she worked on her master's and doctoral degrees. Evaluation now forms the basis of much of the work she does.

Tonya values program impact and accountability, which help her in data collection and analysis in order to make appropriate claims about a program's success or need for improvement. Tonya elaborates on how her values facilitate her work:

Part of the reason I started doing more of this work is that I really think it's important that we collect data about the impact of some of the outreach work that we do. Collecting good, solid data and having stories to tell about the impacts is probably the main value I bring to evaluation work. It's really about being accountable to those who fund us and to the people that we work with. We do technical work, and if we don't have any data to back it up, it's really tough for us to make those kinds of claims.

Tonya's evaluation focused on a holistic management-training program for farmers established to build the farmers' capacity to make appropriate farm planning decisions. The stakeholders in this case were the funder and the program participants. Because Tonya deals with the same stakeholders repeatedly, she feels that she doesn't really select the stakeholders. Tonya is involved in the technical aspects of evaluation, and interacts with the stakeholders for data collection and analysis. Tonya explains the frustration of meeting different stakeholder needs:

The multiple stakeholders that we [work with] are people who are participants in our program. We do report some of our data back to them, but more importantly, we have local stakeholders at the county and state level who are often legislators or county commissioners. They're making some decisions about funding our programs.

They want a certain kind of information–often they want the stories. We also report the evaluation data to the federal government who, again, support our programs financially. [However], they're looking for something much different–often something much more quantifiable. I think [in the extension field] we're collecting data in one way in one state and in a very different way in another state. At some federal level, they would like to aggregate that [information], and it's just very difficult to because our measures are [so] different. That's probably one of the more frustrating things about it.

According to Tonya, she does not encounter issues with stakeholders because she continually works with the same people. Nevertheless, Tonya has learned to be clear and up front with stakeholders regard the expectations of the evaluation, including reporting requirements as various governmental levels. Tonya relates this exchange of expectations:

I'm very concerned about accountability mainly because of the work that I do and I evaluate is basically funded through public money, whether it be county, state, or federal money. My strong feeling of being accountable and having some sort of data to support why we spend that money has really not changed over time at all. If anything it [has] become stronger. I really think that's an important reason for doing program evaluation. It's not only to know whether or not the work you're doing is good, or doing what you intended it to do, but what kind of an impact it makes on people.

Tonya frequently assumes the roles of technical assistant, coach, and mediator in order to clarify expectations for the evaluation, conduct an effective evaluation, and teach others to do the same. Tonya concludes with these comments on roles:

In some cases, it's more the technical assistant's role to [ask], "How are we going to collect this? What's realistic? What's going to be valid? What's the best way to do it?" In some cases, it's a coaching kind of role because I'm helping others do it. In other cases, it's the evaluator role, where I'm really doing the evaluation much on my own. Typically, it's more the coaching and mediator-type role.

Vignette 5: Carol

Carol has been an evaluator for over 15 years, focusing on children's health services. Her formal training was in political science, but along with that, she had a strong methodological foundation that helped her to transition into the evaluation field. Carol relates her training experiences:

My training is in political science, and evaluation is a very big part of how political scientists orient themselves in the world. Evaluation to me was really part of my training, but it doesn't fit in exactly with the way it does for people who are trained directly in evaluation. When I started working, it seemed to me that my skill base really matched well with a lot of organizations who really needed evaluation-type work.

I also had methodological training. I had a number of years when I was working as a research associate when I was working on my doctorate. That wasn't in evaluation research, but it really gave me an incredibly strong methodological foundation, so that when I started working as an evaluator, I had a lot of resources. [For example], designing a survey wasn't new for me. While I was in graduate school, I worked full-

time in a research post. I was exposed to a lot of methods that really made it easy for me

to work independently, pretty quickly after finishing my Ph.D. [Now that makes] it easy

for me when a community organization asks me for something and I can figure out a

method that would help them get [the information they need].

Carol feels that those in the social sciences have a particular view of the world such that

intellectual exchanges, opinionated discussions, and critical thinking flow together to come to

resolution on various issues. Because of this training and experience, Carol values disagreement,

seeing that as a way to foster negotiation between the evaluator and stakeholders. Carol

elaborates on this viewpoint:

I think what's different, perhaps, about political scientists is that we expect the world we

walk into to be a world where people don't agree with each other. People are trying hard

to either develop consensus or get agreement, and we're pretty comfortable with

disagreement and all the complexities that happen with that. I think where my values

come in, how I would be different from other evaluators, or how I would see myself as

having a different orientation, [is that] I expect people to not agree. I see those opinions

as being really equal and equally legitimate.

Carol's evaluation focused on the sustainability of a school and community-based safety

and child development program. The main stakeholders in this case consisted of the federal

government as the project funder, school administrators, and a management team comprised of

the police and local health departments and service providers such as counselors and social

workers. According to Carol, the "biggest dynamic" involved in the project was the power

struggle between the management team and the superintendent. Because the superintendent was

afraid of negative press in the schools, he tightly controlled the evaluation itself and the

resulting data. Although he allowed the evaluation to occur, he would not allow the evaluator to disseminate the results to any stakeholders whatsoever–even to the funders who initiated the evaluation.

Carol defines stakeholders based on John Dewey's book, *the Public and it's Problems* (1946), as those affected by a program, whether or not they are included in the decision-making. Although she is free to make recommendations, Carol feels that those in leadership positions are the people who choose the stakeholders. Carol discusses this viewpoint:

> I don't think that's my choice. It's the people who have the leadership positions in a community or organization are the ones who choose the stakeholders. As an evaluator, I may [make] recommendations to add additional stakeholders, based on what I observe in the community. It's their choice whether or not to take those recommendations.

Three big issues for Carol include the role of the evaluator in the evaluation, the value of knowledge in solving social problems, and the effectiveness of giving voice to the wide range of stakeholders she deals with. Carol describes her reasoning behind these issues:

> The role of the evaluator, that's always an issue because you have to have a role that gives integrity and legitimacy to the data you're collecting. You have to negotiate a role that everyone's comfortable with but where [everyone sees] the data as legitimate, helpful, and relatively unbiased. That's the bread and butter of evaluation.
>
> The last two issues are more my core values. When we make decisions in public policy or for an organization, we sometimes don't consider data–it's sometimes is justifiably a small part of [the whole picture]. One of the reasons that we do evaluation is because we can give good information and help people make better decisions. I felt

that part of the evaluation process was really truncated because I couldn't get the information out that would help people make better decisions.

In the third issue, the voice of all the stakeholders, the evaluator ends up really being in a position where sometimes they're the only way for less-powerful individuals in a community to have a voice because of the power structures in communities. I've embraced that a little bit. Not that I purposefully go out and try to find the least powerful people and try to upset everybody's plans with their point of view. However, if I'm given the opportunity and the privilege of gathering data from individuals, I'm going to make sure that the people who don't want to hear it do hear it because it's an important part of their community. I'm not going to be aggressive about it or make people feel uncomfortable, but I'm going to make sure that their voice gets heard. Sometimes there's no other way.

Negotiation and relationship building are key ways for Carol to handle potential issues. Doing this tends to foster greater communication and often diffuses stakeholder issues. In this case, Carol negotiated with the superintendent to release a newsletter highlighting positive evaluation results, but the superintendent did not allow her to release the rest of the evaluation results, which also contained some negative information about the program. This lack of information sharing created much anxiety between the management team and the superintendent in terms of the desire to move forward with the project in order to help the schools. However, the relationship building formed a tighter bond with other stakeholders on the team and helped them to deal with the superintendent who sought to thwart the evaluation efforts. Carol describes this negotiation process:

It really forced us to get clarity on what we were willing to stand up for. I think at different times in the project it was such a divisive environment. Even though we had good relationships with all the management team members, I felt many times that I was being played by different stakeholders. In that sense they wanted me to be on their side of different arguments, and I really stepped back from that as much as I could. The only fight I was really willing to take on completely was confronting the superintendent about releasing the data and finding a way to get him to be willing to release some of it.

Carol learned to continuously build relationships so stakeholders may deal with their conflicts. She finds that being a broker, in that she forms stakeholder relationships to the extent that stakeholder feel they can confide in her regarding situations regarding the evaluation, is the best role for an evaluator to help resolve conflicts between the different stakeholders. Carol concludes with these comments.

I try really hard to build a strong collegial relationship with my primary contacts in an organization. Based on that, [I] build the capacity for each of us to hold each other's confidences, so that if they say, "I'm really worried about this part of the program, but don't tell anybody," they can trust me that I'm going to hold that. If I say, "I'm concerned about this part of the program," I can trust them to hear that, too.

I think that's a little bit of the way that I'm always trying to build something strong to stand on when the conflicts come–because on almost every evaluation, there are conflicts. You don't really know how things are going to change, and you can really run into some difficulties. If you have strong partnerships and very respectful, collegial relationships–if you're able to build that, then you can pretty much tell them anything in the end, and they'll accept it from you. The important thing is to be able to tell the

truth–and any evaluator can tell the truth–but you also need to be able to know that your stakeholders can hear it from you and that they're not just going to discredit you.

I think a lot of that trust-building that I do is my little savings account that I can then know that when I give them the bad news–if there is valid bad news to give them, that they're going to hear it, and they're going to respond to it in a productive way and not just discredit me.

Chapter 5: Themes Emerging from the Research

This chapter identifies themes emerging from the research based on my interpretations of the evaluators' descriptions of their experiences organized around each of the four research questions. Examples provided by the interviewed evaluators are used to illustrate the work experiences, education, stakeholder interaction, issue identification, and roles and reasoning of the respective evaluator. Chapter 5 will explore these insights in light of the evaluation literature on the research questions, and offer a discussion of implications of these themes for practicing evaluators and others.

Research Question 1: What is the experience of evaluators in dealing with multiple stakeholders?

The experiences of evaluators can be divided into two themes: (a) work experiences and education, and (b) stakeholder selection and interaction.

Work experiences and education. Work experiences and education helped prepare the evaluators for the multiplicity of stakeholder encounters throughout their evaluation careers. All participants cited previous work experiences as the means for their entering into the evaluation field. Internal and external organizational needs lead the participants to seek evaluation training and higher education to fill those needs, foster teamwork and collaboration, and further their evaluation career progression. In retrospect, the participants depicted the prominence of evaluation throughout their career–even prior to their training–the only difference being in the terminology of their tasks.

Frances says she became an evaluator by accident, but that training has kept up her interest as a lifelong learner and has helped her to better understand and manage her programs:

I was not trained as an evaluator. My supervisor at the time said, "You need to understand what difference you're making or not in the work that you do." That was the first I heard of the term and started taking workshops and going to things, and as a community-based educator, I started to do some program evaluation. Eventually, I got so interested in it, that I went and did my Ph.D.

Afterward I was able to work half of my time in the youth-development unit, and the other half with program development and evaluation unit. That's where I finally became formalized … into being an evaluator. It wasn't intentional. It just was part of the job that I learned how to do it.

Carol's methodological training helped her to become more in tune with stakeholders and able to provide for their needs.

My training is in political science, but I also had methodological training.…While I was in graduate school, I worked full-time in a research post, and I was exposed to a lot of methods that really made it easy for me to work independently, pretty quickly after finishing my Ph.D. That makes it easy for me when a community organization asks me for something that I can figure out a method for that would help them get it.

The experience of evaluators in dealing with multiple stakeholders includes prior work experiences and organizational needs that motivate the evaluator toward evaluation training and/or formal education. The combination of training and experience facilitates the development of communication, evaluation, social, and problem-solving skills (e.g., the use of personal and professional values, collaboration, commitment, negotiation, and service) which they believe are necessary for working effectively with stakeholders.

Stakeholder selection and interaction. All study participants agreed that there are always multiple stakeholders in any given evaluation. The stakeholders themselves, however, usually differ in importance and degree of caring about the evaluand. All participants agreed that funders and/or leaders associated with the evaluand usually play primary roles in shaping the evaluation. Participants identified similar criteria for selecting stakeholders to participate, such as who funded, implemented, was potentially impacted by, and/or cared about the program. Participants also mentioned that selecting stakeholders depended on the particular context and purpose of the evaluation. However, there was considerable variation among participants regarding who has the responsibility for selecting stakeholders.

Samuel focuses on impact and caring as important factors regarding stakeholder selection:

With educational products, the deciding criteria are "Will the product have an impact on someone?" and "Do they care about that product?" If the answer to both questions is yes, they're a stakeholder; If the answer to both is no, they are not a stakeholder.

There was considerable variation among participants regarding who has the responsibility for selecting stakeholders. Samuel said he selects stakeholders in a group setting with other members of the evaluation team, or in coordination with the funder or primary stakeholder. Frances and Carol specified those in leadership positions or the people hiring the evaluator are responsible for selecting stakeholders.

Samuel collaborates extensively with other members of the evaluation team, as well as the client, in determining who the stakeholders are.

In a pre-kickoff meeting, we discuss it internally, of who we think all the stakeholders
are. Then, in the kickoff meeting with the client, we again ask the same question, "Who
do we think all the stakeholders are?"

Depending on her position in the evaluation project, Frances yields to hiring authorities
or (in more flexible situations) uses many criteria for identifying stakeholders.

Since it was the agent from this particular county who asked me to do the evaluation, I
considered him the lead stakeholder, and I asked him who he wanted involved. He said
he only really wanted to involve the people from his office and his campers. It didn't
need to go any wider than them. If I were to have been a hired evaluator, I would have
said the person hiring me defined the stakeholders.

It really depends on the project. Every project is different. Oftentimes, it's based
on, what are the political factors? What are the contextual factors, like time–how much
time do we have? Because involving secondary stakeholders oftentimes takes more time.
The other would be how much do we have in the way of resources. Sometimes we really
can't do a deep empowerment model if we don't have a lot of resources. Then the other
is what the purpose of the evaluation is. If the evaluation is something that's just being
done because it has to be done, then I don't usually involve tons of stakeholders. If it's
just a compliance issue versus they're really going to do something with the results. It's
really a contextual situation.

Carol, on the other hand, states that organizational or community leaders are the ones
who choose the stakeholders.

I don't think that that's my choice. It's the people who have the leadership positions in a
community or organization are the ones who choose the stakeholders. As an evaluator, I

may make recommendations to add additional stakeholders, based on what I observe in the community. It's their choice whether or not to take those recommendations.

All study participants emphasized the importance of building relationships with stakeholders from the beginning. Stakeholders are then more willing to disclose information and assist in the evaluation. Participants also cited the benefit of increased access to other stakeholders and resources that would have otherwise been difficult to obtain. Building relationships over time served to legitimize the relationship and often changed stakeholders' opinions of the role of evaluation, inviting them to think evaluatively in future projects.

The participants' subject-matter background and experience also helped to form a tighter bond with their stakeholders: they were able to relate to them better, and the stakeholders in turn were more willing to share information. Long-term relationships also fostered mutual trust and communication between the evaluators and stakeholders, and created an open environment to discuss concerns as well as successes.

Daniel found that information disclosure flowed more freely as a result of his stakeholder relationships:

> I did a five-year evaluation with seven different schools, and there was only one teacher in each of the schools involved in the program. Over the five years, we get to know those people very well. At the first interview, of course, it was very tense for them, I'd say. They didn't know who you were, they don't know why you are there talking to them, and you built this relationship. During the last year when I went and interviewed each of the schools, it was completely different. They were much more open and willing to talk about different things and reflect on their own experience.

Frances described her increased access to study participants based on stakeholder involvement:

I think it makes a great difference into how successful the evaluation really is are those relationships. The agent–the person who asked me to do the evaluation–he and I are co-workers, and he had helped with my orientation and helped me out to help me understand the organization Our relationship was one of an exchange at that point.

He had a phenomenal relationship with every one of the stakeholders–the campers, the counselors, the parents, and so, by him saying to them, "Here– my friend wants to ask you a few questions. Would you take a few minutes?" They, of course, would say yes because they loved him. He opened the door for getting some good, authentic data. If you were going to do network analysis, he'd be the node–for me to get to everybody else.

Yet stakeholder interaction does not always yield positive results. Carol described an extremely fragile relationship with a key stakeholder. Despite the best relationship-building efforts, that stakeholder felt threatened by the evaluation and sought to thwart attempts to share evaluation results with other stakeholders. This incident illuminated the issue of stakeholders occasionally asking the evaluator to take sides in an evaluation. Nevertheless, the participant's relationship with other stakeholders helped them all deal more effectively with a difficult stakeholder.

Carol stated the following in reference to the participant's relationship with other stakeholders:

The biggest dynamic here is that there was a management committee that oversaw the student project at this school district. The administrators for the school district–the

superintendent and the assistant superintendent–would not allow us, as the evaluators, to share our evaluation findings with the management team.

We had been told by the management team how frustrated they were with this and how frustrated they were with a number of other things having to do with the way the school district was managing the grant. We took the opportunity of meeting to look at the sustainability issue–to do interviews with a very broad range of stakeholders. All of the management team partners were interviewed, but also a lot of schoolteachers were interviewed, and a lot of service providers were interviewed.

The idea behind the report was just to take ourselves out of it and to allow the stakeholders to talk directly to the superintendent and assistant superintendent, and let that conversation happen because that conversation wasn't happening. It was a way for us to…force the superintendent to pay attention to a broader range of stakeholders. That was our goal with that, and it didn't succeed. He still didn't release any data, and it was such a mess.

In summary, the experience of evaluators in dealing with multiple stakeholders involved selecting the stakeholders via hiring authorities, others in leadership positions, or by the evaluator along with team members or primary stakeholders, where evaluators work to integrate as many stakeholders as possible into the evaluation process depending on who funds, implements, is impacted by, and is interested in the evaluation. When many stakeholder groups are involved in the evaluation, funders and/or leaders play the primary roles. Evaluators build relationships throughout the evaluation process to foster trust, communication, and facilitation in the evaluation, as well as generate ability to handle communication issues and potential problems among stakeholders.

Research Question 2: What does it mean for an evaluator to deal with conflicting values among stakeholders?

The meaning for evaluators in dealing with conflicting values among stakeholders can be divided into two themes: (a) identifying and addressing issues encountered during stakeholder interaction, and (b) learning lessons from the experience.

Identifying and addressing issues. All of the participants agreed that many issues arise in the course of the evaluation and between different evaluations. These may be human interaction issues (e.g., engaging in meeting dynamics to ensure that everyone has a say in the evaluation), or issues that compromise one or more values of the evaluator or a stakeholder.

Samuel describes a human interaction issue between a stakeholder and the evaluation team:

> In this case, the stakeholder wanted to be present when we were doing the evaluation, and we felt that that greatly tainted the results, and after we explained why we thought that, then he agreed not to accompany us anymore. His value was he wanted to be on site–he wanted to observe what was going on, so that he could understand the evaluation better. That is one value that he has, but that conflicts with another value that we have, which is that the value would be not influenced by outside pressure, and he's very much a pressure to the people being evaluated because he's giving them stuff for the program. If he's there, they will want to say the right things that they want him to hear, so he tainted the results.

Frances had a similar situation with stakeholder values in terms of a companion evaluator:

I was doing an evaluation of a human services program with a chair of a board. He came and asked me if I would help him conduct focus groups and analyze the data, etc. We were fine working together, analyzing the data, 'til we get to the county board meeting, where he made the final report, and he reported results that weren't in our data. At that point, it was too late for me to re-negotiate anything with him because he had reported the results the way he wanted to see them.

What I have done now is change the way I operate. I try never to do an evaluation just with one other person, and especially the analysis. I try to have a second or third person available, so that the person is kept accountable by more people. That was one of those things you just learn along the way. Some people can be trusted to analyze things honestly, and others can be trusted to put a bias on it for what results they want to see.

The things that would be issues for me would be those that might begin to compromise my base values. The example I just gave you would be–there was not honesty in the reporting of the results, and for me, honestly and accuracy is important. That's where it became an issue for me is when it made me compromise my values. For example, where people are have a hard time working together, they are not allowing others to speak–that compromises my value of empowerment and allowing all people to bring their voice to the table and share their story. That is usually where it becomes an issue for me, is if it is somehow infringing upon my values or making me compromise them.

All participants used basic problem-solving techniques (e.g., identify the problem, review alternatives, make a decision) to handle issues regarding conflicting values among

stakeholders. Because there may be multiple constructs at work, identifying the problem was the most crucial step, followed by coming up with alternative solutions such as direct intervention, compromise, or making future changes to the situation to prevent it from happening next time.

Samuel makes a concerted effort to identify and resolve issues quickly regarding evaluation conduct:

What you do is you identify as quickly as you can–sometimes it takes a while to identify the conflicting values. As soon as you have identified that there are conflicting values, then you need to state that right away, "Oh, we have some conflicting values here. Here's what I think you think, and here's what I think, and here is why I think it." Then, you just go through the education process, and say, "This is how I'm going to deal with this issue. Is that okay with you?" Then, it is a negotiation from that point forward. …Basically, the negotiation is, "How are you going to conduct the evaluation?"

In addition to similarities among evaluators' experiences reflected in this theme, there were several divergent perspectives revealed by interviewees. Daniel referred to the need to report the evaluation results in a fair and neutral manner regardless of conflicting values. Carol capitalized on the strength of her relationship with the stakeholders to negotiate with those stakeholders toward a resolution.

Daniel separated himself from the stakeholder values when conducting and reporting the evaluation.

It comes down to the match between what the program was meant to do and what they were trying to force it to do. The program was really trying to get people to interact in

better ways, talk to each other, and have better relationships–understanding and

speaking and communicating. They gained a new awareness or insight into some of

their students, but that didn't really change the way they were teaching. It also didn't

change the outcomes of the attendance and violence. We simply reported it, and we tried

to report it fair and in a nice way. You state it neutral. You don't try to say, that's good

or bad.

Carol focuses on building stakeholder relationships to be able to handle issues when

they arise.

 I really try to maintain a relationship and try to build from the strength of that

relationship and get a strong enough relationship where I can nurture the stakeholders to

be where we all need them to be. I do know that some evaluators feel very strongly it's

important to be stronger than that, and to just tell people when they're doing things

wrong. Everyone I know who's done that–their relationship ends with the stakeholders

when that happens. I don't know that that benefits anybody. I try really hard to build a

strong collegial relationship with my primary contacts in an organization. Based on that,

I can build the capacity for each of us to hold each other's confidences.

Learning Lessons. All participants encouraged disclosure of conflicting values among

stakeholders. Although stakeholders may be involved in the evaluation for different reasons,

conflicting values should be at least acknowledged if not resolved so that everyone is aware of

them and can make accommodations for them. This disclosure and acknowledgement helps to

form realistic expectations of all phases in the evaluation.

Daniel feels that stakeholder values are all valuable, but he stays focused on the mission

of the evaluation.

It's a Dewey thing where you say, "Sometimes we don't know what is best. We just do good things. We do things that we think are valuable and we hope that good things result from it." In many ways that is true. In some ways, I am simply, as an evaluator, saying, "These were the values of these various stakeholders. This is what they wanted to have happen. This is what seems to be happening. It's meeting that objective; it's not meeting that objective," and most of these things I don't perceive as being bad. They're either equally good, or some things aren't bad; they're just not important. If there were something bad that they wanted to happen, then I would have an ethical problem.

Quite often the issue isn't whether you did a quality job, it's–given the resources, time, and money, the expectations of what you contracted with the client to do–you did what you were supposed to do, and you did it to the best of your ability, given the access, resources, and availability of the data that you have.

Tonya emphasizes the need for clarity with regard to realistic stakeholder needs for information:

Well, I think it's just, being patient and being very clear and listening to what they need and doing your best that you can, but also being very clear back to stakeholders about what's realistic and what's possible. Sometimes it felt as though they just wanted us to make numbers up, as opposed to collect numbers, and most of us aren't willing to do that. Just being very clear about it with them. It usually ends up being a compromise. Like I said, give them the best data that they're looking for. However, there will be other places that we're just simply not able to collect it and have to just be honest in it. I'm not going to report things that we can't possibly collect in a valid and reliable way.

In spite of the similarities among evaluators' experiences reflected in the theme of learning lessons, Frances recommended selecting stakeholders with similar values or those who will honor the values of other stakeholders as well as the evaluator, and stakeholders who are critical thinkers and help the group think outside the box.

Frances depicts a situation of selecting stakeholders with similar values in order to aid critical thinking:

I have learned that there are three groups of stakeholders. Those who are just going to say, "That's great. Thank you." There's not going to be any conflict, whether they agree or not. There is a middle group, maybe about sixty to eighty percent of the stakeholders that say, "Well, what about this? What about that?" They are more critical in their thinking about things, and they challenge things a little bit, and that's the group that I really like having the noise with because they're going to push and shift me a little bit in my thinking. Then, there is another group–probably another ten percent that are just going to be wanting to hear their voice, not willing to change–what you would call the "laggers" in the Diffusion Theory. Those folks that are just making noise because they want to, and that's who they are. Those are the people that I list in my mind as un-trainable. I'm not going to be able to change them. They're not going to be able to be open to thinking about other ways to doing things. I like to try to work with the stakeholders that are in that middle sixty to eighty percent that are really going to help me think about things, and yet, they're going to be relatively reasonable about what's doable and what's not.

In summary, the meaning for evaluators in dealing with conflicting values among stakeholders is that many issues arise regarding human interaction or value compromising, such

as gaps between evaluation data and stakeholder opinions, the role of the evaluator in the evaluation, the value of information, and ensuring that stakeholders have a voice in the evaluation. Evaluators utilize fair and neutral reporting of evaluation results, negotiate with stakeholders toward problem resolution, and use problem-solving skills to deal with conflicting values among stakeholders.

Evaluators select stakeholders with similar values or those who honor the values of others. Evaluators and stakeholders acknowledge their differences early on in the evaluation. Expectations of the evaluation design, data collection, analysis, and reporting are realistic based on the evaluation capacity of evaluators and stakeholders. Stakeholders shift group thinking toward different perspectives.

Research Question 3: What roles do evaluators take on to resolve conflicting values among stakeholders?

How evaluators deal with multiple stakeholders depends on the roles they take on throughout the evaluation. Participant responses regarding the roles evaluators take on to resolve conflicting values among stakeholders parallel those found in the evaluation literature with respect to four main roles of researcher (e.g., reporter, technical assistant), consultant (e.g., clarifier, facilitator, mediator), teacher (e.g., expert, directive leader, coach), and judge. Participants stated they tended to rotate through multiple roles throughout the evaluation process depending on the situation.

Samuel stresses acknowledging conflicts encountered during the evaluation but focusing on the commonalities.

The role of–well, I was going to say arbitrator, but it is not really arbitrator because we are not trying to change, generally speaking, people's conflicting values, so that they're not conflicting anymore, by changing them into the same values. It is more like clarifier.

You say, "white," you say, "gray." What you are both saying is a color, and you have different perspectives on the color. As long as you can help people understand that, then you can move forward with the evaluation. It is a clarifying role, not an arbitration role. Of course, my values are thrown in there, as well.

Tonya moves from the role of technical assistant to the roles of coach and mediator during the evaluation.

I mean in some cases, it's more the technical assistant's role to say, "How are we going to collect this? What's realistic? What's going to be valid? What's the best way to do it?" In some cases, it's a coaching role because I'm helping others do it. In other cases, it's the evaluator role, where I'm really doing the evaluation much on my own. Typically, it's more the coaching and mediator-type role, I would say.

In addition to similarities among evaluators' experiences reflected in this theme, there were several divergent perspectives revealed by interviewees. Frances described the role of protector (i.e., trying to shield or protect one stakeholder from another) and talked about being a peer for the stakeholders, in which the evaluators related their own experiences in past projects as a means to form a peer relationship among the stakeholders. Carol considered herself a broker, where the evaluator forms relationships with stakeholders that form a bond in fostering communication and negotiation concerning the evaluand.

Frances illustrates the roles of protector and peer for the stakeholder as being of great importance:

Sometimes I will also play the role of protector. If I see one person in the group with conflicting values of another really beating on somebody else unnecessarily or they're reacting out of fear, I will actually protect the group under siege and try to help the other

group dissolve their anger or whatever it might be. Sometimes, I step in and try to protect the people that are being beat upon. Another role that I thought of that I find myself doing is that of a peer for the stakeholder. For example, if I'm brought in to do a program evaluation for use development, I can say, "Oh, I was an agent for twenty years. I see your point there." It is oftentimes to be a peer to build trust or understanding or buy in or whatever it might be.

Carol sees the role of broker as being powerful in building stakeholder relationships that may lead to resolution of conflicting values among stakeholders.

Our best role is often that of broker between the different stakeholders. When we can move into that role of broker, usually we can help the stakeholders get to a better place. I think sometimes being a researcher allows you to be a broker, where it's harder to be a broker if you're part of their community. If you're part of the community then you're seen as someone with a vested interested who is going to weigh on one side or the other. However, if you're seen a little bit as an outsider, many people may look at you as somebody they can confide in and maybe try to move over to their side of the argument. I think that's an opportunity to just be a listener and help those people who have some issues to just talk through those issues with them and give them a chance to air them and then encourage and help them talk through ways to resolve them.

In summary, the roles evaluators take on as a way to resolve conflicting values among stakeholders are multiple roles used throughout the evaluation process, including those of researcher, consultant, teacher, judge, protector, peer, and broker.

Research Question 4: What reasoning is used by evaluators in dealing with conflicting values among stakeholders?

All participants mentioned reasoning via discussion with stakeholders regarding different aspects of conflicting values. For example, Carol prefers to motivate stakeholders toward collaboration in the conflict resolution process.

Well, I guess I feel like it's a little reflexive. I don't know that I'm using a lot of justification while I'm working through these issues. …I feel like I'm being fairly practical because I know that in order to move this project, for instance, forward, these people have to collaborate more. They each have to be willing to give things up to get something bigger down the road. I'm just trying to think through how to get them individually where they need to be to be able to do that.

In addition to similarities among evaluators' experiences reflected in this theme, there were divergent perspectives revealed by interviewees.

Daniel individually assessed the relevance of the conflicting value to the evaluation itself, and then addressed the conflict if it was relevant. Daniel's primary focus is that of relevance of the issue to the evaluation itself. By assessing relevance at the onset, he can determine whether the issue will affect the evaluation or simply be set aside.

You separate them out, and you look at issues and say, "This is relevant to what I'm supposed to be looking at, and this isn't relevant to what I'm supposed to be looking at." You may comment contextually that there are many factors that are influencing what they're doing and why they're doing it. Usually you're narrowly focused on answering the question that you've been paid to answer.

Samuel personally identified, disclosed to the stakeholders as appropriate, and bracketed his own biases toward the evaluation. Frances internally assessed the possible repercussions of the conflicting value(s) on various groups or aspects of the evaluation, and then used standard

tools of decision making (i.e., defining the problem, exploring alternatives, making a decision, implementing that decision) to tackle those situations.

Samuel follows a procedure of introspection first, and then coordinates with the stakeholders based on those results in order to provide appropriate disclosure of bias.

The first thing I try to do is identify my own bias, with regard to whatever project it is I'm evaluating, and try to understand how that may skew how I look at things, so that I can, hopefully, make accommodations up front, so that the number of issues that arise during the course of the evaluation are reduced. The reason why I say that is often, issues that need to be resolved in evaluation are associated with misunderstandings. Many of those misunderstandings are based on the evaluator's perception of things. If you think about that up front, and think about how you might be biased or prejudiced in your view about certain things, you can account for that up front and appropriately deal with that before it comes up in the evaluation.

That is probably the most important thing for me to do–right up front–is to take a look at things and say, "How could I possibly be biased?" or "How could I possibly misinterpret data? What data am I gathering? What information is being provided to me? How can I misinterpret that, based on my own experience?" If I think about that up front, then I'm less likely to actually to make that error in judgment.

Frances considers the possible effects of that issue on the evaluation and the individuals involved, which dictates how she will handle the situation.

There are some standard things to consider. One is, "What is this going to do for the current work environment with the stakeholders?" Addressing this issue -- dealing with it, or not dealing with it -- "How is it going to change the relationship we have with each

other?" That's clearly a criterion. The other one is, "Can I live with myself with what I have just done or am going to do? Would mom and dad still be proud of me if I did the following?" It's that personal piece of, "What will this do to me or my reputation or my situation, as well as the group?" Then there is a piece in there about, "What does it mean for the others as individuals?"

For example, when I put my hand in front of that person, basically, put my back to him and trying to get him not to talk that is pretty radical in a group where you have not met people before. That is a pretty stern response. What is that going to do to him as an individual? Am I going to hurt him in any way? That is probably the third thing I think of. One is the group and then me and then him. Those tend to be the things that I will think about, and then, the other thing that I will think about is the institution that I represent and to what degree the actions I'm going to take–how does that effect that I represent? As a public servant, what does that mean? Then, the same thing would be true for the organizations that the stakeholders represent–or entities.

In summary, the reasoning used by evaluators in dealing with conflicting values among stakeholders includes discussing expectations of the evaluation, encouraging collaboration among stakeholders to resolve issues, and conducting internal evaluation of possible biases, misinterpretations of evaluation data, or repercussions for various stakeholders, followed by external discussion of those issues with stakeholders.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter offers implications of the findings, presents practical tips evaluators may use in their daily work, and concludes with future research opportunities.

Implications of Findings

This chapter describes implications that evaluation theorists may use to enhance their theories, educators and trainers may use to enhance evaluator training, and evaluators may use as specific examples of how fellow evaluators handled conflicting values among the stakeholders with whom they worked.

Clarify standards. The Joint Standards and Guiding Principles need to be clearer in order to close the gap between what they say evaluators should do and what evaluators actually do. Training in the Joint Standards and Guiding Principles must be scenario-based in order to be effective. Collections of experiences of this nature may be consolidated and tested in a host of different contexts. Having a knowledge base of what evaluators actually do forms the foundation for effective decision making among evaluation scenarios (Shadish, 1998). Shadish describes these as "implications that make a difference to evaluation practice….The value of such contingencies is that they help us to evaluate and choose among competing forms of theoretical and practical advice for how to do evaluation" (p. 8).

Train on values. Evaluators need training in identifying many types of values and applying those to evaluation scenarios. Through their various experiences, each of the participants developed values that drove their decision-making. Values of work proficiency (e.g., learning experiences, self-motivation), evaluation qualities (e.g., usefulness, meaning, accuracy, impact, accountability, objectivity), and methodology (e.g., disagreement, flexibility),

come together to define the evaluator experience and create a reservoir to draw from in order to handle various stakeholder experiences.

Although the evaluators in this study encountered value conflicts dealing with use, inherent, and epistemic more so than those of a moral nature, evaluators must be educated in many types of values, in how to identify those values, and then in applying solutions to deal with conflicting values and allow the evaluation to move forward.

Expand training and make it consistent. Because prior education and training affect how evaluators work with stakeholders and their multiple values, evaluation education and training need to be as consistent as possible across training programs in helping evaluators deal with these challenges.

Often, however, evaluators are thrust into evaluation without any training at all. The evaluators in this study, for example, arrived at that junction via many different avenues. Daniel began conducting evaluations at the prompting of a supervisor who noticed his expertise in technology education. Samuel had a desire to incorporate his evaluation, teaching, and technical skills into one area of focus. At the suggestions of her supervisor, Frances began evaluating the programs she had coordinated for many years. Tonya had a job change that warranted more program accountability. Carol ascended to evaluation through experience in political science and research. Nevertheless, with each of these experiences, there are valuable skills transferable to many different evaluation scenarios to assist evaluators in dealing with multiple stakeholders.

The background and values of evaluators also facilitate evaluation training development through case scenarios and linking of evaluator background to current practice. The collection of experiences may also be expanded upon in a similar nature to the essential competencies for evaluators (Stevahn, King, Ghere, & Minnema, 2005).

Evaluator training may also be expanded to include expert interviews and procedures for stakeholder relationship development. The availability of case-based training, as well as textbook principles, will assist in developing situational evaluators, who learn the facts, are aware of their surroundings, and regulate control of the evaluation (Bare, 2005).

Enhanced evaluator training may include simulations of stakeholder interaction and resolution options. Such training may be shared among many training situations and results disseminated via networking forums. In a similar vein, evaluator training may include role-play or exemplar-based learning to grasp solutions to conflicting values among stakeholders.

Although professional evaluators are not formally certified in their profession, there is ample opportunity for formal and informal education via university programs (i.e., masters, doctoral, and certificate programs at universities worldwide), evaluation institutes (e.g., The Evaluators' Institute, n.d.), professional development workshops at various conferences (e.g., the annual conference and summer institute of the American Evaluation Association), on-the-job training, and other informal learning environments (e.g., webinars, podcasts). A large part of training may include role-playing, case scenarios, projects, and individual study. While there are many instructional materials currently in use in the above-listed learning environments, often these materials contain textbook solutions rather than actual evaluator experiences. Future evaluation training may include actual evaluator experiences as a basis for the above-listed curriculum styles.

Practical Tips for Evaluators

Often it is the lessons learned after diverse and perhaps intense experiences such as that of dealing with conflicting values among stakeholders that echo with evaluators long after the individual evaluation is complete. Lessons such as selecting stakeholders with similar

values, working with stakeholders who shift evaluator thinking, having early discussions of expectations, reporting results objectively, and dealing with the complex nature of conflicting values among stakeholders resonated with the study participants.

Select stakeholders with similar values. Frances stated that she preferred to select stakeholders with similar values in any given evaluation, but acknowledged selection was more of a luxury than a regular occurrence. In many evaluation situations, the evaluator is chosen once funding and project direction has begun, or circumstances do not otherwise permit stakeholder selection. Even if that selection is not possible, evaluators can develop an understanding of stakeholder values upfront. Those stakeholders may then be involved in the evaluation more effectively. One drawback is that if evaluators join the evaluation late, that may hinder relationship building with stakeholders and create conflicts that later may need to be dealt with.

Work with stakeholders who shift evaluator thinking. Frances preferred stakeholders who helped to shift her thinking toward the evaluation, bringing up topics or circumstances for consideration as appropriate. Those types of stakeholders may be more focused on and interested in the evaluation, and may provide contributing instead of conflicting values. Evaluators are then able to deal with multiple stakeholders more effectively in situations where the stakeholders are actively involved in the evaluation (Bryk, 1983; Cousins & Earl, 1995).

Have early discussions of evaluation expectations. Samuel and Tonya specifically mentioned the benefits of early disclosure of evaluation expectations by both the evaluator and stakeholders. Of particular benefit is that the evaluator can better understand why stakeholders have certain values–opening up the possibility for negotiation or relevancy determination of any conflicting values. Evaluators can also assess whether those expectations are realistic given

the particular evaluation scenario, which may foster an information exchange and help to diffuse potential issues.

Report results objectively. Daniel commented on the dichotomy between the objectives of the evaluation and the individual values of the stakeholders. He mentioned there is often a disparity between the two, and one of the duties of the evaluator is to reconcile the disparity via weighing the relevance of stakeholder values against the objectives of the evaluation.

An avenue of approach undertaken by the participants is the examination of stakeholders based on their role (i.e., who is funding, impacted by, or benefiting from the evaluation), identifying their individual values, and then weighing that information against the values of the evaluation itself. The weighing of individual values versus those of the evaluation results in (a) the relevance of those values to the evaluation, and (b) the necessity to address conflicting values. If individual values fail to balance with those of the evaluation, those individual values are deemed irrelevant, and there is no conflict calling for the attention of the evaluator.

Reporting results objectively also warrants an analysis of possible bias from the evaluator or stakeholders. As Samuel pointed out, full disclosure of possible biases toward the evaluation helps to avoid errors in judgment and possibly tainting the evaluation results. That acknowledgement of bias helps the evaluator and stakeholders to understand each other and themselves better, and allows all parties to more effectively work together toward a coherent evaluation.

Deal with the complex nature of conflicting values among stakeholders.   Natural differences in evaluator personality characteristics may mean that evaluators gravitate toward

certain reasoning techniques regardless of the situation. These instances, if true, do not preclude the evaluator from learning from and adapting to different reasoning techniques. If properly documented and explained, evaluators may still understand and be able to adapt their techniques as appropriate.

Often the evaluators' hands are tied by stakeholder decisions, and they are forced to do what is necessary to complete the evaluation, regardless of standards or other training. Evaluators can follow the guidance of Frances, however, in acknowledging political, social, and interpersonal factors. Frances then decided if or how to resolve conflicting values based on the possible implications of her decisions.

Conclusion

The results presented in this study are intended to help evaluators better understand and thoughtfully use the many suggestions from theorists by providing concrete examples, specifically within the context of dealing with the conflicting values of multiple stakeholders. The transferability of this type of knowledge base can essentially be limitless and may develop into an information exchange process among evaluation theorists and practitioners via different networking forums such as resource databases from the American Evaluation Association or other evaluation entities.

This study makes explicit some of the thoughts, decision-making, and judgments that are normally implicit within evaluators. By sharing this information, evaluators may have a better idea of how to face similar situations. The results of this study may be used in curriculum development for helping evaluators in training and professional development environments.

Future Research Opportunities

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe what practicing evaluators do when faced with conflicting stakeholder values. This research study focused on documenting the lived experience of evaluators as they address conflicting values of multiple stakeholders they seek to serve.

With these purposes in mind, there are many opportunities future researchers may take. One research opportunity is to significantly expand the study to more evaluators. This may be accomplished via a two-phase study. The first phase would include a preliminary survey of a large group of evaluators to discover the respective demographics, evaluation foci, evaluation experiences and training, values, and theories, approaches, or procedures most commonly used. From that initial information, during the second phase the researcher could select a sample of participants from each evaluation discipline (e.g., education, business, non-profit organizations) for in-depth interviewing regarding their lived experiences in dealing with multiple stakeholders and their values. This information would allow for comparison and contrast among the disciplines, as well as greater applicability throughout the evaluation field.

Another research opportunity may be the development and testing of scenarios evaluators may find themselves in when dealing with multiple stakeholders and their values. These scenarios could be similar in nature to the Ethical Challenges series found within the American Journal of Evaluation (AJE). Researchers would distribute these scenarios to those universities with evaluation programs (e.g., masters, doctoral, or certificate programs) for use in the classroom. After reading and discussing the scenarios, student participants would take a survey regarding their perceptions of their efficacy in dealing with multiple stakeholders with conflicting values (and participating stakeholders could also rate their evaluators' performance).

Researchers could use results to refine the scenarios based on the results of the study, and then coordinate with university professors and publishers to integrate scenarios into evaluation curricula.

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Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Announcement

Participants Needed for Qualitative Research Study

Dear _____:

 I recently read your article in the [American Journal of Evaluation (AJE) or New Directions in Evaluation (NDE)] on _____, and I would like to speak with you more regarding your experiences in dealing with the values of multiple stakeholders.

I am conducting a research study as part of my dissertation on how evaluators deal with the values of multiple stakeholders during the course of their evaluation work. My intent is to interview evaluators (using Irving Seidman's three-interview series–three interviews of one hour each) in the education field to analyze their experiences in greater depth.

During the first interview, we would discuss your background education and experiences in evaluation. The second interview would include a discussion of your typical evaluation tasks, working relationships with the stakeholders in your projects, key issues with stakeholders you needed to resolve and how you did so, and a review and discussion of a recent evaluation report of your choice in terms of the stakeholders with whom you worked. The third interview would include your reflections on how you deal with the values of multiple stakeholders.

There are minimal risks to participating in this study, including possible emotional discomfort stemming from recall of events and circumstances or feelings of remorse for not having included certain stakeholders. There are no direct benefits to participation in this study. The potential benefits include the following:

1. Inform the development of a descriptive theory of evaluation

2. Enhance evaluation training

3. Help evaluators become better critical thinkers and better decision makers through

   understanding the lived experiences of other evaluators

The results of this study will be presented at a future conference of the American

Evaluation Association (AEA) and published in an evaluation journal.

Please let me know if you are interested and willing to participate in the interviews (via

telephone or Skype) by replying to this email message. We can then schedule the interviews as

applicable.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

Michelle Baron

Ph.D Student

Brigham Young University

Appendix B: Interview Confirmation Email

Dear Dr. _____:

Thank you for your interest in the research study on how evaluators deal with multiple stakeholders. This email message is to confirm our first interview on _____. The interview will last approximately one hour. If for any reason you need to reschedule our interview, please contact me at 801-422-2637.

As we have previously discussed, attached is a consent form for your review prior to our interview. Since our interview will be in person, I will have you sign a copy of the consent form, as well as give your verbal consent to participation in this study, prior to the interview.

Again, thank you for your participation. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Michelle Baron

Appendix C: Evaluator Interview Questions

Interview #1: Focused Life History

1. How did you come to be an evaluator (e.g., training, experience)?

2. Tell me about your values as they relate to evaluation.

3. How have these values changed over time?

4. How do your values and evaluation training go together in your daily work?

5. How are you using any particular evaluation theories or procedures?

6. What is your experience in dealing with multiple stakeholders?

Interview #2: Details of the Experience

1. Describe a typical day in your evaluation work.

2. Discussion of the evaluation report sample

3. Who were the people involved in the evaluation (not specific names, but positions)?

4. Were there other people whose values you considered besides the ones you did? Why did those people not get involved?

5. How do you pick some stakeholders and not others? Who is responsible for identifying stakeholders?

6. Describe the relationship you have with the stakeholders in this evaluation. How do you interact with these stakeholders during the course of the evaluation?

7. What is it like for you to deal with multiple stakeholders?

8. What were the issues regarding conflicting stakeholder values?

9. Why were they considered issues?

10. How did you handle these issues? Do you have any particular conflict resolution processes you utilize in dealing with these stakeholders? What reasoning did you use in dealing with conflicting values among stakeholders? What was the outcome of your conflict resolution?

Interview #3: Reflection on the Meaning

1. Given what we talked about in the previous interviews, can you summarize how you deal with multiple stakeholders?

2. What have you learned from working with stakeholders whose values conflict?

3. What roles did you take on to resolve conflicting values among stakeholders?

4. Where do you see yourself going in the future with regard to working with multiple stakeholders and why?

Appendix D: Research Quality Evaluation Checklist

As a member of the expert panel, please judge the quality of this research study based on the following questions.

1. Is a meaningful topic addressed?

2. Is naturalistic inquiry appropriate for the topic?

3. Are people treated ethically?

4. Are natural conditions maintained as closely as possible?

5. Is the report well written?

6. Does it communicate well?

7. Does it address conflicting results?

8. Does it include descriptions of the researcher, the data gathered, and the conditions under which data were gathered?

9. Does it include analysis and synthesis of the data?

10. Is the study credible?

11. Is persistent observation adequate?

12. Is triangulation adequate?

13. Are progressive subjectivity checks made?

14. Is the emic perspective highlighted?

15. Does the thematic analysis align with the research questions?

16. Are member checks adequate?

17. Is thick description adequate to make transferability of the study likely?

18. Is the study dependable?

19. Is an adequate audit trail maintained?

20. Was an audit conducted? Results?

21. Are data collection and analysis procedures adequate? Has the researcher been careless or made mistakes in conceptualizing the study, sampling people and events, collecting the data, interpreting the findings, or reporting results?

22. Is the study confirmable?

23. Is an adequate audit trail maintained?

24. Was an audit conducted? Results?

25. How adequate are the findings? How well are they supported by people and events that are independent of the inquirer?

Appendix E: Data Collection Methods and Analysis Chart

Data Collection Method	Description of Purpose	Description of Analysis Method	Research Questions Addressed
Literature Review	Identified background information on balancing stakeholder interests	Wholistic approach	All Research Questions
Evaluator Interviews (Three Interview Series)	Discovered how evaluators deal with multiple stakeholders–confirming or disconfirming information found in the literature and applying it to the evaluation field	Wholistic approach Selective or highlighting approach	All Research Questions
Document Review	Learned of any additional issues or reasoning processes that arose as the evaluators deal with multiple stakeholders	Reviewed evaluation reports for background information and for signs of stakeholder issues in preparation for the second interview	All Research Questions

Appendix F: Research Experiences

Conducting this research study served many professional purposes, including testing the model-data fit and developing personal interviewing skills.

 Model-Data Fit

The power of the three-interview series. Although in-depth interviewing was a good choice methodologically, the specific use of Seidman's 3-Interview Series brought into question the viability of this method within the context of evaluator experiences. What would it take to fully utilize the power of the 3-Interview Series? One answer could be increasing the quantity and quality of the interview questions. While a feasible suggestion, the real power of this method lies in the situated use of it. Profound ethnographic topics such as the Cambodian survivor and the day-care provider experiences that Seidman illustrates naturally lend themselves to a rich, reflective experience that can be readily encapsulated into a profile. Such was not the case with this study. While the study yielded significant detail with regard to the experiences of evaluators, it was clearly not at the ethnographic level.

Additionally, the spacing and timing of the three interviews, even when executed according to Seidman's recommendations, are not necessarily contextually appropriate for this topic. For example, Seidman's interview spacing recommendation of three days to one week apart ["This allows time for the participant to mull over the preceding interview, but not enough time to lose the connection between the two" (Seidman, 2006, p. 21).], while methodologically sound, does not synchronize with the duties of a busy evaluator, where participation in a research study may be the last thing on their mind in light of their deadlines and other

responsibilities. The participant responses were not always fresh in their mind, and they performed little reflection of the discussion between interview sessions.

Interview questions. The interview questions may not have been geared for actual evaluator experiences. For example, the question, "Where do you see yourself going in the future with regard to working with multiple stakeholders and why?", although used by Seidman (2006) as an example question for use during the reflective interview (the third interview), does not readily apply to this study because the participants did not reflect on the experience as significantly as anticipated. Due to their busy schedules, I had to combine some of the interviews, which may have rushed the process. However, even using the spacing guidance Seidman recommends, participants did not devote time in between interviews to reflect on the experience (either the interviewing experience itself, or on their individual accounts).

Evaluation tools. The use of self-selected, publicly-available evaluation reports by the participants greatly facilitated discussion about their experiences with conflicting values among stakeholders. While the intricate details of the individual study were not disclosed, the overall situational concepts of how evaluators handled certain issues and other topics helped bring experiential and decision-making processes to light.

Context. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of context in their evaluation experience. Even within the education field, there are many different evaluation opportunities. This study with five evaluators yielded five different experiences. Some experiences were rich with detail and contemplation, others were aloof and not entirely applicable to the study topic.

Personal Interviewing Skills

Whether minor idiosyncrasies or trends in data collection methodology, there were a number of points of interest that I noticed as a proceeded in this study. These included the use of follow-up and additional questions, and researcher-participant interaction.

Follow-up questions. I need to ask more and improved secondary questions (i.e., those questions not formally outlined in Appendix C) during the interview in order to probe deeper into to the given topic. While I did extensive follow-up questioning both on my own accord and at the direction of my doctoral chair, deeper initial questioning will bring the same or more issues to light in a timelier manner.

Additional questions. Since the main purposes of this study were to describe what practicing evaluators do when faced with conflicting stakeholder values, to examine how current evaluation approaches might clarify what is going on in evaluator practices, and to begin working toward a descriptive approach of evaluator-stakeholder interaction, I should have asked additional questions regarding current views on prescriptive and descriptive evaluation theory and on evaluation training suggestions.

Researcher-participant interaction. There were times during the interview sessions where I thought I might be prompting the participant too much or not enough (e.g., "Did I ask potentially leading questions? Did I let them stray from the interview path?"). In some cases, getting participants to speak and share their experiences proved challenging; in other cases, participants were readily willing and able to share anything and everything about their experience. I believe this experience drives the question of participant personality versus apprehension. For example, one participant did not have much to say about her experiences, which lead me to question (in my mind) why that person chose to participate in this study. Since there was no compensation offered for participation, her motivation might have been a

desire to share experiences in her situation, yet possibly her personality did not lend itself to such an experience.

Appendix G: Journal Article

Understanding How Evaluators Deal with Multiple Stakeholders

Abstract

Although many leaders and guidelines in evaluation advise evaluators to balance the needs of the client and other stakeholders, very little is known about how or if practicing evaluators address this injunction. Understanding how practicing evaluators address the needs of multiple stakeholders could inform evaluator training. The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe what practicing evaluators do when faced with conflicting stakeholder values. This study invited five evaluators to share their experiences working with multiple stakeholders while reflecting on how they deal with multiple and often conflicting values as they seek to serve the stakeholders. Implications from this study included clarification of *The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation* and *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*, and consistency among and expansion of evaluation training programs. Practical tips for evaluators included (a) selecting stakeholders with similar values, (b) working with stakeholders who shift evaluator thinking, (c) having early discussions of evaluation expectations, (d) reporting results objectively, and (e) dealing with the complex nature of conflicting values among stakeholders. The results presented in this study are intended to help evaluators better understand and thoughtfully use the many suggestions from theorists by providing concrete examples, specifically within the context of dealing with the conflicting

values of multiple stakeholders. The results of this study may be used in curriculum

development for helping evaluators in training and professional development environments.

The nature of evaluation involves making value judgments regarding the merit or worth of something (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). According to many evaluation theorists, two important tasks of all evaluators involve clarifying the relevant values of people who care (stakeholders) about a particular program, product, process, or person (evaluands) and identifying the criteria and standards associated with stakeholders' values for use in judging that evaluand (Alkin, 2004; Bryk, 1983; Chen, 2005; Coghlan, Preskill, & Catsambas, 2003; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Gold, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; House & Howe, 1999; Patton, 1997; Preskill & Coghlan, 2003; Stake, 2004). Because types of stakeholders and their values likely differ within any given evaluation, logic dictates that evaluators must make decisions regarding the prioritization and accommodation of conflicting values and associated criteria and standards.

However, very little literature describes how evaluators actually work to understand stakeholders' values, how they translate values into criteria and standards that can be used to judge how well evaluands are performing, how they attend differentially to multiple stakeholders' values, how they negotiate conflicting values among relevant stakeholders, or if and how they balance stakeholders' conflicting values in order to conduct an effective evaluation that serves all stakeholders appropriately. This study explored this problem in the literature through case studies of five evaluators.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe what practicing evaluators do when faced with conflicting stakeholder values and document the lived experience of evaluators as they address conflicting values of multiple stakeholders they seek to serve. Specifically this study addressed the following questions:

1. What is the experience of evaluators in dealing with multiple stakeholders?

2. What does it mean for an evaluator to deal with conflicting values among stakeholders?

3. What roles do evaluators take on to resolve conflicting values among stakeholders?

4. What reasoning is used by evaluators in dealing with conflicting values among stakeholders? Here the word reasoning refers to how evaluators make decisions, and not to the cognitive psychology aspect of thinking.

Evaluation Standards

The evaluation literature has made it clear that stakeholders and their values are central to evaluations of all kinds (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 2008; Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). Guidelines and standards have been established to encourage evaluators to attend to stakeholders' values for ethical as well as practical reasons.

Two prominent documents summarize several guidelines and standards that have evolved in the evaluation field to guide evaluators in dealing with situations among multiple stakeholders: the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*, which describe the daily activities evaluators should be engaged in, and the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, which contain 30 standards by which to judge the soundness of specific evaluations.

The Guiding Principles for Evaluators

In 1994, the American Evaluation Association (AEA) formed its *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* (Newman, Scheirer, Shadish, & Wye, 1995), which include standards of systematic inquiry, competence, integrity and honesty, respect for people, and responsibilities for general and public welfare.

Listed under Section C: Integrity/Honesty, the Guiding Principles offer some guidance to evaluators in dealing with stakeholder issues. Point one in that section advises evaluators to

"negotiate honestly with clients and relevant stakeholders" (Newman et al., 1995, p. 23), but does not identify who the client and relevant stakeholders are.

Point 3 advises evaluators "to determine, and where appropriate be explicit about, their own, their clients', and other stakeholders' interests concerning the conduct and outcomes of an evaluation (including financial, political, and career interests)" (Newman et al., 1995, p. 23). Who are the "other stakeholders"? How does the evaluator weigh these interests against each other, or does the evaluator attempt to accommodate everyone?

Section E: Responsibilities for General and Public Welfare, looks at the scope of considerations for the evaluators to keep in mind. Point 1 advises evaluators to "consider including important perspectives and interests of the full range of stakeholders in the object being evaluated" (Newman et al., 1995, p. 25). The operative word here is including, which could mean anything from simply making a mental note of the perspective to actively weighing and balancing stakeholder interests when designing the evaluation plan. How does the evaluator know which perspectives to include?

Point 3 puts information dissemination at the forefront, advising evaluators to "allow all relevant stakeholders to have access to evaluative information and should actively disseminate that information to stakeholders if resources allow" (Newman et al., 1995, p. 25). While evaluation reporting and dissemination is a basic part of the evaluation process, this point also raises a few questions: How does the evaluator discern who the relevant stakeholders are? If the evaluator receives information requests from an irrelevant stakeholder, should the evaluator still grant him or her access to the information? What should the evaluator do if a stakeholder seeks to prevent information dissemination of the evaluation results?

Point 4 advises evaluators to "maintain a balance between client needs and other needs" (Newman et al., 1995, p. 25), and to engage in conflict identification and resolution for any issues. This point, however, does not explain how to maintain that balance, thus opening up a wide area for interpretation.

Overall, the Guiding Principles essentially put the burden of proof on the evaluator to discern situations where values conflict, disclose potential conflicts in the evaluation, defend sometimes-unpopular solutions to the conflict, and decline evaluations if necessary. While this responsibility does not release the stakeholders from responsibility, evaluators must initiate appropriate conversations to resolve each situation, according to the Guiding Principles.

The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation

Created in 1975 to address the quality of evaluation for Western cultures, the committee now includes seventeen different organizations who continually clarify evaluation standards for various facets of evaluation. In particular, the committee has developed three sets of standards: personnel (Stufflebeam, 1988), program (Sanders, 1994), and student (Gullickson, 2003). All three sets of standards address four main topics: propriety (i.e., ethics and legality), utility (i.e., information and influence), feasibility (i.e., implementation and efficiency), and accuracy (i.e., technical and logical). The Joint Committee continually reviews, revises, and develops new standards as occasions warrant. While the evaluation community has not formally adopted these standards, the standards serve to guide numerous evaluation organizations in their pursuit of judging the worth or merit of evaluands.

Out of 30 standards, only four address stakeholders directly, though several others imply the importance of addressing stakeholders and their values. Utility Standard 1: Stakeholder Identification, states, "Persons involved in or affected by the evaluation should be

identified, so that their needs can be addressed" (Sanders, 1994, p. 23). Sanders offers some guidelines to evaluators: including using stakeholders to find other stakeholders, discussing needs within the evaluation constraints with each stakeholder group, and involving the client and other stakeholders in the design and conduct of the evaluation (reflective of a participatory approach). How and to what extent should all of these activities be accomplished? Should there be a point where inclusion stops and evaluation begins?

Feasibility Standard 2: Political Viability, advises evaluators to plan the evaluation with the interests of different stakeholder groups in mind so "possible attempts by any of these groups to curtail evaluation operations or to bias or misapply the results can be averted or counteracted" (Sanders, 1994, p. 71). This includes identifying and documenting these different perspectives. How does the evaluator keep track of all these perspectives, let alone integrate them into the evaluation process?

Propriety Standards 6 and 7 parallel that of the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* by encouraging disclosure of the evaluation results and discussion of conflicts openly in order to avoid thwarting the evaluation. Must the evaluator accommodate every stakeholder within a certain political, social, economical, or organizational radius? How does the evaluator ascertain which conflicts should be addressed and which stakeholders should be given evaluation results?

In summary, the Guiding Principles and Joint Standards identify much of the accumulated wisdom of many theorists and practitioners who have thought and written about evaluators and stakeholders and lay some ground rules for evaluation planning and execution. However, they do not describe evaluators dealing with conflicting values among stakeholders and raise many questions that need further exploration and clarification.

Values

Values are beliefs held about people, things, events, or emotions. People acquire values based on upbringing, education, life experiences, or any combination thereof (Goldthwait, 1996). Examples of values may be found within the family (e.g., patriotism, work, and responsibility), the military (e.g., the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage), and business organizations (e.g., hard work, sacrifice, quality).

When people speak of values, they often refer to moral values - or conditions of right and wrong. There are also many other types of values. Cohen (1985, pp. 4-7) describes seven types of values:

1. Intrinsic–a state or condition of being (e.g., health, freedom)

2. Extrinsic–an activity or state of affairs (e.g., going to the dentist is good for maintaining oral health)

3. Use–the utility of a physical object (e.g., a hammer is good for pounding nails)

4. Inherent–the perception of value (e.g., a beautiful painting)

5. Moral–conditions of right and wrong (e.g., stealing is morally wrong)

6. Personality–qualities that people ascribe to each other (e.g., boisterous, penitent, admirable)

7. Epistemic–related to the act of believing (e.g., warranted, justified)

Other authors (Bahm, 1993; Goldthwait, 1996) break down values into more descriptive categories such as beliefs and claims, good and bad, ends and means, actual and potential, subjective and objective, apparent and real, pure and mixed. Each of these categories can be further broken down by degrees, with ultimate judgment based on the beholder of the value. A value judgment, therefore, is a statement about the value of a person, thing, or event based on

its context. Statements such as, that was a great movie, or, I think I ate some bad food, are examples of judgments of a situation based on a set of circumstances.

In evaluations, evaluators have a responsibility to proclaim a value judgment on the evaluand (Worthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, 2004). Statements such as, The program is not effective in achieving the learning outcomes, or The community development strategy has had a profound effect on reducing the influence of gangs stem from the common evaluation procedure of weighing the criteria and standards against what is actually happening in a given program (Worthen et al., 2004). By developing criteria and standards together with stakeholders, evaluators work with stakeholders to clarify their values for the particular evaluand (Shadish, 1998).

However, not all stakeholders hold the same values. While an evaluation may pass through the criteria and standards development phase fairly smoothly, situations among stakeholders or between the evaluator and associated stakeholders may arise during the course of the evaluation that may create conflicts. While some conflicts may be minor, others may prevent the evaluation from taking place at all, create an abrupt end to the evaluation, or taint the evaluation results and may ultimately lead to program decisions based on inaccurate information (Sanders, 1994). How do evaluators wrestle with these situations? The current evaluation literature says very little about how evaluators actually work with stakeholders and their values, especially when these are in conflict. What is missing is an analysis of the process by which evaluators attempt to address these issues in dealing with the values of multiple stakeholders. Having descriptions of practice should be helpful to practicing evaluators and may also be helpful to people who develop approaches for others to consider. This study is designed to begin filling this void.

Method

To address the research questions, this study invited evaluators to share their experiences working with multiple stakeholders while reflecting on how they deal with multiple and often conflicting values as they seek to serve the stakeholders. The study sought to understand evaluators' experiences and associated meanings from a phenomenological perspective by inviting evaluators to share how they decide to include or exclude stakeholders' values in particular evaluation studies.

I interviewed evaluators using the three-interview series as described by Seidman, (2006) and originated by Schuman (1982). I analyzed the data using thematic analysis (Van Manen, 1997) and domain analysis (Spradley, 1979). I validated data collection and analysis techniques using standards by Williams (2007) as originated by Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1986), and Guba and Lincoln (1989).

In order to understand as fully as possible experiences of evaluators in dealing with the values of multiple stakeholders, the research included evaluators in a variety of settings. I selected participants based on journal publications of their evaluation experiences dealing with stakeholders in university education settings, and on maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2002). This recruitment was not age or gender specific.

Based on the nature of the data collection (i.e., in-depth interviewing) and the time constraints of this study, a sample of five to seven evaluators was the goal. That range provided enough experiences for comparison and contrast, while keeping the amount of interviewing time (i.e., fifteen to twenty-one 1-hour interviews) manageable. In order to obtain that range of participants, I sent recruiting announcements to 27 evaluators (after discarding non-education and non-evaluation articles, and removing from the list those whose contact information was

not readily available either within the journal article or on the Internet, with the understanding that not all evaluators may be willing or able to participate). While eight participants expressed interest in this study, only five participants completed the interview process due to scheduling conflicts. I conducted the interviews themselves via telephone, Skype, and in person, and I audio recorded all of them for analysis purposes.

Using maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2002), I selected journal articles in the American Journal of Evaluation (AJE) and the New Directions for Evaluation (NDE) published from 2005-2009 from evaluators in the education field and with a wide range of experience. I chose this date range because the participants may not recall specific circumstances of the evaluation in earlier publications, and there may be smaller participant availability with a shorter date range. This sampling helped identify trends and illustrate how evaluators dealt with multiple stakeholders in different circumstances.

Results

Through brief vignettes of each study participant, including their background, the issues they faced in a particular evaluation, and how they handled those issues, this section provides a contextual overview of the participants' experiences to help the reader understand later analyses of all the cases. In order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, all names used are pseudonyms.

Vignette 1: Daniel

Daniel has been an evaluator for over 25 years, focusing predominantly on program evaluation and the integration of technology into classroom settings. Having a degree in computer science and a degree in teaching, Daniel first gained experience as a high school computer science teacher for the private school system in the area where he worked.

Because of his direct experience in computer literacy and teaching interventions to promote technology in the schools, he was selected to conduct evaluations of the school's computer literacy programs in the district. His selection to be the evaluator was based on his extensive background and expertise with school technology.

Later Daniel went back to school to obtain a Ph.D in instructional design to capitalize on his teaching experience and desire to provide educational materials to accommodate different types of learners. During this time he increasingly saw the need to evaluate his work and subsequently changed his Ph.D focus to an evaluation-related field.

Since then Daniel has had many opportunities for evaluation in technology and teaching interventions within the schools, and in working with non-profit agencies supporting educational endeavors.

While some evaluators may enter the situation with pre-conceived values, Daniel considers the values implied by the objectives and aims of the evaluand. He concentrates on conducting a useful, coherent evaluation based on what the stakeholders intend the evaluand to do.

The evaluation Daniel selected to discuss during his interviews focused on the impact of a learning initiative program being implemented in a school district. Daniel worked with the client (in this case, the school superintendent) on the evaluation purpose. Daniel collected data from various sources and stakeholders including school administrators, staff, teachers, and training professionals. Together, he and the client took into consideration those directly funding, implementing, benefiting from, and impacted by the program as stakeholders. They also examined the degree of access the Daniel had to those people. Daniel had the strongest relationship with the funder due to Daniel's prior association with that individual, as well as

having the greatest access to him. The funder in turn helped gain access to other stakeholders that Daniel needed to speak with for the evaluation.

While the evaluation process went smoothly, negative evaluation results caused some consternation for the stakeholder who provided the program and the training. As a result, that individual complained to the administrators.

The evaluators later explained the objective nature of the evaluation to the administrators, and the need for the evaluators to provide an accurate description of the evaluand. This stakeholder's underlying motive for having the program evaluated differed considerably from the motive and purposes set out by the funder of the program.

For Daniel, value issues often dealt with the disparity between the data and how stakeholders felt about the program personally. In this case and in general, although Daniel feels that the values of all stakeholders are real and may be important to the individual stakeholders, not all stakeholder values are equally important to the evaluation. He tries to focus on the mission and purpose of the evaluation. Daniel considers himself a reporter of the evaluation results, sets aside potentially conflicting stakeholder values, and tries to report the evaluation findings in a fair and neutral way.

In order to resolve conflicting values, Daniel considers the relevance of the conflicting value to the overall objective of the evaluation. He often finds some values to be irrelevant or unimportant to the evaluation, so he simply sets that issue aside and concentrates on the main objectives of the program in question.

Vignette 2: Samuel

Samuel has been an evaluator for over 30 years, which followed a course of four different careers: military service, financial management, information systems management,

and instructional technology. His most recent evaluation endeavor began as he sought to combine his teaching and technology experiences.

Because of his many evaluation experiences over the years, Samuel's values pervade personal (e.g., the desire for the welfare of others) and professional (e.g., learning experiences, working independently) realms in order to help empower stakeholders and evaluators.

Samuel's evaluation focused on the effectiveness of an NGO program. The stakeholder issue in this case was that the involvement of a key stakeholder during the data collection process threatened to taint the evaluation results.

Stakeholders included the program director, other administrators, and program participants. Samuel selects stakeholders in a group setting with his evaluation team, and then solidifies who the stakeholders are when meeting with the client. His two main criteria to determine if someone is a stakeholder are whether the person is impacted by, and cares about, the evaluand.

While in this case the director did not feel he was imposing on the situation, and genuinely wanted to observe in order to understand the evaluation process better, his presence made program participants reluctant to share information for fear of reprisal. Samuel often encounters issues where values of the evaluator and/or stakeholders are compromised. He recognized this situation as an issue because that situation threatened to skew the evaluation results.

When conducting an evaluation himself, Samuel meets with stakeholders frequently throughout the evaluation process to clarify expectations, gather data, and discuss evaluation results. Samuel prefers to quickly identify and resolve issues through negotiation. Samuel engages in open dialogue with the stakeholders to identify and bracket his own biases toward

the evaluation. In this way, the issues come to the attention of the evaluator and stakeholders, and together they are able to come to resolution.

Samuel spoke with the director about the need to be objective and to allow participants to voice their opinions. The director then understood and chose to not be present during the data collection process. Samuel often plays the role of clarifier in order to acknowledge conflicts, but ultimately seek commonalities among stakeholders.

Samuel has learned that conflicting stakeholder values are not easy to resolve, but half the battle is understanding the perspectives of everyone involved.

Vignette 3: Frances

Frances has been an evaluator for over 28 years, focusing on extension education. As a program agent in extension education, Frances began her evaluation career at the prompting of her supervisor to evaluate the impact of the work she did.

That prompting struck her curiosity regarding the evaluation field, which lead to her obtaining a Ph.D and becoming more involved in professional development opportunities as well as in greater evaluation of programs she works with.

Her values as they relate to evaluation have shifted from evaluating out of obligation to creating usefulness and meaning for the stakeholders with whom she works. That in turn drives her decision-making with regard to the evaluation process.

Frances' evaluation focused on the impact of 4-H camp in developing problem solving, decision-making, and communications among youth. Her stakeholders included the youth, camp directors, camp counselors, and 4-H agents over the camps in her state and in surrounding states.

Frances feels that the person who hires her is the one in charge of selecting the stakeholders for the particular evaluation. In more flexible situations, Frances takes into account political, contextual, economic, and practical factors when determining stakeholders. .

In this case, Frances dealt with human interaction issues (i.e., dealing with interpersonal communications) and contextual issues (i.e., assessing the political environment of the evaluation). As a result of building relationships with the stakeholders over time, Frances gained greater access to stakeholders and the information they possessed than she otherwise would have. Because of her deep background in camping, her knowledge of the subject matter of the evaluand helped further solidify the bond between her and the stakeholders because "they know you've had a similar experience to theirs."

Depending on the situation, Frances confronts the issue, avoids it and settles for a compromise, or plans what to do to avoid the situation in the future.

Frances internally assesses possible repercussions of the conflict on others, then based on her assessment she uses common decision-making skills to resolve the issue.

Frances has learned to select stakeholders with similar values to hers if possible. She also tries to work with stakeholders who shift her thinking regard the evaluand. Frances often plays the roles of protector (i.e., protecting one stakeholder against harsh criticism or treatment by another stakeholder) and peer for the stakeholder (i.e., forming stakeholder relationships by relating past experiences in an effort form a bond with those stakeholders). She also discusses expectations for the evaluation early on in the evaluation process in order to avoid any misconceptions about the evaluation.

Vignette 4: Tonya

Tonya has been an evaluator for approximately 5 years, focusing on extension education. Evaluation more prominently came to fruition in her career as she had a change in job responsibilities.

She later pursued additional schooling. Her formal education was in higher education, but she took some courses in program evaluation as she worked on her masters and doctoral degrees. Evaluation now forms the basis of much of the work she does.

Tonya values program impact and accountability, which help her in data collection and analysis in order to make appropriate claims about a program's success or need for improvement.

Tonya's evaluation focused on a holistic management-training program for farmers established to build the farmers' capacity to make appropriate farm planning decisions. The stakeholders in this case were the funder and the program participants. Because Tonya deals with the same stakeholders repeatedly, she feels that she doesn't really select the stakeholders. Tonya is involved in the technical aspects of evaluation, and interacts with the stakeholders for data collection and analysis.

According to Tonya, she does not encounter issues with stakeholders because she continually works with the same people. Nevertheless, Tonya has learned to be clear and up front with stakeholders regard the expectations of the evaluation, including reporting requirements as various governmental levels. Tonya frequently assumes the roles of technical assistant, coach, and mediator in order to clarify expectations for the evaluation, conduct an effective evaluation, and teach others to do the same.

Vignette 5: Carol

Carol has been an evaluator for over 15 years, focusing on children's health services. Her formal training was in political science, but along with that, she had a strong methodological foundation that helped her to transition into the evaluation field.

Carol feels that those in the social sciences have a particular view of the world such that intellectual exchanges, opinionated discussions, and critical thinking flow together to come to resolution on various issues. Because of this training and experience, Carol values disagreement, seeing that as a way to foster negotiation between the evaluator and stakeholders.

Carol's evaluation focused on the sustainability of a school and community-based safety and child development program. The main stakeholders in this case consisted of the federal government as the project funder, school administrators, and a management team comprised of the police and local health departments and service providers such as counselors and social workers. According to Carol, the "biggest dynamic" involved in the project was the power struggle between the management team and the superintendent. Because the superintendent was afraid of negative press in the schools, he tightly controlled the evaluation itself and the resulting data. Although he allowed the evaluation to occur, he would not allow the evaluator to disseminate the results to any stakeholders whatsoever–even to the funders who initiated the evaluation.

Carol defines stakeholders based on John Dewey's book, *The public and it's problems* (1946), as those affected by a program, whether or not they are included in the decision-making. Although she is free to make recommendations, Carol feels that those in leadership positions are the people who choose the stakeholders.

Three big issues for Carol include the role of the evaluator in the evaluation, the value of knowledge in solving social problems, and the effectiveness of giving voice to the wide range of stakeholders she deals with.

Negotiation and relationship building are key ways for Carol to handle potential issues. Doing this tends to foster greater communication and often diffuses stakeholder issues. In this case, Carol negotiated with the superintendent to release a newsletter highlighting positive evaluation results, but the superintendent did not allow her to release the rest of the evaluation results, which also contained some negative information about the program. This lack of information sharing created much anxiety between the management team and the superintendent in terms of the desire to move forward with the project in order to help the schools. However, the relationship building formed a tighter bond with other stakeholders on the team and helped them to deal with the superintendent who sought to thwart the evaluation efforts.

Carol learned to continuously build relationships so stakeholders may deal with their conflicts. She finds that being a broker, in that she forms stakeholder relationships to the extent that stakeholder feel they can confide in her regarding situations regarding the evaluation, is the best role for an evaluator to help resolve conflicts between the different stakeholders.

Themes

Research Question 1: What is the experience of evaluators in dealing with multiple stakeholders?

The experiences of evaluators can be divided into two themes: (a) work experiences and education, and (b) stakeholder selection and interaction.

Work experiences and education. Work experiences and education helped prepare the evaluators for the multiplicity of stakeholder encounters throughout their evaluation careers. All participants cited previous work experiences as the means for their entering into the evaluation field. Internal and external organizational needs lead the participants to seek evaluation training and higher education to fill those needs, foster teamwork and collaboration, and further their evaluation career progression. In retrospect, the participants depicted the prominence of evaluation throughout their career–even prior to their training–the only difference being in the terminology of their tasks.

Frances says she became an evaluator by accident, but that training has kept up her interest as a lifelong learner and has helped her to better understand and manage her programs:

> I was not trained as an evaluator. My supervisor at the time said, "You need to understand what difference you're making or not in the work that you do." That was the first I heard of the term and started taking workshops and going to things, and as a community-based educator, I started to do some program evaluation. Eventually, I got so interested in it, that I went and did my Ph.D.

> Afterward I was able to work half of my time in the youth-development unit, and the other half with program development and evaluation unit. That's where I finally became formalized … into being an evaluator. It wasn't intentional. It just was part of the job that I learned how to do it.

Carol's methodological training helped her to become more in tune with stakeholders and able to provide for their needs.

> My training is in political science, but I also had methodological training.…While I was in grad school, I worked full-time in a research post, and I was exposed to a lot of

methods that really made it easy for me to work independently, pretty quickly after finishing my Ph.D. That makes it easy for me when a community organization asks me for something that I can figure out a method for that would help them get it.

The experience of evaluators in dealing with multiple stakeholders includes prior work experiences and organizational needs that motivate the evaluator toward evaluation training and/or formal education. The combination of training and experience facilitates the development of communication, evaluation, social, and problem-solving skills (e.g., the use of personal and professional values, collaboration, commitment, negotiation, and service) which they believe are necessary for working effectively with stakeholders.

Stakeholder selection and interaction. All study participants agreed that there are always multiple stakeholders in any given evaluation. The stakeholders themselves, however, usually differ in importance and degree of caring about the evaluand. All participants agreed that funders and/or leaders associated with the evaluand usually play primary roles in shaping the evaluation. Participants identified similar criteria for selecting stakeholders to participate, such as who funded, implemented, was potentially impacted by, and/or cared about the program. Participants also mentioned that selecting stakeholders depended on the particular context and purpose of the evaluation. However, there was considerable variation among participants regarding who has the responsibility for selecting stakeholders.

Samuel focuses on impact and caring as important factors regarding stakeholder selection:

With educational products, the deciding criteria are "Will the product have an impact on someone?" and "Do they care about that product?" If the answer to both questions is yes, they're a stakeholder; If the answer to both is no, they are not a stakeholder.

There was considerable variation among participants regarding who has the responsibility for selecting stakeholders. Samuel said he selects stakeholders in a group setting with other members of the evaluation team, or in coordination with the funder or primary stakeholder. Frances and Carol specified those in leadership positions or the people hiring the evaluator are responsible for selecting stakeholders.

Samuel collaborates extensively with other members of the evaluation team, as well as the client, in determining who the stakeholders are.

In a pre-kickoff meeting, we discuss it internally, of who we think all the stakeholders are. Then, in the kickoff meeting with the client, we again ask the same question, "Who do we think all the stakeholders are?"

Depending on her position in the evaluation project, Frances yields to hiring authorities or (in more flexible situations) uses many criteria for identifying stakeholders.

Since it was the agent from this particular county who asked me to do the evaluation, I considered him the lead stakeholder, and I asked him who he wanted involved. He said he only really wanted to involve the people from his office and his campers. It didn't need to go any wider than them. If I were to have been a hired evaluator, I would have said the person hiring me defined the stakeholders.

It really depends on the project. Every project is different. Oftentimes, it's based on, what are the political factors? What are the contextual factors, like time–how much time do we have? Because involving secondary stakeholders oftentimes takes more time. The other would be how much do we have in the way of resources. Sometimes we really can't do a deep empowerment model if we don't have a lot of resources. Then the other is what the purpose of the evaluation is. If the evaluation is something that's just being

done because it has to be done, then I don't usually involve tons of stakeholders. If it's just a compliance issue versus they're really going to do something with the results. It's really a contextual situation.

Carol, on the other hand, states that organizational or community leaders are the ones who choose the stakeholders.

I don't think that that's my choice. It's the people who have the leadership positions in a community or organization are the ones who choose the stakeholders. As an evaluator, I may make recommendations to add additional stakeholders, based on what I observe in the community. It's their choice whether or not to take those recommendations.

All study participants emphasized the importance of building relationships with stakeholders from the beginning. Stakeholders are then more willing to disclose information and assist in the evaluation. Participants also cited the benefit of increased access to other stakeholders and resources that would have otherwise been difficult to obtain. Building relationships over time served to legitimize the relationship and often changed stakeholders' opinions of the role of evaluation, inviting them to think evaluatively in future projects.

The participants' subject-matter background and experience also helped to form a tighter bond with their stakeholders: they were able to relate to them better, and the stakeholders in turn were more willing to share information. Long-term relationships also fostered mutual trust and communication between the evaluators and stakeholders, and created an open environment to discuss concerns as well as successes.

Daniel found that information disclosure flowed more freely as a result of his stakeholder relationships:

I did a five-year evaluation with seven different schools, and there was only one teacher in each of the schools involved in the program. Over the five years, we get to know those people very well. At the first interview, of course, it was very tense for them, I'd say. They didn't know who you were, they don't know why you are there talking to them, and you built this relationship. During the last year when I went and interviewed each of the schools, it was completely different. They were much more open and willing to talk about different things and reflect on their own experience.

Frances described her increased access to study participants based on stakeholder involvement:

I think it makes a great difference into how successful the evaluation really is are those relationships. The agent–the person who asked me to do the evaluation–he and I are co-workers, and he had helped with my orientation and helped me out to help me understand the organization… Our relationship was one of an exchange at that point.

He had a phenomenal relationship with every one of the stakeholders–the campers, the counselors, the parents, and so, by him saying to them, "Here –, my friend wants to ask you a few questions. Would you take a few minutes?" They, of course, would say yes because they loved him. He opened the door for getting some good, authentic data. If you were going to do network analysis, he'd be the node–for me to get to everybody else.

Yet stakeholder interaction does not always yield positive results. Carol described an extremely fragile relationship with a key stakeholder. Despite the best relationship-building efforts, that stakeholder felt threatened by the evaluation and sought to thwart attempts to share evaluation results with other stakeholders. This incident illuminated the issue of stakeholders

occasionally asking the evaluator to take sides in an evaluation. Nevertheless, the participant's relationship with other stakeholders helped them all deal more effectively with a difficult stakeholder.

Carol stated the following in reference to this type of stakeholder relationship.

The biggest dynamic here is that there was a management committee that oversaw the student project at this school district. The administrators for the school district–the superintendent and the assistant superintendent–would not allow us, as the evaluators, to share our evaluation findings with the management team.

We had been told by the management team how frustrated they were with this and how frustrated they were with a number of other things having to do with the way the school district was managing the grant. We took the opportunity of meeting to look at the sustainability issue–to do interviews with a very broad range of stakeholders. All of the management team partners were interviewed, but also a lot of schoolteachers were interviewed, and a lot of service providers were interviewed.

The idea behind the report was just to take ourselves out of it and to allow the stakeholders to talk directly to the superintendent and assistant superintendent, and let that conversation happen because that conversation wasn't happening. It was a way for us to…force the superintendent to pay attention to a broader range of stakeholders. That was our goal with that, and it didn't succeed. He still didn't release any data, and it was such a mess.

In summary, the experience of evaluators in dealing with multiple stakeholders involved selecting the stakeholders via hiring authorities, others in leadership positions, or by the evaluator along with team members or primary stakeholders, where evaluators work to

integrate as many stakeholders as possible into the evaluation process depending on who funds, implements, is impacted by, and is interested in the evaluation. When many stakeholder groups are involved in the evaluation, funders and/or leaders play the primary roles. Evaluators build relationships throughout the evaluation process to foster trust, communication, and facilitation in the evaluation, as well as generate ability to handle communication issues and potential problems among stakeholders.

Research Question 2: What does it mean for an evaluator to deal with conflicting values among stakeholders?

The meaning for evaluators in dealing with conflicting values among stakeholders can be divided into two themes: (a) identifying and addressing issues, and (b) learning lessons

Identifying and addressing issues. All of the participants agreed that many issues arise in the course of the evaluation and between different evaluations. These may be human interaction issues (e.g., engaging in meeting dynamics to ensure that everyone has a say in the evaluation), or issues that compromise one or more values of the evaluator or a stakeholder.

Samuel describes an issue between a stakeholder and the evaluation team:

> In this case, the stakeholder wanted to be present when we were doing the
> evaluation, and we felt that that greatly tainted the results, and after we
> explained why we thought that, then he agreed not to accompany us anymore.
> His value was he wanted to be on site–he wanted to observe what was going on,
> so that he could understand the evaluation better. That is one value that he has,
> but that conflicts with another value that we have, which is that the value would
> be not influenced by outside pressure, and he's very much a pressure to the
> people being evaluated because he's giving them stuff for the program. If he's

there, they will want to say the right things that they want him to hear, so he

tainted the results.

Frances had a similar situation with stakeholder values:

I was doing an evaluation of a human services program with a chair of a board.

He came and asked me if I would help him conduct focus groups and analyze the

data, etc. We were fine working together, analyzing the data, 'til we get to the

county board meeting, where he made the final report, and he reported results

that weren't in our data. At that point, it was too late for me to re-negotiate

anything with him because he had reported the results the way he wanted to see

them.

What I have done now is change the way I operate. I try never to do an

evaluation just with one other person, and especially the analysis. I try to have a

second or third person available, so that the person is kept accountable by more

people. That was one of those things you just learn along the way. Some people

can be trusted to analyze things honestly, and others can be trusted to put a bias

on it for what results they want to see.

The things that would be issues for me would be those that might begin

to compromise my base values. The example I just gave you would be–there was

not honesty in the reporting of the results, and for me, honestly and accuracy is

important. That's where it became an issue for me is when it made me

compromise my values. For example, where people are have a hard time

working together, they are not allowing others to speak–that compromises my

value of empowerment and allowing all people to bring their voice to the table

and share their story. That is usually where it becomes an issue for me, is if it is somehow infringing upon my values or making me compromise them.

All participants used basic problem-solving techniques (e.g., identify the problem, review alternatives, make a decision) to handle issues regarding conflicting values among stakeholders. Because there may be multiple constructs at work, identifying the problem was the most crucial step, followed by coming up with alternative solutions such as direct intervention, compromise, or making future changes to the situation to prevent it from happening next time.

Samuel makes a concerted effort to identify and resolve issues quickly.

What you do is you identify as quickly as you can–sometimes it takes a while to identify the conflicting values. As soon as you have identified that there are conflicting values, then you need to state that right away, "Oh, we have some conflicting values here. Here's what I think you think, and here's what I think, and here is why I think it." Then, you just go through the education process, and say, "This is how I'm going to deal with this issue. Is that okay with you?" Then, it is a negotiation from that point forward. …Basically, the negotiation is, "How are you going to conduct the evaluation?"

In addition to similarities among evaluators' experiences reflected in this theme, there were several divergent perspectives revealed by interviewees. Daniel referred to the need to report the evaluation results in a fair and neutral manner regardless of conflicting values. Carol capitalized on the strength of her relationship with the stakeholders to negotiate with those stakeholders toward a resolution.

Daniel separated himself from the stakeholder values when conducting and reporting the evaluation.

It comes down to the match between what the program was meant to do and what they were trying to force it to do. The program was really trying to get people to interact in better ways, talk to each other, and have better relationships–understanding and speaking and communicating. They gained a new awareness or insight into some of their students, but that didn't really change the way they were teaching. It also didn't change the outcomes of the attendance and violence. We simply reported it, and we tried to report it fair and in a nice way. You state it neutral. You don't try to say, that's good or bad.

Carol focuses on building stakeholder relationships to handle issues when they arise.

I really try to maintain a relationship and try to build from the strength of that relationship and get a strong enough relationship where I can nurture the stakeholders to be where we all need them to be. I do know that some evaluators feel very strongly it's important to be stronger than that, and to just tell people when they're doing things wrong. Everyone I know who's done that–their relationship ends with the stakeholders when that happens. I don't know that that benefits anybody. I try really hard to build a strong collegial relationship with my primary contacts in an organization. Based on that, I can build the capacity for each of us to hold each other's confidences.

Learning Lessons. All participants encouraged disclosure of conflicting values among stakeholders. Although stakeholders may be involved in the evaluation for different reasons, conflicting values should be at least acknowledged if not resolved so that everyone is aware of

them and can make accommodations for them. This disclosure and acknowledgement helps to form realistic expectations of all phases in the evaluation.

Daniel feels that stakeholder values are all valuable, but he stays focused on the mission of the evaluation.

It's a Dewey thing where you say, "Sometimes we don't know what is best. We just do good things. We do things that we think are valuable, and we hope that good things result from it." In many ways that is true. In some ways, I am simply, as an evaluator, saying, "These were the values of these various stakeholders. This is what they wanted to have happen. This is what seems to be happening. It's meeting that objective; it's not meeting that objective," and most of these things I don't perceive as being bad. They're either equally good, or some things aren't bad; they're just not important. If there were something bad that they wanted to happen, then I would have an ethical problem.

Quite often the issue isn't whether you did a quality job, it's–given the resources, time, and money, the expectations of what you contracted with the client to do–you did what you were supposed to do, and you did it to the best of your ability, given the access, resources, and availability of the data that you have.

Tonya emphasizes the need for clarity with regard to stakeholder needs:

Well, I think it's just, being patient and being very clear and listening to what they need and doing your best that you can, but also being very clear back to stakeholders about what's realistic and what's possible. Sometimes it felt as though they just wanted us to make numbers up, as opposed to collect numbers, and most of us aren't willing to do that. Just being very clear about it with them. It usually ends up being a compromise. Like I said, give them the best data that they're looking for.

However, there will be other places that we're just simply not able to collect it and have to just be honest in it. I'm not going to report things that we can't possibly collect in a valid and reliable way.

In spite of the similarities among evaluators' experiences reflected in this theme, Frances recommended selecting stakeholders with similar values or those who will honor the values of other stakeholders as well as the evaluator, and stakeholders who are critical thinkers and help the group think outside the box.

Frances depicts such a situation.

> I have learned that there are three groups of stakeholders. Those who are just going to say, "That's great. Thank you." There's not going to be any conflict, whether they agree or not. There is a middle group, maybe about sixty to eighty percent of the stakeholders that say, "Well, what about this? What about that?" They are more critical in their thinking about things, and they challenge things a little bit, and that's the group that I really like having the noise with because they're going to push and shift me a little bit in my thinking. Then, there is another group–probably another ten percent that are just going to be wanting to hear their voice, not willing to change–what you would call the "laggers" in the Diffusion Theory. Those folks that are just making noise because they want to, and that's who they are. Those are the people that I list in my mind as un-trainable. I'm not going to be able to change them. They're not going to be able to be open to thinking about other ways to doing things. I like to try to work with the stakeholders that are in that middle sixty to eighty percent that are really going to help me think about things, and yet, they're going to be relatively reasonable about what's doable and what's not.

In summary, the meaning for evaluators in dealing with conflicting values among stakeholders is that many issues arise regarding human interaction or value compromising, such as gaps between evaluation data and stakeholder opinions, the role of the evaluator in the evaluation, the value of information, and ensuring that stakeholders have a voice in the evaluation. Evaluators utilize fair and neutral reporting of evaluation results, negotiate with stakeholders toward problem resolution, and use problem-solving skills to deal with conflicting values among stakeholders.

Evaluators select stakeholders with similar values or those who honor the values of others. Evaluators and stakeholders acknowledge their differences early on in the evaluation. Expectations of the evaluation design, data collection, analysis, and reporting are realistic based on the evaluation capacity of evaluators and stakeholders. Stakeholders shift group thinking toward different perspectives.

Research Question 3: What roles do evaluators take on to resolve conflicting values among stakeholders?

How evaluators deal with multiple stakeholders depends on the roles they take on throughout the evaluation. Participant responses regarding the roles evaluators take on to resolve conflicting values among stakeholders parallel those found in the literature with respect to four main roles of researcher (e.g., reporter, technical assistant), consultant (e.g., clarifier, facilitator, mediator), teacher (e.g., expert, directive leader, coach), and judge. Participants stated they tended to rotate through multiple roles throughout the evaluation process depending on the situation.

Samuel stresses acknowledging conflicts but focusing on the commonalities.

The role of–well, I was going to say arbitrator, but it is not really arbitrator

because we are not trying to change, generally speaking, people's conflicting values, so

that they're not conflicting anymore, by changing them into the same values. It is more

like clarifier. You say, "white," you say, "gray." What you are both saying is a color,

and you have different perspectives on the color. As long as you can help people

understand that, then you can move forward with the evaluation. It is a clarifying role,

not an arbitration role. Of course, my values are thrown in there, as well.

Tonya moves from the role of technical assistant to the roles of coach and mediator

during the evaluation.

I mean in some cases, it's more the technical assistant's role to say, "How are we going

to collect this? What's realistic? What's going to be valid? What's the best way to do

it?" In some cases, it's a coaching role because I'm helping others do it. In other cases,

it's the evaluator role, where I'm really doing the evaluation much on my own.

Typically, it's more the coaching and mediator-type role, I would say.

In addition to similarities among evaluators' experiences reflected in this theme, there

were several divergent perspectives revealed by interviewees. Frances described the role of

protector (i.e., trying to shield or protect one stakeholder from another) and talked about being a

peer for the stakeholders, in which the evaluators related their own experiences in past projects

as a means to form a peer relationship among the stakeholders. Carol considered herself a

broker, where the evaluator forms relationships with stakeholders that form a bond in fostering

communication and negotiation concerning the evaluand.

Frances illustrates the roles of protector and peer for the stakeholder.

Sometimes I will also play the role of protector. If I see one person in the group with conflicting values of another really beating on somebody else unnecessarily or they're reacting out of fear, I will actually protect the group under siege and try to help the other group dissolve their anger or whatever it might be. Sometimes, I step in and try to protect the people that are being beat upon. Another role that I thought of that I find myself doing is that of a peer for the stakeholder. For example, if I'm brought in to do a program evaluation for use development, I can say, "Oh, I was an agent for twenty years. I see your point there." It is oftentimes to be a peer to build trust or understanding or buy in or whatever it might be.

Carol sees the role of broker as being powerful in building stakeholder relationships that may lead to resolution of conflicting values among stakeholders.

Our best role is often that of broker between the different stakeholders. When we can move into that role of broker, usually we can help the stakeholders get to a better place. I think sometimes being a researcher allows you to be a broker, where it's harder to be a broker if you're part of their community. If you're part of the community then you're seen as someone with a vested interested who is going to weigh on one side or the other. However, if you're seen a little bit as an outsider, many people may look at you as somebody they can confide in and maybe try to move over to their side of the argument. I think that's an opportunity to just be a listener and help those people who have some issues to just talk through those issues with them and give them a chance to air them and then encourage and help them talk through ways to resolve them.

In summary, the roles evaluators take on as a way to resolve conflicting values among stakeholders are multiple roles used throughout the evaluation process, including those of researcher, consultant, teacher, judge, protector, peer, and broker.

Research Question 4: What reasoning is used by evaluators in dealing with conflicting values among stakeholders?

All participants mentioned reasoning via discussion with stakeholders regarding different aspects of conflicting values. For example, Carol prefers to motivate stakeholders toward collaboration in the conflict resolution process.

> Well, I guess I feel like it's a little reflexive. I don't know that I'm using a lot of justification while I'm working through these issues. …I feel like I'm being fairly practical because I know that in order to move this project, for instance, forward, these people have to collaborate more. They each have to be willing to give things up to get something bigger down the road. I'm just trying to think through how to get them individually where they need to be to be able to do that.

In addition to similarities among evaluators' experiences reflected in this theme, there were divergent perspectives revealed by interviewees.

Daniel individually assessed the relevance of the conflicting value to the evaluation itself, and then addressed the conflict if it was relevant. Daniel's primary focus is that of relevance of the issue to the evaluation itself. By assessing relevance at the onset, he can determine whether the issue will affect the evaluation or simply be set aside.

> You separate them out, and you look at issues and say, "This is relevant to what I'm supposed to be looking at, and this isn't relevant to what I'm supposed to be looking at." You may comment contextually that there are many factors that are influencing what

they're doing and why they're doing it. Usually you're narrowly focused on answering the question that you've been paid to answer.

Samuel personally identified, disclosed to the stakeholders as appropriate, and bracketed his own biases toward the evaluation. Frances internally assessed the possible repercussions of the conflicting value(s) on various groups or aspects of the evaluation, and then used standard tools of decision making (i.e., defining the problem, exploring alternatives, making a decision, implementing that decision) to tackle those situations.

Samuel follows a procedure of introspection first, and then coordinates with the stakeholders based on those results in order to provide appropriate disclosure of bias.

The first thing I try to do is identify my own bias, with regard to whatever project it is I'm evaluating, and try to understand how that may skew how I look at things, so that I can, hopefully, make accommodations up front, so that the number of issues that arise during the course of the evaluation are reduced. The reason why I say that is often, issues that need to be resolved in evaluation are associated with misunderstandings. Many of those misunderstandings are based on the evaluator's perception of things. If you think about that up front, and think about how you might be biased or prejudiced in your view about certain things, you can account for that up front and appropriately deal with that before it comes up in the evaluation.

That is probably the most important thing for me to do–right up front–is to take a look at things and say, "How could I possibly be biased?" or "How could I possibly misinterpret data? What data am I gathering? What information is being provided to me? How can I misinterpret that, based on my own experience?" If I think about that up front, then I'm less likely to actually to make that error in judgment.

Frances considers the possible effects of that issue on the evaluation and the individuals involved, which dictates how she will handle the situation.

There are some standard things to consider. One is, "What is this going to do for the current work environment with the stakeholders?" Addressing this issue -- dealing with it, or not dealing with it -- "How is it going to change the relationship we have with each other?" That's clearly a criterion. The other one is, "Can I live with myself with what I have just done or am going to do? Would mom and dad still be proud of me if I did the following?" It's that personal piece of, "What will this do to me or my reputation or my situation, as well as the group?" Then there is a piece in there about, "What does it mean for the others as individuals?"

For example, when I put my hand in front of that person, basically, put my back to him and trying to get him not to talk that is pretty radical in a group where you have not met people before. That is a pretty stern response. What is that going to do to him as an individual? Am I going to hurt him in any way? That is probably the third thing I think of. One is the group and then me and then him. Those tend to be the things that I will think about, and then, the other thing that I will think about is the institution that I represent and to what degree the actions I'm going to take–how does that effect that I represent? As a public servant, what does that mean? Then, the same thing would be true for the organizations that the stakeholders represent–or entities.

In summary, the reasoning used by evaluators in dealing with conflicting values among stakeholders includes discussing expectations of the evaluation, encouraging collaboration among stakeholders to resolve issues, and conducting internal evaluation of possible biases,

misinterpretations of evaluation data, or repercussions for various stakeholders, followed by external discussion of those issues with stakeholders.

<div align="center">**Implications**</div>

Standards Clarification

The Joint Standards and Guiding Principles need to be clearer in order to close the gap between what they say evaluators should do and what they actually do. Training in the Joint Standards and Guiding Principles must be scenario-based in order to be effective. Collections of experiences of this nature may be consolidated and tested in a host of different contexts. Having a knowledge base of what evaluators actually do forms the foundation for effective decision making among evaluation scenarios (Shadish, 1998). Shadish describes these as "implications that make a difference to evaluation practice….The value of such contingencies is that they help us to evaluate and choose among competing forms of theoretical and practical advice for how to do evaluation" (p. 8).

Value Training

Evaluators need training in identifying many types of values and applying those to evaluation scenarios. Through their various experiences, each of the participants developed values that drove their decision-making. Values of work proficiency (e.g., learning experiences, self-motivation), evaluation qualities (e.g., usefulness, meaning, accuracy, impact, accountability, objectivity), and methodology (e.g., disagreement, flexibility), come together to define the evaluator experience and create a reservoir to draw from in order to handle various stakeholder experiences.

Although the evaluators in this study encountered value conflicts dealing with use, inherent, and epistemic more so than those of a moral nature, evaluators must be educated in

many types of values, in how to identify those values, and then in applying solutions to deal with conflicting values and allow the evaluation to move forward.

Training Consistency and Expansion

Because prior education and training affect how evaluators work with stakeholders and their multiple values, evaluation education and training need to be as consistent as possible across training programs in helping evaluators deal with these challenges.

Often, however, evaluators are thrust into evaluation without any training at all. The evaluators in this study, for example, arrived at that junction via many different avenues. Daniel began conducting evaluations at the prompting of a supervisor who noticed his expertise in technology education. Samuel had a desire to incorporate his evaluation, teaching, and technical skills into one area of focus. At the suggestions of her supervisor, Frances began evaluating the programs she had coordinated for many years. Tonya had a job change that warranted more program accountability. Carol ascended to evaluation through experience in political science and research. Nevertheless, with each of these experiences, there are valuable skills transferable to many different evaluation scenarios to assist evaluators in dealing with multiple stakeholders.

The background and values of evaluators also facilitate evaluation training development through case scenarios and linking of evaluator background to current practice. The collection of experiences may also be expanded upon in a similar nature to the essential competencies for evaluators (Stevahn, King, Ghere, & Minnema, 2005).

Evaluator training may also be expanded to include expert interviews and procedures for stakeholder relationship development. The availability of case-based training, as well as textbook principles, will assist in developing situational evaluators, who learn the facts, are aware of their surroundings, and regulate control of the evaluation (Bare, 2005).

Enhanced evaluator training may include simulations of stakeholder interaction and resolution options. Such training may be shared among many training situations and results disseminated via networking forums. In a similar vein, evaluator training may include role-play or exemplar-based learning to grasp solutions to conflicting values among stakeholders.

Although professional evaluators are not formally certified in their profession, there is ample opportunity for formal and informal education via university programs (i.e., masters, doctoral, and certificate programs at universities worldwide), evaluation institutes (e.g., The Evaluators' Institute, n.d.), professional development workshops at various conferences (e.g., the annual conference and summer institute of the American Evaluation Association), on-the-job training, and other informal learning environments (e.g., webinars, podcasts). A large part of training may include role-playing, case scenarios, projects, and individual study. While there are many instructional materials currently in use in the above-listed learning environments, often these materials contain textbook solutions rather than actual evaluator experiences. Future evaluation training may include actual evaluator experiences as a basis for the above-listed curriculum styles.

Practical Tips for Evaluators

Often it is the lessons learned after diverse and perhaps intense experiences such as that of dealing with conflicting values among stakeholders that echo with evaluators long after the individual evaluation is complete. Lessons such as selecting stakeholders with similar values, working with stakeholders who shift evaluator thinking, having early discussions of expectations, reporting results objectively, and dealing with the complex nature of conflicting values among stakeholders resonated with the study participants.

Selecting Stakeholders with Similar Values

Frances stated that she preferred to select stakeholders with similar values in any given evaluation, but acknowledged selection was more of a luxury than a regular occurrence. In many evaluation situations, the evaluator is chosen once funding and project direction has begun, or circumstances do not otherwise permit stakeholder selection. Even if that selection is not possible, evaluators can develop an understanding of stakeholder values upfront. Those stakeholders may then be involved in the evaluation more effectively. One drawback is that if evaluators join the evaluation late, that may hinder relationship building with stakeholders and create conflicts that later may need to be dealt with.

Working with Stakeholders Who Shift Evaluator Thinking

Frances preferred stakeholders who helped to shift her thinking toward the evaluation, bringing up topics or circumstances for consideration as appropriate. Those types of stakeholders may be more focused on and interested in the evaluation, and may provide contributing instead of conflicting values. Evaluators are then able to deal with multiple stakeholders more effectively in situations where the stakeholders are actively involved in the evaluation (Bryk, 1983; Cousins & Earl, 1995).

Having Early Discussions of Evaluation Expectations

Samuel and Tonya specifically mentioned the benefits of early disclosure of evaluation expectations by both the evaluator and stakeholders. Of particular benefit is that the evaluator can better understand why stakeholders have certain values–opening up the possibility for negotiation or relevancy determination of any conflicting values. Evaluators can also assess whether those expectations are realistic given the particular evaluation scenario, which may foster an information exchange and help to diffuse potential issues.

Reporting Results Objectively

Daniel commented on the dichotomy between the objectives of the evaluation and the individual values of the stakeholders. He mentioned there is often a disparity between the two, and one of the duties of the evaluator is to reconcile the disparity via weighing the relevance of stakeholder values against the objectives of the evaluation.

An avenue of approach undertaken by the participants is the examination of stakeholders based on their role (i.e., who is funding, impacted by, or benefiting from the evaluation), identifying their individual values, and then weighing that information against the values of the evaluation itself. The weighing of individual values versus those of the evaluation results in (a) the relevance of those values to the evaluation, and (b) the necessity to address conflicting values. If individual values fail to balance with those of the evaluation, those individual values are deemed irrelevant, and there is no conflict calling for the attention of the evaluator.

Reporting results objectively also warrants an analysis of possible bias from the evaluator or stakeholders. As Samuel pointed out, full disclosure of possible biases toward the evaluation helps to avoid errors in judgment and possibly tainting the evaluation results. That acknowledgement of bias helps the evaluator and stakeholders to understand each other and themselves better, and allows all parties to more effectively work together toward a coherent evaluation.

Dealing with the Complex Nature of Conflicting Values among Stakeholders

Natural differences in evaluator personality characteristics may mean that evaluators gravitate toward certain reasoning techniques regardless of the situation. These instances, if true, do not preclude the evaluator from learning from and adapting to different reasoning techniques.

If properly documented and explained, evaluators may still understand and be able to adapt their techniques as appropriate.

Often the evaluators' hands are tied by stakeholder decisions, and they are forced to do what is necessary to complete the evaluation, regardless of standards or other training. Evaluators can follow the guidance of Frances, however, in acknowledging political, social, and interpersonal factors. Frances then decided if or how to resolve conflicting values based on the possible implications of her decisions.

Conclusion

The results of this study may be used in curriculum development for helping evaluators in training and professional development environments. One future research opportunity may be to expand the study to more evaluators from a variety of disciplines in a survey-interview combination. This information would allow for comparison and contrast among the disciplines, as well as greater applicability throughout the evaluation field.

Another research opportunity may be the development and testing of scenarios evaluators may find themselves in when dealing with multiple stakeholders and their values. After reading and discussing the scenarios, student participants would take a survey regarding their perceptions of their efficacy in dealing with multiple stakeholders with conflicting values (and participating stakeholders could also rate their evaluators' performance). Researchers could use results to refine the scenarios based on the results of the study, and then coordinate with university professors and publishers to integrate scenarios into evaluation curricula.

The results presented in this study are intended to help evaluators better understand and thoughtfully use the many suggestions from theorists by providing concrete examples, specifically within the context of dealing with the conflicting values of multiple stakeholders.

The transferability of this type of knowledge base can essentially be limitless and may develop into an information exchange process among evaluation theorists and practitioners via different networking forums such as resource databases from the American Evaluation Association or other evaluation entities. By sharing this information, evaluators may have a better idea of how to face similar situations.

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