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**WHY DO EVALUATORS INTENTIONALLY SEEK PROCESS USE?  
EXPLORING MEANING AND REASON AS EXPLANATION**

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To Mum and Dad



## ABSTRACT

Process use describes the learning that occurs through stakeholder engagement in the evaluation process. It is more likely to occur when evaluators choose to pursue it through intentionally adopted practices. When it does occur, the value and utility of evaluation can be enhanced. This thesis explores reasons and seeks explanations for why evaluators are intentional in seeking process use and why they choose the practices they do to achieve it.

The epistemological stance of constructivism and theoretical perspective of interpretivism are adopted. Epistemologically, process use is framed as a constructed phenomenon, interpretable only through individual experience and likely to have different meanings and manifestations in different contexts. The assumption is made that evaluators' intent and practice regarding process use will be explained by understanding what the concept means to them and by understanding the constitutive influence of the contexts within which they practice.

To address the research questions, 24 practicing evaluators in Aotearoa New Zealand were interviewed in-depth about their evaluation practice. Participants were intentionally selected by gender, ethnicity, and workplace context, and by criteria that enhanced the likelihood that they would be aware of process use. For this reason, they were more experienced evaluators. Their practice context was described through a literature review of developments in evaluation theory, through participants' accounts of their understanding and approach to evaluation, and through participants' descriptions of the settings they worked in. The values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions that underpinned their practice were explored to reveal what was important to them as evaluators and what process use meant to them. How these factors explained types of process use, identified by participants as important and intentional within their recent practice, was explored.

Participants' intent and practice regarding process use was explained as an outcome of multiple converging factors. It was understandable given participants' awareness of evaluation as a change process and their desire to address issues related to social justice, equality, and tikanga Māori. Process use was facilitated by practices that were utilization and learning focused, pragmatic and contextually responsive, and relational. These practices

were explained by the social, cultural, organizational, political, and historical contexts within which the evaluators worked.

Intent and practice regarding process use was also shown to simply reflect developments in contemporary evaluation practice and common practice traditions. It inevitably occurred when practice was participatory, relational, learning orientated, co-constructed, just, and fair. Participants' intent and ability to conduct evaluation in these ways reflected their skills, credibility, and status as more experienced evaluators.

Overall, the research findings show how evaluators' intent and practice regarding process use can be traced to values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions of importance to them. For many participants, process use was integral to their understanding of good evaluation. By identifying these explanatory relationships, this research shows that process use needs to be understood as more than just useful extra utility that is achievable through special effort or method. It inevitably occurs when the evaluator understands that they are essentially tasked with addressing relational, moral, socio-cultural, organizational, and historical concerns. Deeper examination of the role and responsibilities of the evaluator within this context of practice may be the most profitable way of further understanding the occurrence of process use.

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## GLOSSARY

<b>AES</b>	Australian Evaluation Society
<b>Ako</b>	Māori pedagogy
<b>anzea</b>	Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association
<b>Aotearoa</b>	New Zealand
<b>Aroha</b>	love, caring
<b>Awhi</b>	embrace, assist
<b>Evaluability assessment</b>	preliminary assessment to determine whether the evaluand is sufficiently developed or implemented to warrant evaluation
<b>Evaluand</b>	the object of evaluation (e.g. program, policy, service, product, strategy)
<b>Formative evaluation</b>	evaluation focused on informing the initial development and implementation of the evaluand
<b>Hapu</b>	kinship group, sub-tribe
<b>Hikoi</b>	march, walk
<b>Hui</b>	meeting
<b>Iwi</b>	tribe
<b>Kai</b>	food
<b>Kaitiaki</b>	“trustee, minder, guard, custodian, guardian, keeper” (Māori dictionary <a href="http://www.maoridictionary.co.nz">www.maoridictionary.co.nz</a> )
<b>Karakia</b>	prayer
<b>Kaupapa Māori</b>	Māori way or agenda
<b>Kete</b>	basket
<b>Koha</b>	gift, contribution
<b>Korero</b>	talk, speak
<b>Kotahitanga</b>	self-governance
<b>Mātauranga Māori</b>	Māori knowledge, worldview, perspective, and practice originating from Māori ancestors
<b>Mana</b>	prestige, respect

<b>Manaakitanga</b>	hospitality
<b>Marae</b>	meeting house
<b>Mihi whakatau</b>	“speech of greeting, official welcome speech - speech acknowledging those present at a gathering” (Māori dictionary <a href="http://www.maoridictionary.co.nz">www.maoridictionary.co.nz</a> )
<b>Mixed methods</b>	use of qualitative and quantitative research methods together
<b>MSD</b>	Ministry of Social Development
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organization
<b>Outcome evaluation</b>	evaluation focused on the difference made by the evaluand; what changed as a result of the evaluand
<b>Powhiri</b>	welcome
<b>Process evaluation</b>	evaluation focused on program implementation, activities, and processes
<b>Program logic model</b>	visual map/diagram depicting what a program does/delivers and intended causal relationships between program activities and short, mid, and longer term outcomes
<b>Rangatiratanga</b>	“sovereignty, chieftainship, right to exercise authority, chiefly autonomy, self-determination, self-management, ownership” (Māori dictionary <a href="http://www.maoridictionary.co.nz">www.maoridictionary.co.nz</a> )
<b>RCT</b>	randomised controlled trial
<b>RFP</b>	Request for Proposal
<b>Rubric</b>	framework specifying evaluative criteria and performance standards to enable conclusions to be drawn on program merit and worth
<b>Stakeholder</b>	“...individuals, groups, or organizations that can affect or are affected by an evaluation process and/or its findings” (Bryson, Patton, & Bowman, 2001, p.1), including evaluation participants and program beneficiaries
<b>Tapu</b>	sacred
<b>Tangi</b>	cry, mourn
<b>Tauāki</b>	statement of intent
<b>Tika</b>	correct, right, appropriate
<b>Tikanga Māori</b>	Māori customs, protocol, lore
<b>Tino-rangatiratanga</b>	self-determination

<b>Waiata</b>	song
<b>Wairuatanga</b>	spirit, soul
<b>Whakaaro Māori</b>	think, plan, consider, decide as Māori
<b>Whakapapa</b>	genealogy
<b>Whakatauki</b>	proverbs
<b>Whakawhanaungatanga</b>	kinship relationship
<b>Whānau</b>	family
<b>Whanaungatanga</b>	relationship



## *Chapter 1:*

### INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is conducted to determine the quality or value of something, and is used to inform decisions and actions. Utility, along with feasibility, propriety and accuracy, is therefore a key standard against which the quality of evaluation is determined (Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011). The concept of utility has historically been understood by evaluators as the relevance and value of evaluation findings to stakeholders and the extent they use them (Kirkhart, 2000). Evaluators have subsequently developed considerable understanding of factors and approaches to evaluation that support findings use (Alkin, Daillak, & White, 1979; Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Leviton & Hughes, 1981; Patton, 1997). Through these developments, evaluators understand that their findings are not always used directly or immediately by intended users (Leviton & Hughes, 1981; Shulha & Cousins, 1997; Weiss, 1979). They also know that in addition to learning from evaluation findings, stakeholders can learn through their participation in the evaluation process (Ayers, 1987; Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Greene, 1988). In 1997, this form of learning was called “process use” by Patton, who stated,

Process use refers to and is indicated by individual changes in thinking and behavior and program or organizational changes in procedures and culture that occur among those involved in evaluation as a result of the learning that occurs during the evaluation process. Evidence of process use is represented by the following kind of statement after an evaluation: “The impact on our program came not just from the findings but also from going through the thinking process that the evaluation required” (Patton, 1997, p. 90).

Process use has received considerable attention from evaluators since Patton first defined the concept (Alkin & Taut, 2003; Amo & Cousins, 2007; Forss, Rebien, & Carlsson, 2002; Harnar & Preskill, 2007; King, 2007; Kirkhart, 2000; Morabito, 2002; Patton, 1997, 1998, 2007; Preskill, Zuckerman, & Matthews, 2003; Taut, 2007b). Three assumptions about process use are central to the focus and purpose of this study. First, as an additional form of evaluation use, process use enhances the value and utility of evaluation (Patton, 2007); second, process use often occurs as an unintentional side-

product of evaluation (Forss et al., 2002; Harnar & Preskill, 2007; Morabito, 2002); and third, process use is more likely to occur if evaluators are purposeful or deliberate in seeking it (King, 2007; Patton, 2007). According to these claims, stakeholders will receive enhanced value and utility from evaluation when stakeholders intentionally seek process use and are successful in achieving it through their practice. Following this logic, Patton (1997) noted,

...the possibility and desirability of learning from evaluation processes as well as findings can be made intentional and purposeful. In other words, instead of treating process use as an informal offshoot, explicit and up-front attention to the potential impacts of evaluation logic and processes can increase those impacts and make them a planned purpose for undertaking the evaluation. In that way, the evaluation's overall utility is increased (p. 88).

Patton infers that evaluators may choose to be more deliberate in seeking process use and that they may purposively adopt certain practices to achieve it. However, he also notes that historically, evaluators may have more typically regarded process use as "...an informal offshoot" (Patton, 2007, p. 88) of their practice. Podems (2007) observes that learning derived through process use may be "...planned or unplanned, intentional or unintentional" (p.88), while Morabito (2002) notes that few evaluation methodologies intentionally seek to derive process use and that it is rarely an integrated goal of practice.

## **1.1 Research Question**

The observations above, and Patton's earlier statement, suggest there is potential to enhance the value and utility of evaluation through process use, yet whether evaluators choose to do so is critical to realizing this. Therefore the research question addressed in this study is that of evaluator 'intent.' That is, why and for what purpose do evaluators seek process use, and why do they choose the practices they do to achieve it? Answering these questions of intentionality advances understanding of why and how process use occurs, and may provide guidance to others should they seek to enhance the value and utility of their practice through more frequently achieving process use.

To answer the research questions, the evaluation practice of 24 evaluators, currently practicing evaluation in Aotearoa New Zealand, was explored through individual, in-depth,

face-to-face interviews. Intent and practice regarding process use was explored at two levels; initially through the accounts participants gave of their general understanding and practice of evaluation, and then more specifically through examples of process use that participants considered important and intentional within their recent practice.

## **1.2 Context of Aotearoa New Zealand**

The questions addressed in this thesis were informed by my response to the concept of process use as an evaluator trained and practicing within Aotearoa New Zealand. I first studied evaluation in 1991 and since this time have been involved in social research and evaluation practice across many areas of local, regional, and central government. The suggestion that process use may largely occur as an unintended side-effect of evaluation practice was at odds with my observation of local practice as often highly process-driven and orientated to facilitating learning and development outcomes. This experience shaped the questions asked in this study and my interest in how the evaluation practice context might influence intent and practice regarding process use. Williams (2003) indicates the potential for such influence through his observation that evaluators in Aotearoa New Zealand are particularly attentive to process in their practice of evaluation. He identifies the country's relatively small population, and the extent to which government activities are mediated through personal relationships, as two reasons for this.

My understanding that local context may be important for explaining intent and practice is shaped by, and in turn, shapes four methodological and conceptual premises that underpin this study: sensitizing concepts, constructivism, interpretivist explanation, and reflexivity. While the first of these draws on the work of Blumer (1954), and subsequently Patton (2007), the latter three are discussed by a range of social scientists. A detailed account of each follows.

## **1.3 Process use as a sensitizing concept**

The possibility that the meaning and experience of process use might differ across different contexts was observed by Patton (2007). He claimed that the concept was likely to have different meanings and manifestations across "...time, space, and circumstance" (p.102). He believed the concept will have most utility in the field of evaluation if it is used by

evaluators as a “...sensitizing concept” (p.102); that is, as a guide to examine how the concept is understood and experienced across different evaluation settings, and as a means of enhancing understanding of the breadth of evaluation use<sup>1</sup>.

The use of social concepts to guide rather than dictate meaning and experience was first discussed by Blumer (1954). Given the often vague, unpredictable, and context specific nature of phenomena, Blumer recognized it was difficult for abstract concepts to definitively specify fixed attributes of phenomena that would remain true through different time and contexts. He asserted that social concepts were therefore more appropriately understood and used as sensitizing concepts. Rather than establishing any fixed attributes, such concepts give direction to what phenomena might look like within any specific context and guide relevant considerations within any inquiry. Blumer (1954) suggests,

Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look (p. 7).

Patton’s (2007) framing of process use as a sensitizing concept was in part a response to a study which examined what evaluators understood process use to be. Respondents to a web-based survey of American Evaluation Association members were asked, “Reflecting on your own evaluation experience and practice, what does process use look like?” (Harnar & Preskill, 2007, p. 29). Commenting on their findings, the authors reported that many respondents had simply described process use as “...what happens during the process of an evaluation” (p. 40). They acknowledged that these responses added little understanding of the changes or learning that could occur through the evaluation process. Harnar and Preskill (2007) believed that their disappointing findings could be largely attributed to the respondents in their study. They had failed to read or understand the intent of the question. They did not understand what process use was or were unable to articulate what it looked like. The authors also believed that their findings indicated that the concept of process use itself needed further validation. A similar call came from Amo and Cousins (2007) following their meta-review of the process use literature. They concluded that there was a high degree of variability in the evidence used to indicate process use, and saw

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<sup>1</sup> The terms ‘evaluation use’ and ‘evaluation utilization’ have been used interchangeably in the evaluation literature and I follow this convention in this thesis.

opportunities for further empirical testing of the various ideas and assumptions presented in the literature regarding the concept.

It was in response to such calls that Patton (2007) clarified that he had understood process use as a sensitizing concept. He asserted that his definition was only useful in providing direction to what process use might look like in different contexts. Rather than seek a standardized, operational definition, he advised researchers and evaluators to use the concept as a “...container for capturing, holding, and examining” (p. 102) potential meanings and manifestations of process use. It would be through the inquirer moving between meaning and understanding drawn from the sensitizing concept, and that expressed by those actually experiencing it, that the “...shape and substance” (p. 102) of the concept would emerge.

#### **1.4 Process use as a construction**

In framing process use as a sensitizing concept, the assumption is made in this study that the concept is appropriately regarded as a constructed and interpreted phenomenon. This means the concept can only be understood through individual experience and through interpretations and accounts of these experiences. Following this position, the theoretical perspective of interpretivism and the epistemological stance of constructivism are adopted. Guided by the work of Crotty (1998), the term ‘theoretical perspective’ is used to mean the approach I have adopted in this study to look at and make sense of the world. The term embodies the assumptions made about the nature of reality (ontology) as well as the nature of knowledge and knowing (epistemology).

Much of my reading of the literature that informs the theoretical perspective adopted derives from writers working in the discipline of psychology (Crotty, 1998; Gasson, 2003; Smith & Deemer, 2000). My reading of this literature reflects my own disciplinary knowledge and bias (see later discussion). While the epistemological and ontological positions taken in this thesis are later detailed (see Chapter Four), I introduce them below as they are foundational to the design and conduct of this study.

Constructivists (Crotty, 1998; Fosnot, 2005; Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Moses & Knutsen, 2007) maintain that the world is not experienced objectively or directly, but rather is interpreted through a range of contextual influences and assumptions. They discount the

empiricist's claim of a separation between the observer and the observed, and of an external, tangible reality that can be captured through value neutral research procedures (Smith & Deemer, 2000). They accept the possibility that different people may look at the same thing and see it differently. Because of this, constructivists believe that the researcher should re-examine and re-interpret what is already thought to be known about the phenomena of interest (Crotty, 1998).

The constructivist epistemology of this study is underpinned by the theoretical perspective of interpretivism. The interpretivist researcher asserts that knowledge and understanding result from interpretations of phenomena, and that meaning is embedded within and influenced by social, historical, and cultural traditions (Gasson, 2003; Smith & Deemer, 2000; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006b). The researcher is focused on exploring and understanding the "...meaningful nature" (Crotty, 1998, p. 283) of behaviour. The possibility of multiple perspectives and realities is accepted while the possibility of an external physical reality detached from the observer is rejected (Yanow, 2006b). Knowing and understanding are believed to be subjective and interpretive processes (Crotty, 1998). Research participants are engaged in a process of interpreting or making meaning of their situation or experience, while researchers are engaged in a process of interpreting these interpretations (Crotty, 1998).

Given the constructivist and interpretivist stance adopted, this thesis is also based on a number of assumptions regarding knowing about and understanding process use. The meaning and reality of the concept are constructed through the consciousness of those who experience it. Process use may have different meanings for different people, and the concept cannot be satisfactorily explained or predicted through general laws and theory. It is not "...out there" (Moses & Knutsen, 2007, p. 194) simply waiting to be "...captured or collected, discovered, or found" (Yanow, 2006b, p. 6). While it is asserted that process use cannot have meaning independent of experience and consciousness, the possibility that it may exist independently from these is accepted. For example, an evaluator's awareness and understanding of the concept might be enhanced through their participation in this study and they may therefore retrospectively recognize process use as having occurred through their practice.

## 1.5 Explaining behaviour

This study examines why and for what purpose evaluators seek process use, and why they choose the practices they do to achieve it. Explanations for behaviour are therefore sought and an interpretivist account of behaviour is adopted for this purpose. This approach differs from a deterministic model of causality where behaviour is understood to be caused by linear cause and effect relationships between variables. Through identifying these relationships, generalizable laws that predict and govern behaviour are possible. By comparison, the interpretivist researcher understands that behaviour is an outcome of multi-directional interactions between multiple factors which are themselves impacted by these interactions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher accepts that it is difficult to predict behaviour because it is a product of “...mutual simultaneous shaping...” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 151-2). Social inquiry is therefore focused on identifying plausible explanations rather than proving “...certain causality...” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 152). Explanations are informed by the presentational aspects of behaviour and the researcher’s interpretation of meaningful connections between explanatory factors. These interpretations are shaped by the purpose and context of the inquiry and the researcher seeks to be open and transparent about this influence (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

By adopting an interpretivist account of behaviour, the overall conceptual framework of this study is coherent and consistent (Crotty, 1998; Henwood, 1996; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006c). Providing explanations for behaviour, rather than proving causes, is consistent with the epistemological and ontological position adopted. The importance of achieving this coherence in any research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is the primary reason for the interpretivist account of behaviour adopted. However, the interpretivist position also reinforces my training in community psychology, particularly the need for an ecological analysis of behaviour (Heller, Price, Reinharz, Riger, & Wandersman, 1984). My approach to explaining intent and practice therefore reflects both my academic training as well as my desire to ensure that this study is conceptually coherent.

The interpretivist researcher considers meaning to be constitutive of behaviour and therefore that behaviour can be explained through understanding its meaningful nature. The inquiry is focused on understanding “...meaning rather than laws...” (Moses & Knutsen, 2007, p. 223). An understanding of individual cases, and the contexts within which meaning is situated, is required. The researcher examines how meaning and belief are

reflected in action and practice (Bevir, 2006). Meaning provides the logic that makes “...obscure, seemingly unrelated narratives, explicable” (Soos, 2006, p. 133). Explanations emerge through understanding how meaning shapes decisions and behaviour, or through understanding how meaning came to be, for example, through previous experience (Soos, 2006).

The relationship between meaning and behaviour is core to the approach taken in this study to explain evaluators’ intent and practice regarding process use. The approach is described by Bevir (2006), who observes,

Practices and beliefs are constitutive of one another: Practices could not exist if people did not have appropriate beliefs; and beliefs and meanings would not make sense in the absence of the practices to which they refer (p. 284).

In interpretivist research, values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions are considered both sources and consequences of meaning (Bevir, 2006; Hughes & Sharrock, 1990; Moses & Knutsen, 2007; Schwartz-Shea, 2006; Soos, 2006). Understanding how these factors shape meaning, and therefore help to explain behaviour, is central to an interpretivist account. The researcher recognizes that these factors are themselves shaped by a wider set of beliefs and that the constitutive influence of this wider context must also be understood (Bevir, 2006).

Interpretivism asserts that knowledge about social phenomena is always “...socially situated and has social consequences...” (Moses & Knutsen, 2007, p. 194). Therefore, if behaviour is to be understood, the researcher must also examine how it is explained by context (Bevir, 2006; Schwartz-Shea, 2006; Soos, 2006). For example, there may be any number of possible reasons for behaviour, and whether these provide appropriate or plausible explanations, will be contextually determined (Hughes & Sharrock, 1990). From a psychological perspective, the constitutive influence of context means that any behaviour can potentially be described and explained in different and possibly competing ways. Any behaviour has the potential to represent “...several kinds of motivated action” (Hughes & Sharrock, 1990, p. 109). For example, while evaluators may adopt similar practices in pursuit of process use, they may do so for different reasons, depending on where and when their practice occurs.

Given the contextualized basis for behaviour, this study does not seek to develop general explanations or theories in relation to intent and practice. Rather, the focus is on understanding differences across evaluators and what this says about the situated nature of their experience and practice (Moses & Knutsen, 2007). When comparisons are made across participants, these are used to interpret thought and action within context rather than to identify “...law-like generalities” (Moses & Knutsen, 2007, p. 223). They are used to understand uniqueness and to provide access to different explanations.

Following an interpretivist account of behaviour, the values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions that shape the practice of Aotearoa New Zealand evaluators are closely examined. The practice context of evaluators is explored, and the constitutive influence of this on their approach to evaluation, and on their intent and practice regarding process use, is considered. The definition and exploration of context is broad. Key developments in evaluation practice and theory are initially examined through a review of relevant literature. Important characteristics of the local evaluation practice context are then considered. The workplace context of each participant is explored as is the journey they took to becoming an evaluator, their understanding and practice of evaluation, and the values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions that underpin their approach. The evaluation projects from which they selected and discussed types of process use, which they considered important and intentionally sought, are also examined.

Taken together, the elements of the practice context explored in this study provide understanding of the conceptual world of participants as relevant to the research questions (Soos, 2006). The sources and consequences of their understanding of evaluation practice are understood, and therefore also, the coherency of their accounts. Through the inquiry, the “...point or purpose” (Hughes & Sharrock, 1990, p. 117) of participants’ intent and practice regarding process use is revealed.

## **1.6 Interpreting accounts of practice**

To explain behaviour, the interpretivist researcher is required to interpret the actors own interpretation of their world (Bevir, 2006). The question of interest is not “...how much” or “...how many”, but rather, “...how do” people make sense of their experience (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2006, p.320). Therefore, while evaluators’ accounts of practice are extensively reported, my concern is not with establishing whether these practices occurred

as described. Neither am I concerned with confirming the outcomes which participants believed occurred as a result of the process use they discussed. It is possible that participants simply told me what they thought they should say given the context and purpose of this study. This is known as social desirability bias (King & Bruner, 2000). Participants' accounts might also represent espoused theories; what they believe, rather than their theories in action; what they actually do (Argyris & Schön, 1974). While I believe that the design of this study helped to mitigate these risks (see Chapter Four for discussion), understanding *why* participants said what they did is of primary concern. For example, what does this say about their beliefs about evaluation, how and why were these beliefs established, and what implications do they have for the practice of evaluation?

While some accounts may be more or less useful for explanatory purposes, this does not mean that any one account is more or less valid than another (Crotty, 1998). Accounts were not considered simple representations of reality (Crotty, 1998) or "...absolute truth..." (Moses & Knutsen, 2007, p. 12). Rather, it was accepted they would be shaped by social, cultural, historical, and organizational contexts. If the same evaluators participated in this research in some different time or place, they may well provide different interpretations and reports of practice than those captured here (Crotty, 1998).

Interactive effects between the researcher and the researched are also expected and accepted in this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The interview data is understood to have been shaped by the context of the study and the interview process itself (Soos, 2006). However, the concern remains for ensuring the quality of this study as interpretivist qualitative research, and the criteria and strategies used to ensure this are discussed in-depth in Chapter Four.

## **1.7 A reflexive approach**

The interpretivist researcher is required to reflect on what they bring to the research process; for example, personal experiences, beliefs, and values, and how these may have shaped the research (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Charmaz, 2002; Gasson, 2003; Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Assertions underpinning the purpose and focus of this thesis are themselves value-laden, and under a reflexive approach, require further scrutiny. For example, not all evaluation theorists would necessarily agree that evaluation can be more than the collection, analysis, and reporting of findings. There may be disagreement that it is

appropriate for evaluators to intentionally seek process use, or that the value and utility of evaluation may be enhanced when process use is achieved. These tensions are considered throughout this section, as I reflect on the values, beliefs, and assumptions that have shaped this thesis.

### **Theoretical and practical influences**

My reading of the evaluation and process use literature has been influential in shaping this thesis, as has my practical experience as an evaluator. I consider both influences below. The claim that process use enhances the value and utility of evaluation (Patton, 2007) formed my view that it is appropriate for evaluators to intentionally seek process use. My stance on this is supported through observations that benefits from process use can continue over time (Forss et al., 2002; Podems, 2007), and can be applied in settings beyond the original evaluation (Alkin & Taut, 2003). I concur with Podems (2007) that evaluators may also have an ethical obligation to pursue process use, particularly when they cannot provide a guarantee to participants that findings will be used. As a contracted external evaluator, I often had limited understanding of the utilization of my work, and this raised the ethical dilemma of asking stakeholders to commit time and resources to the evaluation process. The framing of process use, as both a moral and ethical issue, was therefore instructive in shaping this study, as well as my general interest in developing a more intentional evaluation practice for process use.

My position that it is appropriate for evaluators to seek process use is also informed by my reading of the broader evaluation literature. While agreeing with Scriven (1994, 1996) that evaluation is fundamentally concerned with determining merit and worth, I accept it should also be responsive to the different needs and expectations that stakeholders bring to the process (Bickman, 1994; Fetterman, 1995; Mark, 2001; Patton, 1996; Shadish, 1994). Inevitably, evaluation is legitimately concerned with program and organizational improvement, knowledge development, and learning (Chen, 1994; Fetterman, 1995; Greene, 1997; House, 1994; Lincoln, 1994; Mark, 2002; Patton, 1996). When the evaluator pursues such outcomes, I accept the view that the goals of evaluation, and the roles undertaken by evaluators, are inevitably intertwined (Fetterman, 1995).

According to Morabito (2002), evaluators who pursue process use are intentional in working collaboratively with stakeholders, and in using the evaluation process to facilitate

learning and development outcomes. However, evaluators who focus on process use may place less emphasis on evaluation findings, or may shirk from the responsibility of determining program effectiveness (Mark, 2001). Yet I see little reason why the intent to achieve process use should be considered such a risk. To me, intent implies a concern for maximising learning outcomes from evaluation, rather than a specific or alternative form of practice. As Preskill and Caracelli (1997) observe, there seems little reason why any learning orientated approach to evaluation would not still be based on evaluation logic and sound practice.

In working intentionally with stakeholders to achieve learning and development outcomes, the evaluator may adopt advocacy roles. While there is a view that advocacy in evaluation equates to biased evaluation (Scriven, 1997; Sechrest, 1994; Stufflebeam, 1994), a counter position frames advocacy as the appropriate absence of value neutrality (Greene, 1997). Advocacy is understood here as the presence of a particular set of beliefs and value commitments that underpin evaluation practice and which are communicated to stakeholders (Greene, 1997). A commitment to enhance the value and utility of evaluation to stakeholders, through the intentional pursuit of process use, seems appropriately described through this framing of advocacy within the context of evaluation practice.

The theorists cited above in support of the focus and intent of this thesis, suggest something of a 'sea-change' in the understanding and practice of evaluation. Indicated is a move away from evaluation as a value-neutral set of methodological tools, applied at specific time to determine merit and worth, and conducted primarily for accountability purposes. Rather, evaluation is described as a collaborative, learning process, positioned alongside the evaluand, guiding on-going development, and often explicit in seeking just and fair outcomes. While not without challenge (Scriven, 1996; Stufflebeam, 1994), such intent is indicated in various evaluation approaches that have developed post evaluation's early beginnings (see Chapter Two for a review of these developments).

### **Other assumptions**

In addition to the epistemological and ontological assumptions described earlier, a number of other assumptions also underpin the approach and intent of this study. While it is assumed that it is desirable for evaluators to intentionally seek process use, this is not assumed at all times or in all settings. It may, for example, be undesirable for evaluators to

intentionally seek process use when evaluation is to be primarily used for control or audit purposes (Forss et al., 2002). There may be risks to intentionally pursuing process use when there is likely to be a gap between suggested utility and what is actually able to be achieved. Such a gap is possible as process use is determined through an interaction of factors (King, 2007; Preskill et al., 2003), some of which may be beyond the evaluator's control or influence. For example, an intention to enhance the evaluation capacity of stakeholders may lead to frustration or confusion if the organizational systems within which stakeholders operate do not similarly support, recognize, or incentivise capacity development. If stakeholders are led to unrealistic expectations about the utility of process use, then evaluators may breach the ethical conduct of evaluation: in particular, the principle that stakeholders should be fully informed about what is expected to be delivered from an evaluation, and what can reasonably be delivered (Australian Evaluation Society, 2002).

The potential for process use misuse and negative outcomes from process use is also recognized by Patton (2007). Developing shared understanding across stakeholders may occur through those with more power imposing their views on those less powerful. When the evaluation process acts to support and reinforce the intervention, the independent purpose of evaluation may be distorted. There may be confusion regarding the purpose of evaluation to judge merit and worth if the process becomes part of the intervention, and if program effects become intertwined with evaluation effects. There may be similar confusion, or an undermining of the credibility of evaluation, if the evaluator undertakes roles in program and organizational development. It is possible that through instrumentation effects, program goals and activity may be displaced by what can be measured. Intent to increase participant engagement, self-determination, ownership, and empowerment may actually lead to harm. For example, if the process is in-authentic, it may simply constitute manipulation. Promises and expectations may be unfulfilled leading to alienation and disempowerment (Patton, 2007).

Evaluation stakeholders are defined in this study as all individuals, groups, or organizations who may influence, or who may be affected by, an evaluation process or findings (Bryson, Patton, & Bowman, 2011). Stakeholders therefore include commissioners of evaluation, funders, and beneficiaries of the evaluand, as well as evaluation participants. I assume the potential for all stakeholders to experience process use if they are sufficiently engaged in the evaluation process.

The term ‘process use’ is used throughout this thesis, not because it is assumed to embody common meaning or experience for participants and readers, but because it is commonly used in evaluation to broadly describe the learning and development that can occur for stakeholders through participating in evaluation. The term is used as a sensitizing concept to orientate participants and readers to the possibility of process use. Editorially, the term is also used as a concise way of identifying the learning and development outcomes described by evaluators participating in this study, both for themselves and for stakeholders.

It is not assumed that evaluators participating in this study understood the learning and development outcomes they described for stakeholders as process use. That is, while they may have been intentional in seeking outcomes that can retrospectively be labelled ‘process use’, as I have done in this thesis, their intention does not necessarily mean they understood these outcomes as ‘process use’ or indeed as any form of use. This applies at the time these outcomes occurred as well as when participants reflected on them during the course of this study.

## **1.8 Chapter summary**

Process use indicates that stakeholders’ participation in the evaluation process has resulted in learning or developmental outcomes of value or benefit to them. As an additional way that evaluation can be used, process use may enhance the value and utility of evaluation. The likelihood of process use occurring may be enhanced if evaluators are intentional in seeking it. Intent is therefore indicated as key to enhancing process use, and potentially, the value and utility of evaluation. This thesis therefore explores why evaluation practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand intentionally pursue process use, and why they adopt the practices they do to achieve it.

Process use is framed in this study as a sensitizing concept. It is accepted that the concept may have different meanings and manifestations in different contexts. The assumption is made that process use can only be understood through individual experience and through interpretations and accounts of these experiences. It is also assumed that evaluators will seek process use because resultant outcomes will in some way be meaningful to them. The values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions that underpin evaluators’ understanding and practice of evaluation are treated in this study as both sources and

consequences of meaning. These factors are explored in-depth and consideration is given to how they may help to explain evaluators' intent and practice regarding process use. The constitutive impact of the context within which evaluators practice evaluation, and how this might also explain, is also explored.

I expect this study will advance current knowledge regarding how and why process use occurs by opening up discussion about why process use is considered intentional and important by evaluators. This discussion initially occurred with the evaluators participating in this research and will occur more widely through the dissemination of findings.

## **1.9 Overview of this thesis**

This thesis is presented in seven chapters and adopts a staged approach to addressing the research questions. The current chapter has introduced the intent and purpose of the thesis, the research questions, and key assumptions. The literature reviewed in Chapter Two, 'Practice Context', interrogates developments in evaluation practice and theory, and progresses initial explanations for evaluators' intent and practice regarding process use. Literature describing important characteristics of the local practice context of evaluation in Aotearoa New Zealand further contextualises initial explanations. Taken together, this material suggests two arguments. At one level, evaluators' intent and practice regarding process use may simply reflect general developments in evaluation practice, as well as evaluators' broadening understanding of how evaluation can be used and how it has influence. At another level, the material also points to the explanatory potential of the historical, socio-cultural, and political context within which evaluation practice has developed in Aotearoa New Zealand. I argue that this context may have shaped a local approach to evaluation that is likely to facilitate process use intent and practice. Chapter Three, 'Process Use', provides a further and more specific review of the process use literature. This review identifies that while much has been written about the different types of process use, and factors likely to support it, little consideration has been given to why evaluators may be intentional in seeking it. This is the key knowledge gap concerning process use that this thesis seeks to address. I use the literature to develop frameworks for examining whether evaluators' understanding of the antecedents of process use may help to explain practices intentionally adopted to achieve it. Evaluators may adopt certain

practices because they believe they will achieve process use, or because they believe they will be effective in shaping necessary conditions for process use to occur.

The first three chapters establish the foundations for this thesis and lead to four subsequent chapters beginning with 'Methodology and Method'. This chapter details the methodology of the study, and the methods used to collect and analyse data. The research findings are then presented in the next two chapters. In Chapter Five, I consider participants' general understanding, approach, and practice of evaluation and how this helps to explain identified levels of awareness and intent regarding process use. Participants' intent and practice regarding process use is then examined in Chapter Six in relation to four participant sub-groups. The groups are formed on the basis that respective group members identify the same or similar types of process use as important and intentional. The sub-group analysis identifies drivers to intent and practice that are common across group members, and these drivers are therefore reinforced as explanatory. The final chapter, 'Discussion', summarises and reflects on the thesis. This chapter provides final conclusions, the strengths and limitations of the study are discussed, and directions for theory, practice, and further research are suggested. I examine my influence within the study and why I may have privileged some interpretations of the data over others (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Following reflexive methodology (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000), I consider alternative readings of the data, ensure my conclusions are kept local and provisional, and reflect on how the data may have been shaped by the research process.

## *Chapter 2:*

### PRACTICE CONTEXT

Developments in evaluation practice and theory, that help to describe the context within which evaluators participating in this study practiced evaluation, are reviewed in this chapter. Developments in practice are initially examined, including how evaluators' understanding of evaluation use and influence has evolved. I then describe characteristics of the local context of evaluation practice in Aotearoa New Zealand and examine how this context has been shaped by historical, cultural, and political factors. Consideration is given to how all aspects of the practice context described may help to explain local evaluators' intent and practice regarding process use.

#### **2.1 Traditions of evaluation practice**

Abma and Widdershoven's (2008) review of four major traditions in evaluation practice provides the platform for the following review. Their work offers particular value to this thesis for two reasons. First, the four traditions: "objectivist", "utilization orientated", "ideologically orientated" (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008, p. 215), and "hermeneutic and constructivist" (p. 216), broadly map to a chronology of the main approaches to evaluation practice that have developed since the emergence of program evaluation as a distinct field of professional practice. This beginning can be traced back some fifty years (Patton, 1997), and Abma and Widdershoven's review synthesizes a large body of literature. Second, process use requires some meaningful level of stakeholder participation in the evaluation process (Amo & Cousins, 2007; Forss et al., 2002; Preskill et al., 2003), and the Abma and Widdershoven review is also relevant on this basis. Regarding evaluation as fundamentally a relational process, they differentiate the four traditions by the extent to which stakeholder participation in the evaluation process is supported, and by the type of evaluator/stakeholder relationship advocated. By differentiating the traditions by participatory and relational criteria, and by identifying different evaluation approaches under each tradition, Abma and Widdershoven's review informs my consideration of approaches which are more likely to support process use, and why evaluators may choose to follow these. Beginning with the objectivist tradition, each of the four practice traditions

are detailed and discussed in the following section. Additional literature is drawn upon when this advances understanding of each tradition in relation to process use.

### **Objectivist tradition**

The objectivist tradition traces back to the development of evaluation in the United States during the 1960s, and a belief that solutions to social problems could be found through science-based social programming (Campbell, 1969). As observed by a number of authors (Cook, 1997; Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004; Schwandt, 2005), evaluation developed and was largely considered at this time to be an objective science that used social science research methods to determine whether social interventions worked.

Evaluators working under the objectivist tradition are positioned in a judge-like role (Mark, 2002). They are primarily focused on technical and methodological concerns (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008), and assume primary control and responsibility for designing, conducting, and reporting the evaluation. While they might initially work with stakeholders to establish the purpose and focus of the evaluation, a greater level of stakeholder participation is considered a threat to necessary neutrality and objectivity. Because of this, a distal relationship with stakeholders is generally maintained.

The ontological assumption underpinning the objectivist tradition is that a single reality exists (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008). There is an assumption of independence between the inquirer and what is being inquired into. Methods are tools used by evaluators to discover the truth and to control for any factors that might distort this.

Not only is the objectivist tradition definable in terms of what it seeks to achieve, it may also be defined contra evaluation approaches conducted under the other traditions. For example, Stufflebeam (1994) suggests that regardless of usefulness and worthiness, evaluative activities focused on achieving development, advocacy, and self-determination outcomes are not evaluation. Scriven (1996) believes that evaluation focused on development and empowerment is more appropriately considered an activity and role ancillary to the fundamental definition of evaluation. In taking these positions, both theorists argue that goal or purpose of evaluation must not be confused with the roles that evaluators undertake.

Evaluators working under the objectivist tradition are primarily concerned with ensuring the credibility of knowledge claims through attending to research quality and ensuring that findings are valid and accurate (Caracelli, 2000). While required to defend their methods and findings, they have less responsibility for understanding how programs work, and for informing program development (Campbell, 1994; Sechrest, 1994; Stufflebeam, 1994). As methodologists and technicians, they are not required to have advanced interpersonal or communication skills, although some capability in these areas is desirable (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008).

The more distal relationship between evaluators and stakeholders indicated under the objectivist tradition may be appropriate when there is consensus and clarity regarding program theory, goals, and outcome measures (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008). Process use may have less utility in this situation. It may also be less likely to occur under the objectivist tradition, and when evaluation is understood as the delivery of event-focused knowledge products (King & Stevahn, 2002). According to Schwandt (2005), such an approach indicates that evaluation is conceived as the application of scientific knowledge, theory, and procedure to deliver valid solutions to problems. The knowledge base of evaluators is simply the means and foundation by which theory and technique are applied, in a standardized and bound way, to solve problems. This suggests an “...exceedingly narrow conception of the kinds of evaluation knowledge, learning, and inquiry relevant to enhancing practice” (Schwandt, 2005, p. 104).

If there is ambiguity regarding the design and intent of the evaluand and evaluation, greater dialogue is required between the evaluator and stakeholders to develop necessary shared understanding (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008). By necessity, process use is more likely to occur. Indeed, the utilization tradition, reviewed in the next section, emerged in response to evaluators’ growing realization that if they wanted their work to be used, they needed to better understand the evaluand, as well as stakeholders’ need for evaluation and how they intended to use it. The evaluation approach is inevitably participatory and therefore more likely to support process use.

### **Utilization focused tradition**

Contrary to expectations, many evaluations conducted under the objectivist tradition found little evidence of program efficacy (Patton, 1997). In addition, when assessed in

instrumental terms; whether findings directly informed decision making and action (Rich, 1977), many evaluations did not appear to be used (Caplan, 1980; Cook, 1997). These outcomes prompted some reappraisal of the impact of social programs that were being evaluated, and led to some fluctuating demand and regard for evaluation (Rossi et al., 2004). However, the lack of transparent connection between objectivist evaluation findings and the value of social interventions, prompted evaluators to seek better understanding of the factors that supported evaluation use. A body of evidence emerged through the 1970s and 1980s showing that an array of factors, in the complex program and policy contexts within which evaluation occurred, influenced use. This evidence is discussed more fully in the next section of this chapter. An important finding was that through a variety of mechanisms, the participation of stakeholders in the evaluation process acted to enhance the likelihood of their acceptance and use of evaluation findings. This effect is understood today as a common form of process use (Patton, 1997).

Evaluators began to realize that if they wished for their findings to be used, it was not enough to just attend to methodological rigor. There were calls for evaluation to be less focused on meeting unrealistic scientific research standards, and more focused on working with stakeholders to improve utility (Cronbach & Associates, 1980). Evaluators understood that this would require them to address the contextual factors that influenced use, and to work in closer relationship with stakeholders (Preskill & Caracelli, 1997). It was also recognized that evaluators needed to have earlier involvement in programs if they were to be more influential in shaping effective programs (Caracelli, 2000; Chen, 1994). Therefore, rather than maintain distance from stakeholders and the evaluand, Shulha and Cousins (1997) suggest there was growing acceptance that evaluators needed to work more centrally within the evaluation context and form closer working relationships with stakeholders.

As understanding of the antecedents of use developed, and in particular, the importance of stakeholder engagement, more participatory approaches to evaluation emerged. Compared to the objectivist tradition, these approaches are characterized by increasing levels of stakeholder involvement, responsibility, and control within the evaluation process. While Patton's (1997) utilization focused evaluation (UFE) approach is well known, a number of other participatory approaches fitting under the utilization focused tradition are also described in the literature. In all of these approaches, the evaluator intentionally engages stakeholders to enhance findings use.

An early participatory approach was the “stakeholder-based model” (Cousins & Earl, 1992, p. 399). In an effort to enhance the relevance, political acceptability, and eventual use of findings, a range of interested stakeholders are intentionally engaged in aspects of evaluation planning such as determining questions and types of data collected (Bryk, 1983). A variant of this model, the “stakeholder-collaborative (SCE) approach” (p. 265), was later described by Ayers (1987). The evaluator and stakeholders work in a cooperative relationship, and are jointly responsible for the evaluation and reporting. Stakeholders are primarily accountable for the contents of the report. Given likely levels of stakeholder skill, interest, and opportunity, Ayers (1987) assumed that the approach would be primarily used in formative or improvement orientated evaluation. Displaying an early understanding of process use, Ayers also assumed that through their participation, stakeholders would develop evaluation-related skills.

Arguing that efforts to enhance utilization should be focused on primary users, Cousins and Earl (1992), and Cousins (1996), described a participatory approach that focused more specifically on participation by intended end users. This approach was distinguished from the stakeholder model on the basis that the level of participation went beyond consulting stakeholders during evaluation planning. Rather, primary users were engaged in the “...nuts and bolts” (Cousins & Earl, 1992, p. 400) of evaluation. This included determining the problem, selecting and designing methods, collecting, analysing, and interpreting data, developing recommendations, and reporting. Further, while the evaluator retained responsibilities in coordination, technical support, training, and quality, the actual conduct of the evaluation became a joint responsibility between the evaluator and primary users (Cousins, 1996; Cousins & Earl, 1992). Demonstrating an understanding and expectation of process use, Cousins and Earl (1992) recognized that through close supervision, users became practitioners and learnt “...on the job” (p.400). Ideally, as knowledge and skills develop, the evaluation process leads to enhanced evaluation capacity. Users take on more responsibility for evaluation, while the evaluator increasingly acts in support and consultative roles.

Practical participatory evaluation (PPE) was later defined and distinguished from transformative participatory evaluation (TPE) (Brisolara, 1998; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). In PPE, stakeholder participation is primarily used to enhance the relevance of evaluation to stakeholders, the extent they have ownership over evaluation, and therefore the extent they use and learn from it. This form of participatory approach can be located

within the utilization focused tradition. In TPE, evaluators deliberately use stakeholder participation to create more equal power amongst stakeholders, and to ensure that stakeholders have a high level of control over decision making. In re-configuring who creates and controls the production of evaluation information and knowledge, TPE typically involves a greater range of stakeholders than PPE. The evaluation process is also explicitly used to achieve social change. This form of participatory practice can be located under the ideologically orientated tradition, and indicates the use of process use for emancipatory and transformative purposes.

The utilization focused evaluation (UFE) approach of Patton (1997) is based on the assertion that evaluation should be used. Patton suggests that evaluators have a responsibility to facilitate use through their approach and practice of evaluation. They are required to work closely with stakeholders to understand their end-use intentions as well as the enablers and constraints to use within the evaluation context. Evaluation should then be designed, conducted, and disseminated to exploit or address contextual factors, and to ensure that end-use needs are met. Rather than retain distance, the utilization focused evaluator is required to work within the evaluation context and through stakeholder relationships.

A theory based evaluation approach (Chen, 1990, 2004) also requires evaluators to work in collaboration with stakeholders. Collectively, anticipated causal linkages between program inputs, activities, and intended outcomes are identified. Evaluation is then designed to test the identified theory, and resultant learning is used to inform program and theory development.

Evaluators also paid attention to the organizational context of evaluation use, and how organizational processes and structures mediate use (Jenlink, 1994; Owen & Lambert, 1995; Preskill & Torres, 1999a; Torres & Preskill, 2001). They recognized the need to work closely with stakeholders to ensure that the organizational context of evaluation supports utilization and learning (Preskill, 1994; Preskill & Torres, 1999a; Taut, 2007b; Torres, 1994; Torres & Preskill, 2001). According to a range of theorists (Owen & Lambert, 1995; Preskill, 1994; Torres & Preskill, 2001), roles adopted by the evaluator may include facilitator of organizational level inquiry, organizational change consultant, and developer of organizational learning capacity.

The philosophical stance underpinning the utilization focused tradition is that evaluation should be practical, useful, and used (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008). The desirability of balancing methodological and utility standards, as advocated by Cronbach (1980), is accepted. Evaluators act more as facilitators or brokers, rather than expert judge (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008). They undertake a greater variety of roles compared to evaluators working under the objectivist tradition. For example, Patton (1997) details ten different roles the utilization focused evaluator may potentially negotiate with intended users of evaluation. Three of these roles, “judge”, “auditor/inspector/investigator”, and “researcher” (p. 128-129), suggest the evaluator is distally positioned to stakeholders, much in the objectivist tradition. However, six roles, “consultant for program improvement”, “evaluation facilitator”, “team member with evaluation perspective”, “collaborator”, “empowerment facilitator”, and “supporter of cause” (p. 128-129), indicate the evaluator is working closely with stakeholders. In doing so, it seems likely that the evaluation process will itself be facilitative of learning and development; that is, process use. King and Stevahn (2002) similarly observe that participatory approaches can be intentionally used to build evaluation capacity, and that in doing so, process use occurs. They note,

In many cases, evaluation capacity building is a highly appropriate evaluation outcome for participatory evaluators, where process use serves an important and measureable function (p. 8).

As a consequence of working in closer relationship with stakeholders, evaluators working under the utilization focused tradition are required to have additional skills not usually associated with evaluation (Weiss, 1998). These include advanced interpersonal and communication skills (Ayers, 1987; Cousins & Earl, 1992), and the ability to work in organizational and program development (Weiss, 1998). They need to be willing to engage stakeholders in the evaluation process, and to have the ability to build the skills and knowledge of stakeholders through this participation (Cousins & Earl, 1992). The potential for process use, and an increased likelihood that it will occur, are again indicated.

Evaluation practice under the utilization focused tradition is by necessity participatory, and such an approach is more likely to facilitate process use (Amo & Cousins, 2007; Forss et al., 2002; Preskill et al., 2003). Evaluators working under this tradition recognize that they need to work closely with stakeholders to design and conduct an evaluation that will be useful and used. Compared to approaches under the objectivist tradition, the evaluation

approach is therefore more relational, dialogical, and interactive. Evaluators take on a greater variety of roles, acting more as facilitators, and often intentionally in support of learning and development outcomes. Compared to the objectivist tradition, process use would therefore seem more relevant and likely under the utilization focused tradition. The evaluator is intentional in using the evaluation process to develop shared understanding between stakeholders and themselves. The approach is deliberately participatory in order to enhance eventual findings use. It is understood that the evaluation capacity of stakeholders may be developed through their participation in the evaluation process. All of these outcomes have been described in the literature as process use (see Chapter Three), and are understandable as part and parcel of an intentionally utilization focused approach.

### **Ideologically orientated traditions**

Evaluation approaches under the ideologically orientated tradition reflect increasing multiplicity in evaluation thought, aspiration, and approach. This diversity started to develop from the 1980s, when, following the ‘paradigm wars’, new thinking began to emerge regarding the purpose, nature, and use of social inquiry (Caracelli, 2000). Evaluators began to see that evaluation was inevitably shaped by their own values, beliefs, and interests, as well as those of stakeholders (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Lincoln, 1994; Mertens, Farley, Madison, & Singleton, 1994; Shulha & Cousins, 1997). Recognizing that evaluation could privilege certain perspectives and interests over others (Lincoln, 1994), evaluators began to pay attention to ensuring that evaluation was “...just” and “fair” (Mertens et al., 1994, p. 123). They sought for the evaluation process to be inclusive and responsive to the interests and perspectives of all relevant stakeholders, particularly those who may otherwise be marginalized, either within an evaluation context, or within society generally (Mertens et al., 1994).

Evaluators came to see that evaluation could be used more intentionally to address social problems (King & Stevahn, 2002). They recognized that the evaluation process could be emancipatory (Lather, 1992) and transformative (Mertens, 2001). Therefore, rather than maintain distance from stakeholders, or manage stakeholder relationships to support use, relationships could also be used to examine and challenge existing social structures and the distribution of power (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008). The evaluator could assume the role of change agent and transformer of society (Skolits, Morrow, & Burr, 2009). Evaluation could be used to support organizational development, continuous improvement, and

organizational level evaluative capacity (King & Stevahn, 2002). The evaluator is required to be willing and able to develop emotionally connected and more equal relationships with stakeholders (Mertens, 2001).

A range of evaluation approaches fit under the ideologically orientated tradition. These include feminist approaches (Beardsley & Miller, 2002; Mertens, 2001; Sielbeck-Boewn, Brisolara, Seigart, Tischler, & Whitmore, 2002; Ward, 2002), empowerment evaluation (Fetterman, 1994), transformative evaluation (Mertens, 2001), transformative participatory evaluation (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998), deliberative democratic evaluation (House & Howe, 2000), and kaupapa Māori evaluation (Cram, 1991, 2009; Moewaka Barnes, 2000; Smith, 1999).

Feminist evaluators are concerned with ensuring that gender inequities and structural and systematic gender discrimination are addressed through social programs (Beardsley & Miller, 2002; Sielbeck-Boewn et al., 2002). They understand the political, constructed, and potentially privileging nature of evaluation (Sielbeck-Boewn et al., 2002), and therefore favour participatory, inclusive, democratic, and critical evaluation approaches (Beardsley & Miller, 2002; Ward, 2002).

Empowerment evaluation uses the concepts and tools of evaluation to enable self-determination (Fetterman, 1994). In the role of facilitator or coach, evaluators work in collaboration with stakeholders, and are intentional in building stakeholder capacity and capability for self-evaluation.

Transformative evaluation is based on the view that evaluation should play a more active role in ameliorating social problems (Mertens, 2001). Evaluators build interactive, trusting, and more equal relationships with stakeholders. Such relationships enable a respectful understanding of program contexts, and an integrated evaluation approach that contributes more effectively to social justice outcomes.

Deliberative democratic evaluation (House & Howe, 2000) follows the democratic ideal that political decision-making should result from rational, informed, and impartial dialogue amongst equals (Elster, 1998). The approach seeks to integrate the democratic principles of inclusion, dialogue, and deliberation. Inclusion is required so that all stakeholders with a legitimate interest in the evaluation are represented, and so that the process enables effective deliberation about collective ends. Dialogue helps stakeholders to identify the key

issues and to understand their real interests. Deliberation enables values to be examined and determined through rational processes, and ensures that evaluative conclusions are grounded in reason, evidence, and principles of valid argument.

A kaupapa Māori evaluation approach focuses on the values, processes, and practices that enable access to the Māori world (Walker, Eketone, & Gibbs, 2006). The approach ensures that social inquiry is appropriate within a Māori context (Mataira, 2003; Pipi et al., 2004), and is examined later in this chapter as part of a discussion of the local context for evaluation practice in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Similar to conclusions reached under the utilization focused tradition, it would seem that process use is likely to be an integral and perhaps inevitable part of evaluation conducted under ideologically orientated traditions. The evaluator is intentional in ensuring that the evaluation process is itself empowering, enabling, and transformative, and that it leads purposefully towards social betterment. They work closely with stakeholders, not only to enhance utility, but also as a means of addressing issues of inclusion, power, and control. Deliberation, learning, and development are intentionally facilitated at an individual, organizational, or societal level. Relationships with stakeholders are interactive, interpersonal, and collaborative, and therefore likely to support process use (Amo & Cousins, 2007; Forss et al., 2002; Preskill et al., 2003). The evaluator adopts roles such as educator, organizational development or change consultant, facilitator, and counsellor. These roles are also more likely to facilitate process use (Morabito, 2002).

### **Hermeneutic and constructivist tradition**

Evaluation approaches under the hermeneutic and constructivist tradition date from the early 1990s and trace to theorists who recognized the constructed nature of evaluation knowledge (Cousins & Earl, 1992; Marsh & Glassick, 1988). Rather than framed as a mechanism to enhance use, or to empower or transform others, relationships in the hermeneutic and constructivist tradition are considered the essential basis from which evaluation occurs, and through which evaluation knowledge is constructed. Relationships are considered important in themselves and not simply a means to some other end; they are “...intrinsically valuable” (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008, p. 219). Evaluators working under this tradition understand that respectful and caring relationships are part of the evaluator’s

moral and ethical duty of care (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008; Greene, 2001; Schwandt, 2001, 2005).

Hermeneutic and constructivist evaluation approaches are in keeping with the epistemological and ontological position of constructivism (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008). The social world is understood to exist as an outcome of social interaction and relationships. Knowledge is constructed through this interaction, and through dialogue shaped by context.

Evaluators working under this tradition believe that an understanding of the social world requires a dialogical relationship with stakeholders. This enables meaning and experience to be communicated, and for mutual learning to occur (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008). It is accepted that such exchange can influence and change both parties. The objectivist assumption of independence, and need for separation between the inquirer and inquired, is rejected. Relationships between evaluators and stakeholders are “...horizontal, friendly, and intimate” (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008, p. 219). Evaluators are concerned with developing a respectful and trusting environment within which stakeholders can safely and openly engage in dialogue on an equal basis (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008). Positioned in the role of facilitator, teacher, and guide, evaluators require skills in interpersonal communication, negotiation, and a “...tolerance for ambiguity” (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008, p. 220).

A dialogical approach to evaluation is indicative of a willingness by the evaluator to confront the difficulties of evaluation practice, including those arising when differences of understanding and being are acknowledged (Greene, 2001). Empirical evaluation knowledge is not privileged over other forms, such as that held by participants, practitioners, and policy makers. The evaluation approach is democratic and inclusive of the different values, meanings, perspectives, experiences, and aspirations that stakeholders bring regarding the evaluand. Issues of power, voice, and agency in stakeholder relationships are addressed as it is assumed that these influence the nature of the evaluand, its quality, and effectiveness. A dialogical approach therefore indicates a commitment to engage in the “...relational, moral, and political dimensions” (Greene, 2001, p. 181) of evaluation, and the contexts within which it takes place. A dialogical approach facilitates mutual learning, understanding, empathy, and potentially, common ways of understanding and acting. Shared understanding, but not necessarily agreement across difference, may

result. However, through the development of shared understanding, and regardless of agreement, stakeholder relationships can become more reciprocal, equal, and caring, and therefore indicative of an evaluand that is in some way developed or improved.

Evaluation is also described by Schwandt (2005) as relational and dialogical. Social practice is not simply an instrument or means through which the right kind of knowledge and scientifically valid solutions are applied to solve problems. Rather, social practice is more appropriately understood to require practical knowledge and reasoning. This is the ability to judge and apply contextually appropriate knowledge, principles, and values. Knowledge and the use of knowledge is not a separate event. Learning is not the private accumulation and application of scientific knowledge to fix problems. Rather, it occurs through the practitioner's interaction with others, and within the context of practice. Practice is therefore a joint decision-making process, shaped not only by evidence, but also through the practitioner working with clients or other stakeholders to integrate other factors judged relevant within the practice context. These may include the needs of the client, appropriate knowledge, principles and values, political considerations, individual goals, and available resources. Social practice is therefore always developing; it is continuously shaped through the knowledge and learning that comes through interaction with others, and through engaging with what is to be known. Practice is understood as,

...a particular kind of human engagement that involves one's dealings with or interactions with others that unfold in view of some particular understanding of substantive rationality appropriate to the practice in question. Substantive rationality (in contrast to technical or instrumental rationality) is concerned with outcomes that are appraised in terms of human objectives far wider than effectiveness, efficiency, goal attainment, and so on. Those objectives are entailed in answers to questions about what goods a practice aims to realize, what it means to be a good practitioner, and so on (Schwandt, 2005, p. 98).

The reasoning that underpins social practice is hermeneutic and involves "...moral-political judgment" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 229). Practice requires an ability to interpret a situation through understanding its relevant features, and in conjunction with appropriate values and principles, to determine appropriate and effective action.

Believing that social practice requires practical knowledge and reasoning, Schwandt (2005) rejects the conceptualization of evaluation as a means of fixing social practice

through the application of scientific knowledge. Rather than being the external expert who determines whether social programs work, the evaluator assists stakeholders to better understand the evaluation questions they face and how best to address these. They facilitate deliberation about value-rational questions, appropriate outcomes from practice, and the means of achieving them. This deliberation always gives consideration to social justice. Through dialogue and conversation, just answers are determined. Therefore, evaluation is less about providing technical, instrumental knowledge regarding effectiveness and outcomes, and is more concerned with “...the lived practice of making evaluative judgments in specific situations” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 233).

The evaluation process described by Schwandt (2001) is a pedagogical one. The evaluation approach is collaborative, co-operative, and responsive. The evaluator and stakeholders learn from each other, and it is difficult to separate the doing of evaluation from its use. The evaluator determines appropriate practice by assessing the context of the evaluand, relevant principles, values, and other circumstantial particulars, and by scrutinizing the practice traditions, ideas, and methods that they themselves bring to this context (Schwandt, 2001). The inherent capability of practitioners to undertake evaluative and critical reflection is built upon. It is recognized that practice can become routine, and that practice contexts are not always supportive of critical reflection. The evaluator therefore has a responsibility for enabling such reflection to occur. Through dialogue, participants develop awareness of the assumptions and beliefs they bring to practice. They develop new understanding and self-understanding, and come to appreciate different perspectives and values. Through this learning and development, evaluation has the potential to be transformative.

A similar view of evaluation is presented by Rossman and Rallis (2000). They believe that evaluation use occurs within and through the learning that occurs as a result of the evaluation process. Use therefore occurs, and is continually applied, throughout the evaluation process, and through the knowledge that is collectively generated when evaluators and stakeholders work together. Stakeholders are co-learners within this process, and therefore also have responsibilities for ensuring that evaluation is used.

In summary, it seems likely that process use will be intertwined and integral to evaluation conducted under the hermeneutic and constructivist tradition. Indeed, such is the level of integration suggested, the idea that process use may be something intentionally

‘added’ to evaluation practice, may be problematic under this tradition. The evaluation approach is inclusive, respectful, and caring because the evaluator understands that evaluation is essentially relational, and is a process that must address relational and moral concerns. The approach is participatory and dialogical as the evaluator understands that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and through re-examining meaning and experience. The evaluator is therefore intentional in developing an environment that supports dialogue and critical reflection. They act more as facilitators and guides, rather than experts. Evaluation is considered a process through which mutual learning, empathy, and common ways of understanding and acting are achieved. Decisions about evaluative need, and conclusions about what is right, good, or appropriate, emerge through interaction and deliberation with others, and in response to context, including relevant values and principles. There is acceptance that the evaluation process may itself have influence and impact. The process of doing evaluation cannot be separated from the process of using it. In all these ways, it is difficult to tease out process use from the process of doing evaluation itself.

While I previously located kaupapa Māori evaluation practice under the ideologically orientated tradition, it also clearly sits under the hermeneutic and constructivist tradition. This positioning further supports my prediction that there may be a style of local evaluation practice particularly supportive of intent and practice regarding process use. I discuss kaupapa Māori evaluation practice in detail in Section 2.3 of this chapter.

## **2.2 Evaluation use**

Developments in evaluation practice were examined in the previous section to inform my search for reasons for evaluators’ intent and practice regarding process use. The understanding evaluators have of how their work is used, and of practices that facilitate use, constitutes another important part of the context within which they practice evaluation. Understanding this context is important in this thesis as process use describes a distinct form of use that is distinguishable from various forms of findings use. The following section examines how evaluators’ understanding of evaluation use, and of the antecedents of use, has evolved over time, and consideration is given to how this understanding may also help to explain intent and practice regarding process use.

Dominant assumptions and beliefs held by early evaluators about findings use are initially discussed. The review then examines evaluators' increasing understanding of the factors that influence findings use, including the level and nature of stakeholder participation. I then discuss how evaluators have come to understand that evaluation can be used in many different ways, and can impact in ways other than findings use. The concept of evaluation influence is then examined as an important conceptual framework for describing the process-based impacts of evaluation, and for considering explanations for evaluators' intent and practice regarding process use.

### **Evaluation findings use**

Evaluation undertaken in the 1960s under the objectivist tradition was driven by the optimism that the rationality of science would provide effective solutions to social problems (Patton, 1997). Assuming that political decision making would follow such rationality, early evaluators believed that if they used scientifically robust evaluation methods, their findings would be duly used by policy and other decision makers to enact appropriate policy and program responses (Caracelli, 2000; Cook, 1997; Leviton & Hughes, 1981). However, it became clear that the rationality and logic of the scientific method was not necessarily or easily applied in political decision making (Cook, 1997). The ensuing "...utilization crisis" (Cook, 1997, p. 7) focused evaluators' attention on better understanding the factors that supported use. This research, much of it occurring through the 1970s and 1980s (Alkin et al., 1979; Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Leviton & Hughes, 1981; Marsh & Glassick, 1988), showed that instrumental use occurred less commonly than previously assumed. It also showed that findings could be used in a variety of often indirect ways. For example, conceptual use, sometimes known as "...enlightenment" (Weiss, 1979, p. 429), was identified when findings influenced thinking but did not lead directly to instrumental use. Symbolic use was also described when findings are used to justify an existing decision, or to satisfy some ulterior and often political motive (Weiss, 1979).

In the mid-1980s, Alkin (1985) described findings use as a function of interacting human, context, and evaluation factors. This work is important in the context of this thesis as it showed evaluators that use was influenced as much by the evaluation process as it was the quality and rigor of findings. Human factors were identified to comprise characteristics of the evaluator and characteristics of the user. Evaluator characteristics included their personal credibility, while user characteristics included organizational role and

responsibility, interest in evaluation, and commitment to its use. The quality of the rapport the evaluator had with stakeholders, clearly a process factor, was also identified as important. Context factors, for example, contractual or fiscal constraints, organizational characteristics, and the state and stage of a program's implementation, were recognized to shape the environment within which evaluation occurred, and the extent to which the environment supported use. Evaluation factors included characteristics of the evaluation process, such as the amount of dialogue occurring between the evaluator and stakeholders, how information was transmitted during the evaluation, and how evaluation knowledge was presented and reported. Alkin's (1985) identification of these factors showed that use required more than rigorous social science. The evaluator also needed to act upon the processes through which stakeholders were involved in evaluation and through which evaluation occurred.

Further evidence of evaluators' increasing understanding of the process-based nature of evaluation use is found in Greene's (1988) description of "cognitive", "affective", and "political" (p.107) use. Cognitive use occurs when the discussion, reflection, and analysis enabled through evaluation changes the way that stakeholders think about the evaluand. Affective use describes the situation when the evaluation process affects the way that stakeholders feel about themselves, evaluation, or the evaluand. Political use occurs when the evaluation process facilitates new dialogue or analysis regarding social problems, including new understanding of contextual dynamics, and the influence of power and privilege.

While a review of the empirical research from 1971 to 1985 on evaluation use (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986) was focused on findings use, it also drew evaluators' attention to stakeholder participation and the evaluation process as variables that influenced use. Through their review, Cousins and Leithwood concluded that use was a function of two main groups of variables: characteristics of evaluation implementation, and characteristics of the policy or decision setting. The identification of these two groups showed that the evaluation context and process impacted utilization. Implementation variables included the quality, rigor, credibility, relevance, and timeliness of the evaluation information provided. Policy or decision setting variables determined the extent evaluation information was demanded by users. They included the type of decision to be made, the extent information was required for decision making, the extent and availability of other information conflicting with evaluation information, the extent of focus on program improvement or

development, and commitment or receptiveness to evaluation. Of particular relevance to this thesis was the finding that stakeholder participation could itself impact stakeholders, or could have influence over the evaluation process in ways that would support their eventual use of findings (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986). The authors stated,

Results argue strongly for evaluation procedures that at the outset generate information helpful to users in carrying out their decisions. Results also suggest that evaluation users should be involved in ways manageable for them in the planning and carrying out of the evaluation. Such involvement seems likely to ensure the credibility and relevance of results; and to increase commitment to the evaluation process as a whole; it also seems likely to help in resolving problems of timeliness of reporting results, and in responding to user information needs (p. 360-1).

While recognizing that stakeholder participation in the evaluation process might undermine evaluation objectivity or integrity, Cousins and Leithwood (1986) were early advocates for the learning and development (i.e. process use) that could also occur through a participatory approach. Despite the risks of involving stakeholders, they encouraged evaluators to accept that a participatory approach could lead to important forms of use in addition to findings use. They suggested,

These negatives must be weighed against the cost of widespread non-use of results. Involving the user in the evaluation process, such that it becomes a forum for the mutual education of evaluator and decision maker, may present a viable alternative to non-use or co-optation (p. 361).

A recent review of the research on evaluation use from 1986 to 2005 (Johnson et al., 2009) also used Cousin's and Leithwood's (1986) categorizing framework. The authors were able to categorize most of the 41 studies they examined using the evaluation implementation and decision/policy setting variables. However, reflecting developments in the way that use had been conceptualized since 1986, the authors were required to add the variable of "...evaluator competence" (p. 381) under the evaluation implementation category. A new category of "...stakeholder involvement" (p. 381) was also required. Nine characteristics were identified under this category, with stakeholder "...involvement and commitment/receptiveness to evaluation" (14 studies) and "...communication quality" (11 studies) (p. 382) the most commonly identified. Both characteristics indicated the increasing focus on involving stakeholders in the evaluation process in order to enhance

findings use. A third characteristic, also commonly identified under the new category, “...personal characteristics of users” (9 studies) (p. 382), reinforced the importance of using the evaluation process to shape these characteristics to be supportive of use. While only three of the studies reviewed specifically examined process use, the study reinforced that rather than just involving stakeholders in evaluation, use was particularly enhanced when engaged, interactive, and dialogical relationships were established between evaluators and stakeholders.

The utilization research conducted during the 1970s and 1980s provided evaluators with understanding of the mechanisms that were activated through a participatory approach and which linked participation to use. In the context of this study, evaluators’ knowledge of how and why participation supports findings use, might help to explain practices intentionally adopted to achieve this form of process use. Practices are adopted because evaluators know and expect that they will enhance the likelihood of their work being used. Evaluators may be intentional in adopting these practices because anticipated findings use is important to them. For example, they may consider this form of use as the primary way that their work has value and utility for stakeholders.

The utilization research showed that by involving stakeholders in the evaluation process, their capacity and commitment to engage in the process, and to use findings, was enhanced (Ayers, 1987; Greene, 1988). Stakeholder participation was shown to enhance the motivation of stakeholders to understand and use findings (Geva-May & Peretz, 1991). Stakeholders are also more likely to consider findings to be valid and credible (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Greene, 1988). Involving stakeholders was shown to build stakeholder ownership over the evaluation process, and their confidence in using findings (Ayers, 1987; Greene, 1988). The quality and level of communication, collaboration, and rapport between the evaluator and stakeholder were all identified as being influential in determining whether and to what extent findings use occurred (Ayers, 1987; Cousins, 1996; Cousins & Earl, 1992).

### **Evaluation influence**

The literature reviewed in the previous section highlighted that stakeholders could learn through participating in the evaluation process, and that this constituted an important form of use. The review also shows that these are not new ideas for evaluators. Indeed, it was

over three decades ago that Cronbach observed that people could learn about society through the evaluation process, and that the process could itself influence social thought and action (Cronbach & Associates, 1980). At this same time, Weiss (1979) began to advocate for a broader definition of evaluation utilization that better reflected the diversity of evaluation use. However, it was not until the late 1980s that researchers began to shift their attention from findings use to examine the nature of evaluation influence, and how evaluation more broadly affected, supported, and influenced both the evaluand and stakeholders (Cummings, 2002).

The concept of process use indicates that evaluation can have impacts that are distinct from and independent of findings use. The concept of evaluation influence therefore provides an important conceptual framework regarding the diversity of evaluation utility. It also provides a further lens through which evaluators' intent and practice regarding process use can be explored. Given this importance, the work of three theorists who have advanced understanding of evaluation influence are examined below: initially Kirkhart (2000), followed by Henry and Mark (Henry & Mark, 2003; Mark & Henry, 2004), and finally Alkin and Taut (2003).

An integrated theory of evaluation influence was developed by Kirkhart (2000) in response to the predominant understanding of evaluation use as findings use. She recognized that the concepts of instrumental, conceptual, and symbolic use privileged results based use, and that in doing so, had "...delimited the conceptual landscape" (p. 10) regarding the influence of evaluation. As these concepts largely described use as instrumental, episodic, linear, and purposeful, Kirkhart recognized their poor fit to other dimensions of use, such as when evaluation influenced through ways other than findings, when effects were unintended, or when impacts emerged over time.

The concept of evaluation influence was purposefully proposed by Kirkhart (2000) as a means of moving thinking about evaluation use beyond findings use. She believed that the concept more appropriately articulated the multiple dimensions of evaluation impact, and that it encompassed the potential and capacity of evaluation to produce effects by indirect or intangible means. This intent and belief is reinforced through her description of three dimensions of influence: source, intention, and timing. Through the source dimension, it is acknowledged that evaluation can have influence through both the process and findings of evaluation. Acknowledgment is given through the intention dimension (unintended,

intended) that there can be different degrees to which evaluation influence is purposeful, conscious, and planned. According to the theory, influence can be both intended and unintended in any one evaluation. Time, which could be immediate, end-of cycle, and long-term, describes the chronological or developmental periods through which the influence of evaluation emerges, exists, or continues. Influence can be different over time, and may be open-ended rather than just occurring at a specific point in time.

Kirkhart's theory may help to explain evaluators' intent and practice regarding process use in two ways. First, it endorses the potential of evaluation to be used in ways other than instrumental findings use, and the evaluator's intent may be reinforced or legitimized through this. Second, in describing how and why process influences from evaluation may be multidirectional, incremental, unintentional, and non-instrumental, Kirkhart's model gives direction to practices that may be intentionally used by the evaluator to achieve process use.

The concept of evaluation influence has also been described by Henry and Mark (2003) as a process through which evaluation leads to "...social betterment" (p. 294). Their model of influence articulates the change mechanisms through which the activities, findings, and processes of evaluation have influence, as well as the different types of outcomes that indicate influence has occurred. In doing so, their work also provides direction to possible explanations for why evaluators are intentional in adopting certain practices to achieve process use; that is, practices may follow evaluators' understanding of the way or mechanisms through which certain practices lead towards desired process use outcomes.

Three linking and potentially mutually influencing levels at which change mechanisms and outcomes can occur through evaluation were identified by Henry and Mark (2003). At the first level, "individual" (p. 297), change occurs when the evaluation process or findings influence the thinking or behaviour of individuals, for example, through changing attitudes or developing skills. At the second level, "interpersonal" (p. 297), change results through interactions between people, and through different forms of interpersonal behaviour that may influence the attitudes or actions of others, for example, "...justification, persuasion, change agent, social norms, and minority-opinion influence" (p. 301). Change occurs at the third level, "collective" (p.297), when evaluation influences, either directly or indirectly, organizational level decisions and practices, for example through "...agenda setting, policy orientated learning, policy change, and diffusion" (p. 303). These different levels of

evaluation influence were later classified into four process types, “general,” “cognitive and affective (or attitudinal),” “motivational,” and “behavioural” (Mark & Henry, 2004, p. 40).

Through identifying different levels or types of evaluation influence, Henry and Mark (2003) seek to show how both the findings and process of evaluation connect through different processes to immediate, intermediate, and longer term outcomes that work towards social betterment. In this way, they describe their model as positioning evaluation analogous to an intervention that influences processes that can lead either towards or away from desired outcomes. For them, outcomes of interest and value to evaluation, and to a theory of evaluation influence that should be attended to by evaluators, are those that either lead towards or away from social betterment (Henry & Mark, 2003).

In anticipating how and at what level the process or findings of evaluation may have desired influence, Henry and Mark (2003) give direction to possible explanations for why evaluators may intentionally adopt certain practices to achieve desired process use. For example, an evaluator may understand that the evaluative capacity of stakeholders can be developed through the evaluation process, and they may consider such an outcome to be desirable. Following this, their intentional use of deliberative questioning throughout the evaluation process may be explained if they expect that such questioning will build capacity, for example, skills in critical thinking.

A conceptual model of evaluation use and influence, developed by Alkin and Taut (2003), distinguishes evaluation use and influence on the basis of intention and awareness. Their model also clarifies the relationship between evaluation use and knowledge use. While agreeing that the breadth of evaluation impact required a broad framework of evaluation influence, Alkin and Taut (2003) disagreed that a shift in terminology was necessary to distinguish findings and process use, and to ensure that the latter is not regarded as a secondary form of use. Therefore, rather than frame evaluation impact on the intentional/unintentional dimension proposed by Kirkhart (2000), evaluation use and influence are positioned in the Alkin and Taut (2003) model along a continuum of consciousness and intention of evaluation impact. Use and influence are considered part of the same “...process-results dimension” ( Alkin & Taut, 2003, p. 8). Three possible combinations of evaluation influence are articulated; “...aware/intended”, “...aware/unintended”, and “...unaware/unintended” (p.9). These combinations may occur immediately, at the end of an evaluation cycle, or over the longer term. According to the

model, evaluation influence is a form of use that occurs when impacts from an evaluation are unintended, and when there is a lack of awareness about them.

While Alkin and Taut (2003) recognise evaluation influence as important, they consider it less important than impacts of a conscious nature, either intended or unintended. They argue that when the evaluator is conscious and aware of the potential impact of evaluation, they are most likely and able to increase the likelihood of use. That is, because influence is by definition unintentional, it is outside the domain through which the evaluator can work to enhance use, and therefore the intentional actions of evaluators will be more likely to increase use compared to influence.

Alkin and Taut's (2003) model does not imply that all potential evaluation uses must be anticipated by the evaluator at the start of the evaluation, and that all use must be conscious and intended. Rather, intention and awareness becomes the basis upon which use and influence are distinguished. They state,

By aware or conscious we mean that the primary intended users, if asked and willing to do so, can specify the uses that the evaluation attempts to have, at a particular point in time and in a particular context. All the impacts that users are not aware, i.e. that they cannot name, we would consider influence (p. 10).

The premise and content of Alkin and Taut's (2003) model has direct relevance to this thesis as it indicates the appropriateness of enhancing evaluators' awareness of process use as well as their intentionality in seeking it. It also suggests that evaluators' should be open in their communication with stakeholders regarding the potential for process use to occur. According to the model, and as supported by existing process use literature (Forss et al., 2002; Harnar & Preskill, 2007; King, 2007; Morabito, 2002; Patton, 2007), evaluators will be more able and successful in achieving process use when they are conscious of it. Through this consciousness, they will be more likely and able to intentionally shape their practice, or other factors within the evaluation setting, to be supportive of process use.

Taking Alkin and Taut's (2003) model further, process use that is intended and consciously achieved by evaluators may indeed be most appropriately considered process use, while that unintended and unconsciously achieved may be best described as process influence. Under this analysis, process use may be considered a more important form of

use as it constitutes a type of impact that the evaluator is conscious and aware of, and therefore more likely and able to enhance through intentionally adopted practices.

### **2.3 Evaluation practice in Aotearoa New Zealand**

Different approaches to evaluation, as well as evaluators' evolving understanding of evaluation use, have been largely described within a North American context. Given the internationalization of evaluation and an easily accessible literature, it seems conceivable that evaluation practice within Aotearoa New Zealand has followed similar developments to those discussed. However, an interpretivist account of behaviour is adopted in this study, and therefore the possibility that local context may influence evaluation practice, as well as help explain to intent and practice regarding process use, is examined. The possibility of such localized influence is explored in this next section through four dimensions of the local practice context: the relative infancy of tertiary education in evaluation, prominent values that appear to underpin practice, the emergence of kaupapa Māori evaluation practice, and the position of the government as the main local user of evaluation.

#### **Relative infancy of tertiary education in evaluation**

Evaluation practice in Aotearoa New Zealand has a relatively short history (Saville-Smith, 2003). One account suggests that an organized and systematic approach to practice did not begin until the 1970s (Lunt, 2003). Reflecting this history, local evaluators have had, until recently, limited options for pursuing tertiary education in evaluation (Trotman, 2003). People entering the field have typically done so from a variety of professional, academic, and other backgrounds, and without necessarily having studied the theory of evaluation. It is difficult to determine what impact this has on local practice, as scant literature exists on this issue. It is notable that while Datta (2003) observes "...a relatively young, small evaluation community..." (p. 109), she also suggests that local evaluators are "...well-informed about traditional and emerging paradigms in evaluation" (p. 109). She also notes that evaluators often know each other, an observation that most local evaluators would agree with.

## Social justice values

Commenting further, Datta (2003) also observes that the context for evaluation practice in Aotearoa New Zealand is shaped by a “...profound commitment to the well-being of Māori, Pākehā, Pacific Island nations, and minority ethnic groups...” (p.109). Another observer characterizes local practice as participatory, inclusive, and democratic (Perin, 2003), an approach more likely to support process use (Amo & Cousins, 2007; Forss et al., 2002; Preskill et al., 2003). It seems reasonable to suggest that forms of evaluation practice in Aotearoa New Zealand may be particularly supportive of process use. The influence of the Treaty of Waitangi/Tiriti o Waitangi (‘the Treaty’), and kaupapa Māori evaluation practice, may help to explain such practice. This possibility is supported by Datta (2003) who suggests that the localized concern for well-being may stem from “...the greater political equity implicit in the Treaty of Waitangi” (p. 109).

The Treaty has increasingly set the context for Māori development, and Māori/Pākehā relations within Aotearoa New Zealand (Durie, 1989). Signed in 1840 by representatives of the British government and Māori chiefs from the North Island of New Zealand, the Treaty established British law in New Zealand. It gave Māori the rights of British subjects while also recognizing and guaranteeing their ownership of lands and culture. However, as a Māori and English version of the Treaty were signed, the government and Māori have long disputed its intentions and powers. Since the 1960s, pressure from Māori that their rights under the Treaty be upheld has seen successive governments to give more official recognition of the Treaty (McCreanor, 1989). This responsiveness gathered momentum through the 1970s and through the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal, a body tasked with receiving and assessing Maori claims for Treaty based rights and redress. The courts, legislation, function, and structure of government have all continued to evolve since this time to give greater effect to the government’s obligations and responsibilities under the Treaty.

These developments occurred alongside a groundswell of Māori consciousness in the 1970s regarding Treaty rights (Bishop, 1998; Smith, 1997). The systemic nature of Māori failure within western styled institutions and assimilative policies was articulated ( Smith, 1997). The hegemony of social research based on western values, and the negative, exploitative impact of this research on Māori, was also identified (Bishop, 1998, 1999; Cram, 1991; Forster, 2003; Mataira, 2003; Powick, 2002; Smith, 1999). Attention was

drawn to the need for evaluation that accounted for Māori and non-Māori interests, values, and worldview. Kaupapa Māori research and evaluation practice emerged from these developments. Literally meaning “...the Māori way or agenda” (Henry & Pene, 2001, p. 235), kaupapa Māori describes Māori ways of being and doing. It provides both a philosophy and strategy (Walker et al., 2006) for conducting research and evaluation that is appropriate within a Māori context, and is of value and utility within this context (Mataira, 2003; Pipi et al., 2004).

A number of claims and aspirations lie at the heart of a kaupapa Māori approach. Asserted is the right not to be compared, as Māori, with non-Māori (Moewaka Barnes, 2000). Control is sought over constructions of Māori knowledge (Moewaka Barnes, 2000) and Māori accountability over the use of this knowledge (Bishop, 1998, 1999). Māori competence (Bishop, 1999), and the legitimacy of a Māori worldview (Bishop, 1998; Cram, 2009; Pipi et al., 2004), are assumed. Being Māori is regarded as “...normal” (Pipi et al., 2004, p. 143). The research and evaluation agenda is established in response to Māori concerns, needs, and aspirations (Bishop, 1998; Glover, 2002; Smith, 1999). Social inquiry is planned and conducted on terms understood and controlled by Māori (Bishop, 1999; Henry & Pene, 2001; Walker et al., 2006). The inquiry process is focused on addressing collective concerns, and providing mutual benefit (Bishop, 1999). The authority or expertise of the inquirer is determined by their appropriateness, capability, and ability to contribute within this context (Bishop, 1999; Walker et al., 2006).

A kaupapa Māori approach is underpinned by Māori pedagogy. The learning process is considered experiential, inclusive, co-operative, and contextually situated (Pere, 1982; Pihama, Smith, Taki, & Lee, 2004). Teaching and learning are assumed to be one and the same (Smith, 1987). The teacher and learner are engaged in a mutual learning process that builds upon existing knowledge (Hemara, 2000; Pere, 1982; Smith, 1987). Learning is group centred and undertaken to benefit the collective (Metge, 1990; Smith, 1987). There is intent to create a supportive learning environment for all involved (Metge, 1984; Nepe, 1991; Pere, 1982; Pihama et al., 2004; Smith, 1987).

Reflecting these principles, kaupapa Māori inquiry is collective in orientation, consciousness, and conduct (Bishop, 1999). The inquirer and inquired are connected through whanaungatanga and whakawhanaungatanga, and these relational positions form the basis for planning and conducting the inquiry (Bishop, 1999). The inquirer does not,

and cannot, start from a position of an individual agent external to the inquired. Rather, they must “...enter a consciousness larger than the self” (Bishop, 1999, p. 4). They become a co-learner and guide, rather than authoritative expert (Bishop, 1999; Henry & Pene, 2001; Pīpi et al., 2004; Walker et al., 2006). Enhancing the well-being of stakeholders and their power and self-worth as learners is an explicit objective (Bishop, 1998; Cram, 2009; Pihama et al., 2004). There is a focus on ensuring that social inquiry makes a positive difference for Māori (Moewaka Barnes, 2000; Smith, 1999), and that all stakeholders benefit through their engagement in the process (Pīpi et al., 2004).

As a process orientated form of evaluation practice focused on learning and development outcomes, a Kaupapa Māori evaluation approach may be particularly supportive of process use. However, I do not assume in this study that the concept of process use as framed in the western literature informs, motivates, or makes sense within Māori evaluation practice. Process use is likely to be determined by situation and context (Patton, 2007), and therefore may have distinct meanings and manifestations within Māori evaluation contexts.

### **Demand for process use**

While local characteristics of evaluation practice may support process use, multiple factors interact within the evaluation setting to determine whether it may in fact occur (Forss et al., 2002; Taut, 2007b). For example, rather than just take part in an evaluation process, stakeholders need to be meaningfully involved for process use to occur (Amo & Cousins, 2007; Forss et al., 2002; Preskill et al., 2003). For participatory evaluation to be feasible, stakeholders must, as a minimum, support or at least accept the need for evaluation (Burke, 1998; Cousins & Earl, 1992). Stakeholders need to be willing to invest the time and resources required to support meaningful participation (Burke, 1998; Cousins, 1996; Cousins & Earl, 1992). Willingness may be influenced by the extent stakeholders seek to use evaluation as a learning process to effect change (Preskill et al., 2003). Process use may only occur if both the evaluator and stakeholders “...embark on mutual learning experience representative of a collaborative process” (Taut, 2007a, p. 14).

Therefore, while supply side factors may be supportive of process use, demand side factors may not be. It is instructive therefore to consider factors shaping demand for

evaluation in Aotearoa New Zealand and whether these may act to constrain evaluators' intent and practice regarding process use.

Most demand for evaluation in Aotearoa New Zealand comes from the government through its various local, regional, and central agencies that use evaluation (Hawkins, 2003; Shaw & Eichbaum, 2005; Williams, 2003). The government's virtual monopoly over the demand and use of evaluation may be a feature of the evaluation practice context that distinguishes Aotearoa New Zealand from other evaluation settings. Because of their dominance in the market for evaluation, the government has considerable influence over why and how evaluation is undertaken (Lunt, 2003; Saville-Smith, 2003; Shaw & Eichbaum, 2005), and how it is used (Baehler, 2003; Lunt, 2003; McKegg, 2003).

What expectation of demand side influence may be formed from the literature? The claim that modern democracies have generally become less deliberative (Fishkin, 2002) is of interest here, particularly as evaluation may be considered a deliberative tool within democratic systems (House & Howe, 1999; House & Howe, 2000). An erosion of the structures and processes historically used by governments to facilitate public deliberation on political matters is described by Fishkin (2002). He sees these structures and processes increasingly replaced by mechanisms such as elections, polls, and referendums. While such mechanisms are relatively accessible to the public, they tend to be less supportive of informed deliberation. Because of this, Fishkin (2002) believes that political decision-making is increasingly informed by relatively uninformed mass opinion, and that the media is more and more influential in shaping policy makers' understanding and responsiveness to this. According to House and Howe (2000), evaluation has a critical role in facilitating reasoned and trustworthy decisions in the face of the sound-bite democracy described by Fishkin (2002). However, while the participatory and deliberative approach to evaluation described by House and Howe (2000) may be particularly supportive of process use, and process use may be an important deliberative process, Fishkin's (2002) analysis suggests that governments may not particularly demand such approach and use.

Non-governmental stakeholders of government commissioned evaluation in Aotearoa New Zealand may also be limited in their ability to demand process use. Central government agencies tend to maintain a high level of control over the evaluation they commission (Baehler, 2003; Oliver, Spee, & Wolfgramm, 2003). Other stakeholders, such as service providers, can have limited involvement in evaluation planning. As a result, they

may have limited understanding of why evaluation is being conducted and its potential value and utility (Oliver et al., 2003). They may consequently be anxious, suspicious, angry, or even resistant to evaluation (Oliver et al., 2003). It seems plausible that stakeholders in this situation will have fewer opportunities to engage in the evaluation process in a way likely to facilitate process use. They may also be less inclined to regard evaluation as a process that may itself offer learning and development opportunities.

While the meaningful participation of stakeholders in evaluation requires resources and commitment, evaluators contracting to government often work under limited budgets and timeframes (Bamberger, Rugh, & Mabry, 2006). Under these pressures, the utilization effort is often focused on findings use by the government client, and less consideration is given to use by other stakeholders (McKegg, 2003; Oliver et al., 2003). This may also limit the extent to which process use is possible or considered relevant in relation to non-governmental stakeholders.

A more participatory and open evaluation approach by government may require government agencies to give up some of their control over the evaluation process (Baehler, 2003; Oliver et al., 2003; Sporle, 2003). This appears unlikely given the political risks associated with evaluation, and while government managers ultimately remain responsible for the evaluation process and outcomes (Baehler, 2003). As political opponents may use unfavourable findings for political gain, there may always be pressure for the government to seek more, rather than less, control over the evaluation process and its use (Baehler, 2003; McKegg, 2003).

The current government in Aotearoa New Zealand, elected in 2008, favours free market economic policy and has been actively reducing the size and cost of the public sector. Government demand for evaluation declined during similar previous periods of government policy (Lunt, 2003; Saville-Smith, 2003). A period of free market economic policy during the 1980s and 1990s saw an increase in the contracting out of government services, and an increase in the use of evaluation for risk management and accountability purposes (Lunt & Trotman, 2005; Saville-Smith, 2003). Accountability driven evaluation blurs the line between evaluation and auditing, and may lead stakeholders to see evaluation as something done to them, rather than with or for them (Williams, 2003). This may discourage stakeholders from using evaluation, and may limit opportunities to facilitate stakeholder learning through the evaluation process (Williams, 2003). It follows that such

an environment may be less supportive of evaluation practices likely to support process use.

## 2.4 Conclusions

Three dimensions of the context within which evaluators practice evaluation were examined and consideration was given as to whether this context might help to explain their intent and practice regarding process use. Broad developments in evaluation were initially reviewed by examining four major practice traditions: objectivist, utilization focused, ideologically orientated, and hermeneutic and constructivist. Developments in evaluators' understanding of how their work is used were then examined. Finally, characteristics of the local context within which evaluation is practiced were explored and consideration was given to how historical, cultural, and political factors may have shaped this context.

In order to remain neutral and objective, evaluators working under the objectivist tradition maintain some distance between themselves and stakeholders. Because of this, process use may be less likely to occur under this tradition. For different reasons, relationship and engagement with stakeholders is considered important under the utilization focused, ideologically orientated, and hermeneutic and constructivist traditions. Compared to the objectivist tradition, process use therefore seems more likely under these traditions. When the evaluator is utilization focused, it seems likely that they will be intentional in involving stakeholders in the evaluation process, and in using participatory practices to increase the likelihood that stakeholders will use findings. This is a form of process use. Under ideologically orientated traditions, the evaluators is likely to be intentional in ensuring that the evaluation process is itself empowering, enabling, and transformative, and that it leads purposefully towards social betterment or social justice. Evaluators working under the hermeneutic and constructivist tradition recognize that it is through dialogue, critical reflection, and interaction with others, that knowledge and learning is constructed. The evaluation approach is necessarily dialogical and relational. It is accepted that the evaluation process will itself impact and have influence. In this way, process use seems particularly intertwined and integral to the way that evaluation is approached under this tradition.

Evaluators learnt relatively early in the history of evaluation that their findings were more likely to be used when stakeholders were involved in the evaluation process. While evaluators initially believed that instrumental findings use was the primary way that their work was used, they also learnt that findings could be used less directly. Evaluators also understand the different factors and practices that support use. They recognise that various characteristics of the evaluation process can play a role in determining use, including the nature of stakeholders' participation in the evaluation process. The mechanisms which link participation to findings use, and the participatory evaluation practices that activate these, are widely understood. Such understanding may itself explain participatory practices intentionally adopted by evaluators to enhance findings use.

The concept of evaluation influence emerged when evaluators recognized that traditional concepts of evaluation utility told a limited story of how evaluation could be used and how it could be useful. The occurrence of process use is acknowledged through the concept and this endorsement may help to explain evaluators' intent to achieve it. The work of Henry and Mark (2003) may also help to explain and make evaluators' intent and practice regarding process use understandable. They articulate the change mechanisms that link the activities, findings, and processes of evaluation to desired outcomes. Evaluators' understanding of these relationships may again help to explain why they intentionally adopt certain practices to achieve process use. Alkin and Taut (2003) distinguish evaluation use and influence on the basis of consciousness and intent to have impact through evaluation. They argue that evaluation use is a more important concept than evaluation influence because it constitutes use that is of a conscious nature, and is therefore of a type more able to be enhanced by the evaluator. Their thinking is supported by the process use literature which shows that process use is more likely when the evaluator is intentional in seeking it. The work of Alkin and Taut (2003) supports the general premise of this thesis that the value and utility of evaluation may be enhanced by increasing evaluators' awareness of process use and their intentionality to achieve it.

I considered characteristics of the local context within which evaluators in Aotearoa New Zealand practice evaluation, and how these characteristics might help to explain their intent and practice regarding process use. Identified characteristics of the local supply of evaluation may be more supportive of process use compared to demand characteristics. While there may be a local approach to evaluation that is particularly supportive of process use, and evaluators may wish to 'supply' it, there may be restricted 'demand' for it due to

the government's virtual monopoly over whether, why, how, and for whom evaluation is conducted. Participants' accounts of process use are examined later in this thesis for any evidence of these support and demand characteristics, and whether they help to explain evaluators' intent and practice regarding the concept.

The Treaty of Waitangi/Tiriti o Waitangi, and a kaupapa Māori evaluation approach, may be influential in shaping a local approach to evaluation that is particularly participatory, inclusive, and democratic (Datta, 2003; Perin, 2003). Such an approach is likely to support process use (Amo & Cousins, 2007; Forss et al., 2002; Preskill et al., 2003). A kaupapa Māori evaluation practice may be located under both the ideologically orientated and hermeneutic and constructivist traditions. Evaluators working under a kaupapa Māori approach are likely to be intentional in facilitating learning and development outcomes through the evaluation process. However, it was also noted that these evaluators may not recognize or define these outcomes as process use.



## *Chapter 3:*

### PROCESS USE

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The structured review of the process use literature undertaken in this chapter provides a further theoretical lens through which I later examine evaluators' intent and practice regarding process use. Different types of process use are described so that types considered important and intentional by evaluators participating in this study can be identified. Existing conceptual models of process use, which seek to explain how process use occurs, are then examined. These models inform my consideration of reasons for participants' intent and practice regarding process use. The type of learning indicated by process use is then discussed, along with why a learning orientated approach to evaluation may support an intention to facilitate process use. The manner in which stakeholders' participation in the evaluation process can enhance their capacity to think and act evaluatively is identified in the literature as a form of process use. The conceptual distinction between process use and evaluation capacity building is clarified and this informs later consideration of why evaluators may be intentional in seeking this form of process use.

The literature reviewed in this chapter also guides my examination of how the values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions that underpin evaluators' practice shapes what is important to them, and therefore helps to explain why they seek to achieve process use. Whether and how participants' beliefs about the efficacy of practices to achieve desired process use outcomes help to explain practices adopted, is also explored.

The literature review is also an important part of the reflexivity required within interpretivist qualitative research (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Charmaz, 2002; Dey, 2004). It helps to make transparent the knowledge, presuppositions, and assumptions that shaped the design and conduct of this study as well my analysis of the data. To claim otherwise would be disingenuous and would ignore the fact that it would not be possible to interpret the data from this study without some prior conceptualisation of it (Dey, 2004).

### 3.2 Types of process use

Four types of process use were initially described by Patton (1997), these being when stakeholder participation in the evaluation process enhances or develops shared understanding across stakeholders, when it reinforces or supports the evaluand, when it increases stakeholders' engagement, ownership or self-determination in regard to evaluation or the evaluand, and when it leads to program or organizational development. Two additional types later identified by Patton were when stakeholders learn how to think evaluatively, and when program staff or other program stakeholders focus or re-focus on core aims and objectives (Patton, 1998).

Patton's initial work was built upon by Forss et al. (2002) who described five types of process use: learning to learn, the development of shared understanding amongst stakeholders, strengthening the project, the development of professional networks, and boosting morale. The first three types are similar to those previously described by Patton. Strengthening the project is similar to Patton's (1997) description of evaluation as an intervention that can reinforce or support the evaluand, for example, through providing stakeholders with clearer understanding of the evaluand, or new resolve to address an identified issue. Reflecting on this impact, Forss et al. (2002) recognized that evaluation often enables stakeholders to step outside their work responsibilities and address issues in a concentrated and possibly different way from that routinely possible. The authors' identification of evaluation's impact on professional networks followed their understanding that engagement in evaluation could provide stakeholders with opportunities to develop new networks of potential benefit to them. In boosting morale, it was recognized that stakeholder engagement could increase commitment, strengthen action, or generate enthusiasm in relation to organizations, programs, or program activities.

An expanded definition of process use was later offered by Patton (2008) which read,

Process use occurs when those involved in the evaluation learn from the evaluation process itself or make program changes based on the evaluation process rather than just the evaluations' findings. Process use then includes cognitive, attitudinal, and behaviour changes in individuals, and program or organizational changes resulting, either directly or indirectly from engagement in the evaluation process and learning to think evaluatively (e.g. increased evaluation capacity, integrating evaluation into

the program, goals clarification, conceptualizing the program's logic model, setting evaluation priorities, improving outcomes measurement) (p.156).

This definition draws attention to the fact that process use is demonstrated through learning as well as through changes in action or behaviour. It indicates that process use can consist of different types of change (cognitive, behavioural and attitudinal), and that change can occur at an individual, program, or organizational level. Amo and Cousins (2007) identified similar changes to those that Patton (2008) points to and described learning (cognitive change), changes in actions or behaviour (behavioural change), and changes in affect or attitude (attitudinal change). Other types not fitting these categories included the development of networks and social justice outcomes.

While accepting that stakeholders may acquire new skills or modify their behaviour through participating in the evaluation process, Alkin and Taut (2003) saw these outcomes constituting another "...domain of use" (p.6) rather than a separate form of process use. They described instrumental process use, conceptual process use, and symbolic process use. Instrumental process use occurs when evaluative questioning directly leads stakeholders to re-examine and modify their program. An example of conceptual process use would be when stakeholders change their attitudes about the importance of evaluation as a result of their participation in the evaluation process. Symbolic process use is indicated when the evaluation process itself legitimizes or adds to the stature of programs.

Reflecting on outcomes previously described as process use in the literature, Alkin and Taut (2003) reinforced the importance of distinguishing process use from the use of formative evaluation findings. Recognizing that it was easy to confuse the two concepts, as formative evaluation findings are used to inform program development, they emphasized,

To rightly talk about process use, the stimulus that causes instrumental or conceptual changes to take place must be the participation in the evaluation process, not the acknowledgement of evaluation findings (p.7).

### **3.3 Process use typologies**

The different types of process use, previously identified, are grouped together below and are described in detail under three typologies: cognitive, behavioural, and attitudinal/affective. The motivation for presenting the typologies in this thesis is twofold.

First, they are used to clarify the different types of process use, and the different forms of change, learning, or influence implicated by each type. The typologies reflect Patton's (2008) expanded definition of process use, and that process use can be indicated by cognitive, behavioural, or attitudinal change (Patton, 1997). They are consistent with the types identified by Amo and Cousins (2007), and are similar to Greene's (1988) three dimensions of process-based influence: cognitive, affective, and political. They also reflect Cumming's (2002) grouping of different process use types into three overlapping categories: increased understanding between stakeholders (i.e. cognitive), changes in self-perceptions of worth/value (i.e. attitudinal/affective), and the development of new connections, linkages, or dialogue between stakeholders (i.e. behavioural).

Through capturing the breadth of learning and change possible through process use, the typologies are indicative of the breadth of evaluation impact described in Kirkhart's (2000) integrated model of evaluation influence. They also reflect the four categories of change mechanisms identified in Mark and Henry's (2004) expanded theory of evaluation influence: general, cognitive (affective/attitudinal), motivational, and behavioural. Through describing the level at which respective forms of process use may occur, the typologies also link to the individual, interpersonal, and collective levels of influence identified by Henry and Mark (2003).

The second reason for presenting the typologies is that they provide a framework for exploring why the different types of process use described by participants may be considered important by them and therefore intentionally sought. It is assumed in this thesis that the beliefs, meanings, and expectancies evaluators have about the different types will help to explain their intent and practice in respect of them. For example, an evaluator may consider it important that their evaluation findings are used by stakeholders. They may understand that stakeholders are more likely to accept evaluation findings if they have positive regard for evaluation. They may therefore be intentional in addressing any concerns stakeholders have about evaluation prior to beginning the process. Such practice suggests the evaluator understands that the utilization of their work will be enhanced if they are intentional in using the evaluation process to achieve attitudinal/affective process use. In this case, the result is more favourable attitudes to evaluation. Through this analysis, the time the evaluator deliberately spends with stakeholders prior to beginning the evaluation is potentially explained or is at least understandable.

The typologies also help to explain by describing the type of learning or change implicated within each type of process use, the level at which change occurs (individual, interpersonal, collective), and the change mechanisms at play. In this way, they provide a direct link to the work of Mark and Henry, and guide my later examination of whether evaluators' understanding of change mechanisms, and likely outcomes implicated in the different types, may help to explain their intent and practice regarding process use. For example, certain practices may be adopted if evaluators understand or expect them to be efficacious in achieving process use outcomes which are, for some reason, important to them. An interpretivist account of behaviour suggests that outcomes may be important to evaluators because they satisfy or align to values, beliefs, aspirations, or traditions of importance to them. The typologies therefore provide another mechanism through which to examine the conditional connections (Bevir, 2006) linking evaluators' beliefs and aspirations to their intent regarding process use, and the volitional connections (Bevir, 2006) that help to explain practices used to act upon this intent.

### **Cognitive process use**

Cognitive process use refers to the learning, knowledge, and evaluative capability gained by stakeholders through their participation in evaluation. It occurs when evaluation processes lead to enhanced communication between stakeholders, shared understanding, or a common focus on core objectives (Forss et al., 2002; Greene, 1998; Patton, 1998, 2007; Weiss, 1998). It is described by House and Howe (2000) when they observe that the most important evaluation questions are often identified through the deliberation enabled by the evaluation process. Another example is when evaluation planning informs program implementation in some way (Patton, 1998). Cognitive process use also occurs when stakeholders develop capabilities in thinking and acting evaluatively, and when this capability becomes integrated into organizational infrastructure or culture (Forss et al., 2002; Patton, 1998, 2007; Weiss, 1998).

An instrumental form of cognitive process use occurs when program activities are intentionally focused or refocused in line with what is being measured through evaluation (Patton, 1998; Weiss, 1998). The effect may be positive, such as when attention is refocused on core or priority program objectives, or negative, for example if as a result of refocusing, attention is taken off other important program roles or functions (Weiss, 1998).

Learning orientated evaluation approaches are likely to support cognitive process use. Here the evaluator is intentional in facilitating stakeholder learning through conducting evaluation as ongoing cycles of dialogue and critical reflection on action (Preskill, 1994, 2008; Rossman & Rallis, 2000; Schwandt, 2005).

### **Behavioural process use**

Behavioural process use is indicated by changes in the actions or behaviour of stakeholders resulting from their engagement in evaluation. It occurs when evaluation planning informs implementation of the evaluand. Examples of this include when program logic modelling has this influence (Patton, 1998), when data collection itself impacts program outcomes (Patton, 1997, 1998, 2007), and when the evaluation process leads in some way to program or organizational development (Patton, 1997, 2007).

### **Attitudinal/affective process use**

Attitudinal/affective process use refers to changes in stakeholder motivation, ownership, or attitude that occur as a result of their participation in evaluation. It occurs when engagement, ownership, or self-determination regarding evaluation or the evaluand, is enhanced (Patton, 1997, 2007). Another example is when the evaluation process has a positive impact on stakeholder morale, or when it strengthens commitment, action, and enthusiasm in relation to organizations, programs, or program activities (Forss et al., 2002; Weiss, 1998). This type of process use also occurs when participation creates a more positive environment for the receipt and use of findings (Greene, 1988; Taut, 2007b).

The evaluator is intentional in seeking learning and development outcomes for stakeholders under a range of evaluation approaches, and attitudinal/affective process use may therefore be likely under these approaches. Examples include participatory evaluation (Brisolara, 1998; Cousins & Earl, 1992; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998), empowerment evaluation (Fetterman, 1994), and kaupapa Māori research and evaluation (Bishop, 1998; Forster, 2003; Henry & Pene, 2001).

### **3.4 Conceptual models of process use**

Three models explaining process use are reviewed in this section and are used later to inform explanations for evaluators' intent and practice regarding process use. The models describe evaluation factors and contexts that support learning and process use. Evaluators' understanding of these relationships, as well as their beliefs about their capacity to shape them, may help to explain the practices they intentionally adopt to achieve process use. This approach to explanation is based on social cognition learning theory (Schunk, 2009). Learning occurs in a social context and through observing and engaging with others. The actor develops beliefs about the consequences of any given action and these expectations drive behaviour. Outcomes expectancies are developed through personal experience, and sustain behaviour when the actor believes that their actions will produce desired outcomes (Schunk, 2009). The concept of self-efficacy is therefore important in explaining behaviour. This is the actor's belief that they have the capability to learn and perform actions at the level required to produce intended outcomes. Observations of outcomes are used to assess performance and this process shapes further beliefs and subsequent behaviour (Schunk, 2009). Applied to this research, an evaluator may recognize that stakeholders are more likely to use evaluation to engage in critical reflection when they believe that a supportive environment for this exists. The evaluator may understand that such an environment is shaped through supportive organizational leaders and trusting stakeholder relationships. They may subsequently focus on developing these conditions early in the evaluation process. Their expectancy that specific practices will develop necessary conditions may also explain practices adopted.

#### **Meta-model of utilization**

Evaluation use is a result of human, context, and process factors interacting within internal and external contexts (Alkin, 1985; Cousins & Leithwood, 1986). Process use is a complex form of use (Forss et al., 2002; Taut, 2007) that is shaped by multiple interacting variables (Forss et al., 2002; Taut, 2007). This complexity is demonstrated in Johnson's (1998) theoretical meta-model of utilization which explains both findings and process use.

Meta-modelling is described by Johnson (1998) as a process that builds new theoretical models from existing theory. His model integrates theory regarding different types and theories of evaluation use and different traditions of evaluation practice. Evaluation

utilization is described as occurring through interactions between three variables: “background”, “interactional”, and “use” (p. 106). These variables exist within, and are shaped by, an internal environment which is in turn influenced by an external environment. Background variables shape context which determines the likelihood of utilization and learning from evaluation. These variables comprise characteristics of the organization, stakeholders, and the evaluator respectively. Interactional or process variables refer to the social interactions and activities of organizational members, and the participation and dissemination that occurs through the evaluation process. Utilization variables include competing information and stakeholder expectations about programs and evaluation. They also include the extent findings support existing values, beliefs, and self-interests, and how believable, credible, and useful they are.

The internal and external environment of any evaluation may also be explanatory of evaluators’ intent and practice regarding process use. For example, an evaluation may be commissioned with the intent or expectation that the process will develop the evaluation capacity of stakeholders. This context will clearly help to explain the evaluator’s intent and practice to achieve such process use. In this same example, background and interactional variables may also help to explain. For example, the evaluator’s intent to develop capacity is likely to be supported if leaders within stakeholder organizations also support the development of evaluation capacity through the evaluation process.

### **Explanatory model of process use**

In this second model, Preskill, Zuckerman, and Matthews (2003) describe five variables that enable process use. Aspects of their model are similar to Johnston’s (1998) including how learning from evaluation requires a supportive environment, and how the evaluator encounters both opportunities and constraints in facilitating use.

The first variable, “Facilitation of evaluation processes” (p. 430), describes the extent a learning environment is created and sustained during an evaluation. Influential factors include the amount and quality of dialogue and reflection enabled, and the extent to which member and organizational characteristics support communication, reflection, and learning. Evaluator characteristics are identified as mediating factors and include background, level of experience, credibility, and perceived position of authority. The second variable, “Management support” (p. 431), predicts that organizational members are more likely to

learn from the evaluation process if managers advocate and support this. The third variable, “Characteristics of advisory group members” (p. 432), implies that learning from evaluation will be supported when organizational members champion evaluation and its use. A range of individual characteristics are identified as mediators to this role, including experience and position regarding the evaluand as well as experience, interest, motivations, and attitudes regarding evaluation. The fourth variable, “Frequency, methods and quality of communications” (p. 433), predicts that process use will be related to the extent the evaluation process affords opportunities for stakeholders to share information, challenge assumptions, ask questions, and reflect on experience. Finally, “organization characteristics” (p. 434) have the potential to enable or hinder participation in evaluation and therefore influence whether process use occurs. Characteristics include the positioning and authority of evaluation in relation to organizational decision making, and the extent of organizational willingness, ability, and culture in support of learning and evaluation capacity building.

In the model presented by Preskill et al. (2003), any number of the variables may help to explain evaluators’ intent and practice regarding process use. Knowing that shared understanding across stakeholders is necessary for conducting a useful evaluation, an evaluator may intentionally use deliberate questioning to develop this. Their ability to facilitate this process may be influenced by the level of credibility and trust they have with stakeholders. Evaluators may be deliberate in resetting stakeholders’ expectations about the level of engagement required when evaluation is intentionally learning orientated. They may spend time developing stakeholders’ willingness to engage meaningfully in the evaluation process, knowing this will influence the level of utility they ultimately derive from it.

### **Building organizational evaluation capacity through process use**

In King’s (2007) model, four categories of variables, “context, input, process, and product” (p. 54) are identified as facilitating the use of process use to build organizational evaluation capacity. The product variable describes different types of process use and is not discussed further here. Similar to the previous models, King (2007) identifies factors which shape environments to be supportive of learning and change. The importance of interpersonal communication, support, and capability to engage in critical reflection is again identified, as is the role of the evaluator in creating environments that promote learning.

King's (2007) model is also potentially useful for explaining evaluators' intent and practice regarding process use. The context variable describes the capacity, capability, and support for learning that exists within the external and internal environment. The external environment is shaped by the overall mandate for evaluation, the extent it is driven by accountability requirements, and the level of external support to use evaluation for change. The internal environment is concerned with the amount of management and organizational support to participate in evaluation, to engage in critical and evaluative thinking, and to use and learn from evaluation findings. Input variables refer to the available systems, strategies, resources, and processes that facilitate learning and capacity building. These include a purposeful capacity building plan, peer learning structures, ready access to required evaluation resources, and evaluation champions who are willing and able to promote evaluative thinking. Process variables refer to the extent that evaluation implementation, management, and communication support learning and capacity building. These include the systematic use of an evaluation capacity building plan, the establishment of an evaluation advisory group, the building of alliances with evaluation champions, and the provision of incentives to participate in evaluation.

### **3.5 Process use as constructivist and experiential learning**

This section considers the type of learning that is likely to have occurred as a result of process use. It provides a context for considering how evaluators' intent and practice regarding process use may be explained through the adoption of a learning orientated approach to evaluation.

Process use infers that learning has occurred for stakeholders through their participation in the evaluation process and through the meanings they construct from this. Such inference indicates that process use constitutes both experiential and constructivist learning. According to constructivist learning theory, learning is a socio-cultural process that occurs through persons interacting within physical, social, and cultural contexts (Cranton, 2006; Schunk, 2009). Within these interactions, the learner interprets their experience through drawing upon existing meanings associated with phenomena. Learning occurs as existing thoughts, knowledge, and beliefs are either validated or reorganised through this process (Cobb, 2005; Fosnot, 2005; Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Mezirow, 1991).

Learning is mediated through language, communicated meaning, and the sharing and interpretation of experience (Cranton, 2006).

Process use is constructivist learning as it occurs when stakeholders construct and derive understanding through engaging in evaluative processes (Amo & Cousins, 2007). That is, process use occurs when stakeholders derive meaning through and from the actual conduct of an evaluation (Preskill et al., 2003).

According to experiential learning theory, learners construct meaning through their experience of phenomena, and learn as they reflect on the meaning of their experience (Jackson & MacIsaac, 1994; Lewis & Williams, 1994; Marsick & Watkins, 1990). To develop meaning, learners draw on and adapt the knowledge and experience they bring to the learning setting (Jackson & MacIsaac, 1994; Lewis & Williams, 1994; Marsick & Watkins, 1990). Reflection on experience is therefore required to learn from experience (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Boyd & Fales, 1983). Reflection is facilitated through learning strategies that utilize discourse, dialogue, and questioning (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 1998). Process use is experiential learning as the concept describes the learning that resides within the process of evaluation (Forss et al., 2002). It is the learning that occurs for stakeholders through their involvement in any phase of the evaluation process (Preskill et al., 2003). It results from “...experiential learning and reflection” (Johnson, 1998, p.94).

### **Learning orientated evaluation approach**

Evaluators’ intent and practice regarding process use may be explained if evaluators adopt a learning orientated approach to evaluation. Such an approach is intentionally participatory, dialogical, and reflexive, and therefore likely to facilitate process use. If an evaluator believes that evaluation should itself be a learning process, intent to achieve process use would be understandable. Expectancy that learning orientated practices will lead to desired learning outcomes may also help to explain practices adopted. Learning outcomes derived through process use may be sought by evaluators because these outcomes satisfy values, beliefs, aspirations, or traditions of importance to them. These outcomes may also be important for evaluators given the context of specific evaluations or the context of their practice more generally.

Learning orientated evaluators do not assume that stakeholders will learn through just being involved in evaluation. Rather, they are purposeful in identifying the learning needs of stakeholders and ensuring these are addressed through the evaluation (Preskill, 2008; Preskill et al., 2003). They may educate stakeholders about the potential for process use so roles and expectations within the evaluation process can be established accordingly (Cummings, 2002). Any final reporting of findings may be just the “...last step in the entire learning experience” (Taut, 2007, p. 15).

Learning orientated evaluation is underpinned by constructivist and experiential learning theory. The evaluator understands that learning through evaluation is mediated by the knowledge and experience that stakeholders bring to the process (Preskill & Torres, 1999a; Rossman & Rallis, 2000). They understand that evaluation facilitates learning by enabling stakeholders to critically examine, and revise as appropriate, the values, beliefs, assumptions, and meanings they have about themselves and the evaluand (King, 2008; Preskill & Torres, 1999a; Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2001). The learning orientated evaluator therefore sees the evaluation process as a continuous cycle of critical reflection on action (Preskill, 1994, 2008; Preskill & Torres, 2000; Schwandt, 2005). Critical inquiry is understood to be foundational to the knowledge generated (Rossman & Rallis, 2000).

Under a learning orientated approach, evaluative questioning is used to challenge, test, and validate existing understanding, meaning and assumptions (Preskill & Torres 1999; Rossman & Rallis, 2000). Dialogue is a generative mechanism that facilitates critical reflection (Buckmaster, 1999; Preskill, 2008; Schwandt, 2005), and produces knowledge in the context of its use (Rossman & Rallis, 2000). Evaluation data is used to clarify, reinforce, reframe, or change existing assumptions, beliefs, and understanding (Preskill & Torres, 1999a; Rossman & Rallis, 2000; Torres, Preskill, & Piontek, 2005). The evaluation process has the potential to facilitate transformative learning if the learner fundamentally changes how they arrange their understanding of phenomena (Cranton, 2006; Illeris, 2007; Mezirow, 1990).

Learning orientated evaluators understand that evaluation occurs within a larger learning system (King, 2007). They assist organizations to develop structures and processes that support continuous inquiry and improvement (King, 2007; Preskill & Torres, 1999; Torres et al., 2005), and which transform individual level learning from evaluation into organizational level learning (Preskill et al., 2003; Torres et al., 2005). Evaluation is

responsive to organizational practices and needs (Preskill & Torres, 1999; Torres, 1994; Torres et al., 2005), and the evaluation process is integrated as far as possible into day-to-day organizational operations and responsibilities (Rossman & Rallis, 2000).

A learning orientated approach to evaluation actively uses the process to raise questions, and is orientated to making new discoveries. The approach may therefore provide a greater range of possible solutions to problems compared to more instrumental, problem-based approaches under the objectivist tradition (Rossman & Rallis, 2000). As far as possible, the learning orientated evaluator is intentional in reintegrating evaluation back into the responsibilities of program staff and leaders. This compares to practice under the objectivist tradition where evaluation tends to be separated from the day-to-day management and implementation of programs (Rossman & Rallis, 2000).

### **3.6 Process use and evaluation capacity building**

The conceptual relationship between process use and evaluation capacity building is clarified in this section. This analysis informs my later consideration of why evaluators might be intentional in using the evaluation process to build the evaluation capacity of stakeholders, a form of process use.

Process use may be the “...conceptual cousin” (Amo & Cousins, 2007, p.6) of other concepts that describe outcomes that occur through the evaluation process. Evaluation capacity building is one such outcome. Evaluation capacity is the “...organizational processes and practices that are in place to make a quality evaluation and its uses routine” (Cousins, Goh, & Lee, 2004, p. 107). The building of evaluation capacity broadly refers to the process of developing skills, infrastructure, and culture within organizations that facilitate and integrate evaluation into routine practice (King, 2007; Naccarella et al., 2007).

Process use has occurred when stakeholders learn to use the reasoning, values, and logic of evaluation through participating in the evaluation process (Patton, 1997). That is, it is the result of the evaluator having built evaluation capacity through the evaluation process (Patton, 2007). This conceptualization of process use differs from those who have described process use as intentionally used by evaluators to build capacity (Cousins et al., 2004; Fetterman, 2003; King, 2007; King & Stevahn, 2002). According to Patton (2007), these authors have confused the activity of evaluation capability building with the outcome

of this activity, which is process use. For example, Harnar and Preskill (2007) believe that evaluation capability building best describes the situation when the evaluator is intentional in building learning into the evaluation process. They see process use as more reflective of incidental or informal learning, and best thought of as an unintended side-effect of stakeholders' engagement in the evaluation process. However, Patton (2007) observes that while evaluation capacity building can be intended process use, not all intended process use involves capacity building. He cites the example where the evaluator has been intentional in developing shared program understanding or reinforcing the program through stakeholder participation, two outcomes he does not regard as evaluation capacity building. He also observes that not all evaluation capacity building is intentional, and that capacity building may indeed be a by-product of stakeholders' main interest in findings. Therefore, while the evaluator may be intentional in seeking evaluation capacity building, stakeholders may not share this intent, and any development of their capacity may be more of an implicit, rather than explicit process (Patton, 2007).

Also of relevance to this study is Patton's (2007) clarification that capacity building which occurs separately from the actual conduct of an evaluation is not process use. He reinforces that process use refers specifically to outcomes derived from stakeholders' engagement in an actual evaluation, and not, for example, when capacity building is undertaken as a discrete activity in its own right.

Intent and practice regarding process use is the focus of this study and I am primarily concerned with identifying and understanding examples of intentional process use. The distinction between intentional and non-intentional capacity building is therefore not directly considered in this study. However, clarification that process use is capacity 'built', rather than itself being capacity building, informs my later consideration of why evaluators may be intentional in seeking this type of process use.

### **3.7 Chapter summary**

The process use literature reviewed in this chapter informs later consideration of explanations for evaluators' intent and practice regarding process use. Different types of process use were initially described and categorized into three typologies: behavioural, cognitive, and attitudinal/affective. The typologies help to explain by describing the different forms of change, learning, and influence indicated by the different types, the level

of these impacts (individual, group, organizational), and the change mechanisms involved. It may be that evaluators' understanding of these processes and impacts helps to explain their intent and practice regarding different types of process use. The typologies also guide consideration of how outcomes linked to each type, may connect to underlying values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions of importance to evaluators, and therefore why they seek these outcomes through their practice.

The three conceptual models of process use reviewed in this chapter help to explain in ways similar to the typologies. The models describe factors and contexts that support process use, and therefore indicate practices for the evaluator should they intentionally seek to achieve it. Evaluators' understanding of the relationship between these factors, contexts, and practices may again help to explain practices intentionally adopted to achieve desired process use. Evaluators' belief that they have the capacity to shape enabling factors and contexts, and that adopted practices will be efficacious in doing this, may also be explanatory. Understanding how wider contextual factors can influence process use also guides my later consideration of how the practice context of participants may help to explain their intent and practice regarding process use.

Intent and practice may be more likely when the evaluator's practice is learning orientated. Such practice is participatory, dialogical, and reflexive, and likely to support process use. Expectancy by the evaluator that learning orientated practices will lead to desired process use outcomes may also help to explain their intentional adoption of these practices. Desired outcomes may be important to evaluators because they satisfy values, beliefs, aspirations, or traditions of importance to them, and because they are meaningful or important within the context of their practice.

Finally, clarification of the conceptual distinctions between process use and evaluation capacity building informs my later exploration of how and why evaluators might intentionally facilitate capacity development through the evaluation process. It provides insight into why capacity built might be important and meaningful to evaluators, and why they may consider certain practices efficacious in achieving it.



## *Chapter 4:*

### METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

This chapter details the conceptual framework of this study, that is, the epistemology, theoretical perspective, research methodology, and methods used. To demonstrate how the conceptual framework draws these constitutive elements together, the chapter begins with a brief restatement of the epistemology and theoretical perspective underpinning the study. The methodology, data collection method, and data analysis methods used are then detailed. The criteria used to ensure the quality of the research are presented followed by a discussion of how cross-cultural ethical issues were addressed.

#### **4.1 Conceptual framework**

The conceptual framework of this study informs and justifies the methodologies and methods used. It allows me to distinguish the epistemology informing my theoretical perspective, the theoretical perspective behind the methodology, the methodology underpinning the methods, and the methods used to collect and interpret data. The framework ensures that the methodology and methods used are consistent with the epistemological and ontological stance taken (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006c). It ensures that a mutually reinforcing relationship exists between the various elements that have shaped the study. These include my perspectives, existing theory, the methodology used, and the wider context within which the study exists (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

#### **Conceptual framework of this study**

The epistemological stance of constructivism and the theoretical perspective of interpretivism are adopted in this study. Epistemology is the theory of knowledge that underpins the research and is in turn embedded in the theoretical perspective and methodology (Crotty, 1998). The theoretical perspective describes the way that knowledge and reality (ontology) are interpreted and justifies the philosophical stance which supports the methodology and knowledge claims made (Crotty, 1998). The assumptions about knowledge and reality that underpin the conceptual framework in turn support the research

methodology. The methodology provides the strategy that underpins data collection and analysis and links the methods back to the research purpose (Crotty, 1998; Henwood, 1996). The methodology used in this study integrates naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and reflexive methodology (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). Qualitative, in-depth interviews were used to collect data. The data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and then later re-examined through reflexive interpretation (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000).

Overall, the integrated methodology provides the framework and strategy for the data collection and data analysis methods used. It balances empirical and interpretivist research concerns while ensuring that the research design as a whole is conceptually coherent.

## **4.2 Epistemological stance and theoretical perspective**

This study treats process use as a sensitizing concept that may have different meanings and manifestations for different evaluators working in different contexts. The assumption is made that there may be multiple potential explanations for evaluators' intent and practice regarding process use. Constructivism and interpretivism therefore provide an appropriate conceptual framework for the study.

Through the epistemological stance of constructivism, I contend that phenomena can only be understood through the various contextual influences, assumptions, and lenses that people bring to their experience of them, and how they interpret and make sense of their experiences. It is accepted that process use may be understood differently by different people, and that multiple perspectives and realities regarding process use may exist.

The theoretical perspective of interpretivism asserts that knowledge results from our interpretations of phenomena. Interpretations are embedded in and influenced by different social, historical, and cultural traditions. Developing knowledge and understanding is a subjective process, and there may be multiple ways of knowing about and experiencing phenomena. Through this study, I seek to re-examine what is known about process use, and accept the possibility that alternative meanings and interpretations regarding the concept may be identified.

### 4.3 Methodology

This section describes the integration of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and reflexive methodology (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000) within this study.

#### Naturalistic inquiry

Naturalistic inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1982) is based on a constructivist and interpretivist account of phenomena, and therefore provides an appropriate methodology for this study. However, rather than describe a specific methodology, naturalistic inquiry is best understood as a “...paradigm of inquiry” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p.233). It provides a model for conducting research and evaluation based on epistemological and ontological assumptions regarding the nature of social phenomena. These assumptions or “...axioms” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p.233) concern: the “...nature of reality” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p.237), the “...inquirer-object relationship”, the “...nature of truth statements”, the “...attribution/explanation of action” (p. 238), and the “...role of values in inquiry” (p. 238).

Under the reality axiom, the possibility of a single reality is rejected. Rather, there are “...multiple intangible realities” (p. 237) which may be understood, yet not predicted or controlled through research. The assumption is made in this study that process use only exists through the consciousness of those who experience it and how they interpret and understand these experiences. My goal is to make evaluators’ intent and practice to achieve process use understandable given the meaning and importance of the concept to them.

Under the inquirer-object relationship axiom, interaction and mutual influence between the inquirer and the inquired is assumed. The concept of process use embodies this assumption. The interview data used in this study is understood as having been shaped by the interview process, by participants’ interpretation of the process, and by their response to it.

Regarding the nature of truth, the naturalistic researcher builds knowledge that is “...idiographic” (p.238). This means that knowledge is bound by time and context and is specific to individual cases. Differences rather than similarities between cases are of most interest. Rather than make claims generalizing from my findings, the context within which participants practiced evaluation is described in depth so the reader may themselves assess

the transferability of the findings to other contexts of interest or understanding to them (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Regarding the explanation or attribution of behaviour, the naturalistic researcher assumes that behaviour cannot be satisfactorily understood or explained as a consequence of linear cause-and-effect relationships between variables. The potential for an effect to precede a cause is always recognized (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 142). For example, an evaluator's prior understanding that findings use is more likely if stakeholders are engaged in the evaluation process, may lead them to adopt participatory practices in anticipation of eventual findings use. The naturalistic researcher also assumes that in any setting, multiple elements will interact in numerous, unpredictable, and mutually shaping ways, and that these elements and interactions will themselves be shaped by context. Phenomena therefore occur as a consequence of "...mutual simultaneous shaping" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 151-152) and can only be explained through understanding contextual enablers and constraints. This study examines how evaluators' intent and practice makes sense when there is understanding of the contexts within which they practice evaluation, and of the explanatory factors that exist and interact within these contexts.

The naturalistic researcher assumes that social inquiry is unavoidably influenced by values in at least four ways (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). First, the values of the inquirer frame and focus the inquiry. Second, the paradigm selected to guide the inquiry is value influenced, and the paradigm itself shapes the investigation. Third, the theory and methods used to collect, analyse, and interpret data are value influenced and in turn influence the inquiry. Fourth, the values used to characterize aspects of the social, behavioural, organizational, and human context of the inquiry also influence it. Any understanding or explanation of phenomena will always in part be interpretive, and will be influenced by the researcher's intent, experience, judgement, and insight (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The reflexivity adopted throughout this thesis acknowledges the impact of my values on all aspects of this study.

### **Reflexive methodology**

Despite the utility of naturalistic inquiry for this study, further methodological questions need to be addressed, specifically those arising from ongoing tensions between the constructed and the real, and the use of social science to describe, interpret, and explain.

Reflexive methodology (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000) provides an approach for dealing with these tensions by integrating empiricist and interpretivist research principles and practices. Following the theoretical perspective of interpretivism, the approach is appropriately used within this study. It endorses the empirical rigor needed to satisfy interpretivist qualitative research criteria, while also mandating the critical and interpretative depth demanded by postmodernism.

Reflexive methodology integrates what Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) call the “...four principal thought styles” (p. 288): empiricism, hermeneutics, critical theory, and postmodernism. The reflexive researcher attends to the core principles of each style so that the research approach adopts a satisfactory mid-ground between assuming external reality and assuming that all knowledge is constructed and interpreted. Such balance avoids the limitations or excesses that can occur in research should any one philosophical position dominate. Interpretivism is drawn upon to avoid overly detailed, simplistic, or obvious findings, while an empiricist lens avoids findings that are overly influenced by the concerns, criticisms, or agenda of interpretivism (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). Equal attention is given to empirical analysis as well as to the “...perceptual, cognitive, theoretical, linguistic, (inter)textual, political, and cultural” (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000, p. 6) elements that shape knowledge development.

A reflexive approach regards language to be constructed through interactions situated in context and therefore being of limited validity in depicting reality. However, it is also recognized that when interpreted with appropriate caution, language can be descriptive of “...individual and social reality” (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000, p. 244). Rather than take a pure empiricist or pure constructivist view on the validity of language, reflexive methodology treats language as providing “...perspectivist mirroring” (p. 257). Language provides a view of the world that does not totally depict reality yet is not totally dissociated from tangible phenomena. Therefore, while the data and the descriptions of process use generated from my interviews are interpreted and constructed, the data is regarded as describing the social reality of process use for evaluators and their understanding and experience of this.

#### **4.4 Data collection method**

The data collection method used in this research reflects the commitment to an interpretivist methodology, and relies on qualitative instruments. The role of the researcher is a central concern in such an approach and is discussed in the following section in relation to the data collection method. The appropriateness of a qualitative data collection method for this study is initially described, followed by detail of the in-depth interview method used.

#### **Qualitative research**

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Because of this, the qualitative approach used in this study provided the analytical and interpretive adaptability, flexibility, and reflexivity required for naturalistic inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A qualitative approach facilitated exploration of what lay behind the process use intent and practice of evaluators participating in this study (Ritchie, 2003). It enabled examination of how the meaning of process use for participants was constructed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Henwood, 1996; Stake, 1995; Warren, 2002), how meanings were embedded within individual cases and contexts, and of interrelationships existing within and between contexts (Stake, 1995).

#### *In-depth interviews*

Qualitative, in-depth interviews were used in this study to collect data. Researching process use requires participants to think deeply about their experience of evaluation (Preskill et al., 2003) and the use of in-depth interviews facilitated this. In-depth interviews are “...the only way to collect data” (Lewis, 2003, p. 58) when an understanding of context is needed to interpret decision-making, behaviour, and outcomes from complex phenomena. The method provides access to the thoughts and beliefs that shape participants’ experience, understanding, and meanings related to phenomenon (Hughes & Sharrock, 1990; Lewis, 2003; Warren, 2002). It enables the interviewer to understand how participants draw together and apply their conceptions “...in ways that illuminate both coherence and inconsistency...” (Soos, 2006, p. 143). The method enables multiple realities and meanings to be examined (Johnson, 2002), and to understand why participants, who may act in similar ways, do so for different reasons (Bevir, 2006).

Tracing learning and utility from evaluation is challenging. For example, people can easily forget where the knowledge and experience applied in decision making came from and if evaluation was influential in decisions made (Forss et al., 2002). Participants can struggle to retrospectively recall and identify process use (Forss et al., 2002; Preskill et al., 2003; Taut, 2007). This difficulty may be accentuated if process use was not initially intentionally sought by participants (Patton, 2007). In-depth interviews can provide access to knowledge that research participants may take for granted or may struggle to articulate (Johnson, 2002). The method was also intentionally adopted in this study for this reason.

#### *Narratives as a means to explain*

In-depth interviews have been described as a “...generated method” (Ritchie, 2003, p.36) as they require participants to reprocess their thoughts and to retell events, behaviour, and experiences related to phenomena. In this way, the use of in-depth interviews in this study enabled participants to provide detailed narratives of their experience of process use. These narratives provided a way for participants to bring together their experiences and beliefs to account for their intent and practice regarding process use. Through narrative, the theories that shaped participants’ intent and practice are revealed (Bevir, 2006). Behaviour is explained because we understand the meanings and beliefs that participants have about how and why certain behaviour leads to outcomes that are important to them (Bevir, 2006). These connections between beliefs, desires, and practice, and how they can be understood through narrative explanations, can be expressed in an abstract form as,

An action X was done because the agent held beliefs Y according to which doing X would fulfil a desire Z (Bevir, 2006, p. 286).

Narratives explain by identifying connections that are either “...conditional” or “...volitional” (Bevir, 2006, p. 286). Conditional connections show how themes and meanings embedded in context and behaviour determine interactions between actions, beliefs and aspirations and therefore become “...intelligible in the light of one another” (Bevir, 2006, p. 286). They illuminate why a person believes a certain action will fulfil one or more of their desires. Volitional connections describe how aspiration links to motivated action. They make it understandable why people move from aspiration, to intention to act, to action. Conditional and volitional connections generate different action options, with choice governed by will, the mechanism that ultimately determines behaviour (Bevir, 2006).

For example, an evaluator may believe, for any number of reasons, that they can build the evaluative capacity of stakeholders through engaging them in the evaluation process. They may believe capacity will be developed through specific practices, and that built capacity will enhance utilization through a range of mechanisms. For any number of reasons, utilization may be considered important. It may, for example, satisfy beliefs about what determines good evaluation. These various connections between belief, meaning, and aspiration may therefore help to explain the evaluator's intent to develop capacity through the evaluation process, and the practice they adopt to do so.

#### **4.5 Research participants**

This section details the procedures used to select and recruit participants to this study and the number and type of evaluators who took part.

##### **Participant selection**

The evaluators participating in this study were selected on the basis of their difference to each other on three factors, gender, ethnicity (Māori, non-Māori), and working context (independent consultant, working within government, working within a private company/consultancy). This approach ensured a sufficiently diverse group to allow for the situationally and contextually determined nature of process use meaning and manifestation (Patton, 2007).

By intentionally selecting participants on the basis of difference, the selection approach was purposive (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1997; Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003). The approach aligned to the principle of "...symbolic representation" (Ritchie, Lewis, et al., 2003, p. 78) as participants were purposefully selected on the basis of factors considered relevant to the study. It was assumed that gender, ethnicity, and workplace environment would differentiate participants in respect to the context of their evaluation practice, and that these differences would enable exploration of process use as a situated and contextually determined phenomena.

In addition to evaluator diversity, participant selection was based on four additional eligibility criteria: self-identification as an evaluator, having undertaken evaluation in the last 12 months, some level of stakeholder participation in evaluation undertaken, and at least

five years practice experience. These criteria were guided by the research objectives and relevant literature, and were limited in number to avoid an overly complex selection process (Ritchie, Lewis, et al., 2003). As this study examines explanations for the intention to achieve process use, the participatory practice and experience criteria were used to increase the likelihood of selecting evaluators who would recognize and seek it within their practice. The participatory practice criterion followed evidence that some level of meaningful stakeholder participation in evaluation is required for process use to occur (Amo & Cousins, 2007; Forss et al., 2002; Preskill et al., 2003). The experience criterion was based on evidence that evaluators' awareness of process use increases with level of evaluator experience and knowledge (Harnar & Preskill, 2007). Restricting eligibility to those having conducted some form of participatory evaluation in the last 12 months was a response to indications that participants may find it difficult to recall process use if the recall timeframe is too long (Preskill et al., 2003).

The participatory practice criterion was not defined beyond the self-report of participants that evaluations conducted in the last 12 months involved some level of stakeholder participation. Greater definition would have required more complex and potentially invalid screening questions. For example, the level or nature of participatory practice could well vary for any participant across different projects, and therefore a valid rating of participatory intent or practice was likely to be difficult to achieve.

While the participatory and experience criteria were used to increase the likelihood of selecting evaluators able to identify and discuss process use, the eligibility criteria did not exclude evaluators who may have considered process use to be less relevant, important, or intentional within their practice. A range of understanding, consciousness, experience, and intention regarding process use was evident across the 24 evaluators who participated in the study.

### **Research participants**

From a total of 25 evaluators approached to participate in this research, 24 took part. The one evaluator who declined to participate could not commit the necessary time to the study. The "...parent population" (Ritchie et al., 2003, p.86) from which participants were recruited was defined as all practicing evaluators in Aotearoa New Zealand, known to me through my professional networks, as well as those identified through a search of publically

accessible documents and web sites. Documents searched included the publically listed membership list of anzea (Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association) and web based material, for example, published evaluations. The internet sites of private and public sector organizations, identifying themselves as undertaking evaluation, were also searched.

The 24 evaluators constituted an appropriate number of participants given qualitative research conventions. Participant numbers are generally limited in qualitative research for two key reasons. First, qualitative research does not make claims regarding prevalence or incidence (Patton, 2002) and analytical power is not related to the number of participants (Ritchie et al., 2003). Second, qualitative data is typically highly detailed and voluminous in nature and participant numbers are limited so that the researcher can give appropriate analytical attention to the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ritchie et al., 2003).

A recruitment matrix was developed based on the three main selection criteria of gender, ethnicity, and working context. The matrix below details how the 24 interviews were distributed across the selection criteria (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Recruitment matrix for in-depth interviews**

	<b>Independent</b>	<b>Government</b>	<b>Private Company</b>
<b>Non-Māori female</b>	6	3	3
<b>Māori female</b>	3	-	-
<b>Non-Māori male</b>	1	3	2
<b>Māori male</b>	2	1	-
<i>Total</i>	12	7	5

An attempt was made to recruit more than one participant within each of the ‘cells’ created by the recruitment matrix, and to achieve some difference between participants within each cell. For example, within the Government cell, participants were selected from a range of government departments. Achieving such diversity enabled a greater range of explanatory factors to be examined, as well as how factors were related and the nature and direction of their influence (Ritchie et al., 2003).

While the participants recruited to this study are not intended to be representative of all evaluators in Aotearoa New Zealand, participants were selected to broadly reflect the

practitioner population. The skew to female participants reflects the female dominated nature of local evaluation practice. While anzea membership does not necessarily reflect the total evaluator population locally, approximately 80% of members are female (anzea membership database, 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2011). Membership of anzea may be considered a proxy for self-identification as an evaluator. Attendances at local evaluation events, including the annual anzea national conference, provide further evidence that many local evaluators are female. The skew to independent evaluators reflects the fact that many experienced evaluators choose to work this way. In an effort to represent Māori diversity, six Māori participants were recruited, while another took part in a pilot interview.

The geographical location of evaluators participating in the study was not anticipated to be relevant in relation to the research objectives. The greatest number of anzea members work in Auckland and Wellington (anzea, membership database, 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2011) and the participants were drawn from these two cities. Conducting the interviews in these locations was also convenient for me, given my own residence in Auckland, and relatively easy travel between Auckland and Wellington.

### **Recruitment procedure**

Evaluators fitting the selection criteria were initially contacted by telephone and their interest in participating in the study ascertained. The purpose of the study, the requirements of participation, and eligibility criteria, were explained. Those eligible and interested were sent the research information sheet (see Appendix A) and a summary description of the interview process (see Appendix B). Follow-up phone calls were made to address any questions arising, and to ensure that participants were satisfied with the requirements of their participation. A time and place to conduct the interview was negotiated with those agreeing to participate. All details were confirmed through a follow up email. Participants read and signed a consent form immediately prior to the commencement of all interviews (see Appendix C).

While the recruitment process for Māori participants was broadly similar to that used for non-Māori, the process also acknowledged and sought to address the cross-cultural ethical issues that arose through my seeking Māori participation in the study (see Section 4.9).

The 24 interviews were conducted between September 2010 and August 2011 and in three groups. Five interviews were initially conducted in Auckland during September and October 2010, and then a further nine in Wellington in early December 2010. A further ten interviews were conducted between June and August 2011 in Auckland and Wellington. Conducting the interviews in these groups enabled recruitment to be progressively targeted to achieve the desired diversity of participants. Preliminary data analysis prior to each subsequent group of interviews was possible as was some exploration of emerging themes within later interviews.

#### **4.6 Interview design and process**

The Māori and non-Māori interviews were conducted using different interview schedules (see Appendix D and E). The following section explains why this approach was taken, and details how the schedules were developed. The interviewing approach, structure of questions, and elicitation and probing techniques used within the interviews, are also described.

##### **Interview schedules**

While different, the Māori and non-Māori interview schedules provided a similar structure to the topics covered in each interview (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). As the interviews were semi-structured, the eventual order that topics were discussed was flexible and depended on participants' responses to preceding questions. Each interview was also responsive to emerging issues and themes, prompting new questions and areas of inquiry. The schedules therefore guided, rather than prescribed, the course of each interview (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003).

While the interview approach was flexible and responsive, the topics to be discussed were intentionally structured to follow a logical order and chronology (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003). Interviews began by exploring each participant's journey to becoming an evaluator, how long they had practiced evaluation, and the nature of their workplace. These initial topics were relatively easy for participants to discuss and were intended to build their trust and confidence (Schwarz & Oyserman, 2001). The interview progressively became more challenging. Questions examined participants' understanding of evaluation, what they considered good evaluation, their reasons and aspirations for practicing evaluation, and any

philosophical, methodological, or theoretical frameworks underpinning their practice. These questions developed understanding of the evaluation practice of each participant and through this, established a basis for examining reasons and for providing explanations for intent and practice regarding process use. For example, an evaluator may consider good evaluation as somehow enhancing stakeholder capacity. Given these beliefs, their intent and deliberate use of the evaluation process to develop the ability of stakeholders to think and act evaluatively, a form of process use, is understandable.

The first part of each interview also explored whether participants understood or had experienced the occurrence of process use through their work. Understanding and experience was then examined in more depth through each participant identifying and discussing specific types of process use which they considered important and intentional within their recent practice. The different approaches used with non-Māori and Māori participants to undertake this part of the interview are discussed below.

*Process use intention and practice (non-Māori participants)*

A sorting exercise was used with non-Māori participants to focus the interview on examples of process use which they considered important and intentional. Each participant was shown written descriptions of 11 types of process use described in the literature (see Appendix F) and asked to select those which they recognized as having occurred through their practice within the last 12 months. Participants were asked to consider the outcomes described in each example, regardless of how they might have understood or labelled them at the time they occurred. The sorting process was therefore used as an elicitation technique (Johnson & Weller, 2002), and the examples themselves as sensitizing concepts to orientate participants to outcomes previously described in the literature as process use.

For each outcome identified, participants were asked to consider whether they had intentionally sought the outcome through their practice. They were then asked to sort identified intentional outcomes by those considered more and less important. Participants were finally invited to sort identified important outcomes from most to least important, or in any other way meaningful to them. When this final sort was undertaken based on importance, the example considered most important was focused on for the remainder of the interview. When the final sort was undertaken on some other basis, the goal was still to

derive an example considered intentional and important and which could be discussed in-depth.

After the sorting and selection process, participants were asked to describe the evaluation within which their selected type of process use had occurred. Questions then examined why the selected type was considered important, the extent it had been planned, practices adopted to achieve it, and subsequent outcomes.

Three participants chose to discuss their intention to achieve process use at the level of their practice overall, while two drew from a single evaluation to describe multiple types. These participants were resistant to discussing process use through a single example as they identified multiple examples as being important and intentional within their practice.

The sorting process was only used in the study after careful consideration of its benefits and risks, and a piloting process. I anticipated that each interview would only provide enough time to discuss one example of process use in-depth, and saw value in a process that would relatively quickly identify an appropriate example. Preskill et al. (2003) also advised that “...innovative questioning techniques” (p. 439) may be required when researching process use, particularly given its complex nature and the general difficulties of researching evaluation use.

There was some risk that the sorting process might have the effect of predetermining or suggesting for participants what process use was meant to look like. Such effect would undermine the epistemological and ontological assumptions of the study. A more open-ended approach to focusing the interview, that did not use the sorting process, was therefore piloted. However, my pilot participant found it difficult to identify and focus on specific examples of process use. The decision was therefore made to retain the sorting process and to focus on ensuring that its use in the study was conceptually coherent. It was not assumed that participants would recognize or understand selected examples as process use. The process enabled participants to eliminate examples not experienced, and to identify types different to those shown. Participants were still required to interpret, give meaning, select, and sort the examples on the basis of their experience. All were asked to provide a narrative account of their understanding and experience of the examples discussed, a process that enabled them to describe process use in ways that were meaningful to them (Riessman, 2002). Open-ended questions were used to ensure that participants were able to communicate their understanding and

experience in their own language and terms (Charmaz, 2002). Following each interview, participants were invited to reflect on the interview process itself, and this enabled them to consider whether the interview had itself shaped their understanding of process use and the examples discussed.

#### *Process use intention and practice (Māori participants)*

I anticipated that the sorting process would be particularly inappropriate for Māori participants given that the examples of process use used were drawn from western literature. While the risks of using the sorting process with non-Māori participants appeared manageable, I was less confident about this for Māori, particularly as their practice was more likely to be informed by cultural frameworks. Piloting the sorting process with a Māori evaluator confirmed these concerns and informed the more open-ended approach eventually adopted. The pilot participant described her evaluation practice as shaped by her values and beliefs as Māori and core to who she was as Māori. She found it difficult to relate to the examples of process use shown as she felt they described evaluation as a set of externally determined methods and processes. The outcomes described in the examples read like consequences of this externally determined practice, rather than outcomes that were integral to who she was and what she did, as Māori. The open-ended approach subsequently used with Māori still sought to focus the second half of the interview on examples of process use considered important and intentional, however, it was not assumed that these would be framed or understood by these participants as process use.

#### **Use of probes**

Interpretive research requires rich description and the researcher therefore needs to engage with participants in a way that facilitates “...elaboration, clarification, reflection, and illustration” (Soos, 2006, p. 136). Probes were used extensively throughout all interviews to meet this challenge, and to enhance the level of exploration and explanation achieved (Legard et al., 2003). Probes were particularly used to examine connections between intent and practice and values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions of importance to evaluators. To facilitate elaboration on initial responses, “amplificatory probes” (Legard et al., 2003, p.150) were used, for example, “Can you tell me more about that?” Reasons for importance, feeling or meaning were explored using “exploratory probes” (p. 150), for example, “Why

was that important to you?” The use of “explanatory probes” (p. 151), for example, “What understanding did you have of how practice would produce that outcome?”, enabled understanding of the thinking behind behaviour. Clarity of terms, language, sequences of event, and relationships between events described, were advanced through the use of “clarification probes” (p.151).

Frequent use of the probe “Why is that important to you?” was influenced by personal values research in marketing, and Means End theory (Gutman, 1982). Means End theory is a model of consumer behaviour which asserts that consumers choose products on the basis that they have attributes that are instrumental in achieving desired consequences, which are in turn an expression of personal values. The theory is used to specify the rationale for why consequences are important, namely personal values, and how these explain consumer choices.

Laddering was used throughout the interviews and in combination with the other probes described. Laddering is an interview technique used in marketing research and based on Means End theory (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). It involves repeated use of the “Why is that important to you?” probe to uncover why attributes or consequences are important to participants. The appropriateness of Means End theory and laddering to this study, and to interpretivist explanations of behaviour, is evident. Rather than choose products, evaluators may be considered to choose evaluation practices based on their understanding of how the attributes of these practices are likely to provide consequences or outcomes of importance. Underlying values, beliefs, aspirations, traditions, and context are likely to explain importance. The theory is therefore similar to the use of narratives to identify the conditional and volitional connections that provide explanations for behaviour.

## **Interview process**

Face-to-face interviews help to build the trust and engagement with participants necessary for exploring complex phenomena in-depth (Johnson, 2002). The goal in this research was to engage each participant in a reciprocated conversation between equals, rather than conduct a highly structured question and answer session (Platt, 1981). However, as interviewer, I inevitably occupied a more powerful position within the conversation compared to my participants (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). It was through and from these positions that each interview took place (Warren, 2002). The nature and purpose of the

interviews was also influenced by my research agenda. Conversations within each interview were therefore “...purposive” (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006a, p. 117), shaped through the interviewing process and participants’ interpretations and responses to this (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Charmaz, 2002; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006a). Each interview provided an interpreted and constructed, rather than literal, description of process use (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Further, all descriptions of behaviour are to some extent selected and limited, shaped by and made meaningful by context (Hughes & Sharrock, 1990). Therefore all descriptions of process use derived in this study are understood to be “...defeasible” (Hughes & Sharrock, 1990, p.112). They can always be understood or interpreted differently, should at some stage, further description, justification, detail, or understanding of context be possible.

#### **4.7 Data analysis method**

The following section initially provides an overview of the data analysis method undertaken in this study, and then describes the data analysis process in detail.

##### **Overview of data analysis process**

Data analysis was conducted in two stages and distinct phases within each stage. Collectively, the stages and phases provided a hierarchical structure to the analysis (Spencer, Ritchies, & O’Connor, 2003). In Stage One, and following the idiographic focus of naturalist inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), individual stories were first written from the transcribed data of each interview. The data were then analysed using thematic analysis, a systematic process for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns, themes, and meanings within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While the thematic analysis process undertaken was primarily guided by Braun and Clarke (2006), the analytical procedures described by Miles and Huberman (1994), and for grounded theory (Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), were also drawn upon. The thematic analysis process followed distinct phases of management, description, and explanation (Spencer et al., 2003). All data coding was undertaken in NVivo, a computer program that supports qualitative data analysis and management. NVivo was used because the program provides for the efficient and systematic management of large qualitative data sets, and enables more complex levels of data analysis.

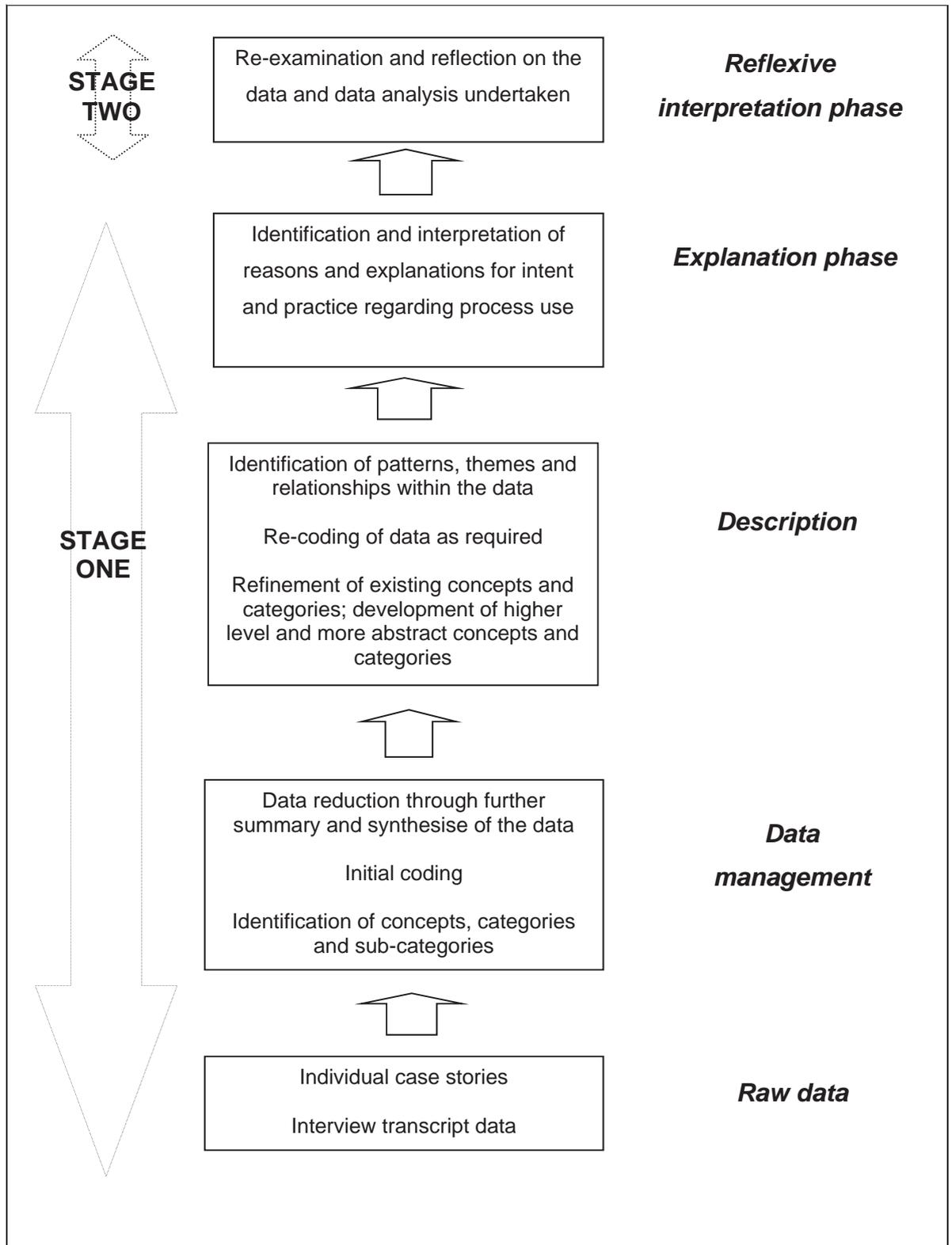
The analysed data from Stage One were re-examined in Stage Two using reflexive interpretation (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). Given my limited experience in interpretive analysis, and following Alvesson and Skolberg's advice that reflective methodology should be adapted to skills and experience, the level of reflexive interpretation undertaken was modest in scope and ambition.

Figure 1 over-page shows all stages and phases of the data analysis process. While a hierarchical structure is indicated, the analysis process moved recursively between the different stages and phases as required (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### *Thematic analysis*

Thematic analysis involves the coding of interview transcript data at conceptual and higher categorical levels. Coding is used to describe data conceptually (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Glaser, 1992), and to assign meaning to it (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this study, "...initial codes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88) were first used to describe and give meaning to specific incidents in the data relative to the research questions. Initial codes are similar to descriptive or first level coding described by Miles and Huberman (1994). At the next level of coding, themes were identified that captured and represented higher levels of patterns or groupings within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes are similar to what Glaser (1992) calls categories, and are used to describe higher level and more abstracted concepts. Sub-categories were also identified and used to represent categories of higher categories.

**Figure 1: Phases of data analysis process**



The concepts and categories developed in the analysis were structured using a thematic framework (Miles & Huberman, 1994) (see Appendix G). The initial framework comprised a provisional list of concepts and categories that were developed from the research objectives and following my initial reading of the first five interview transcripts. The framework was first developed as a Microsoft word document and then reproduced and developed further throughout the analysis in NVivo as a tree node framework.

The analytical process was guided by the assumption that data analysis is an interpretative, rather than objective process (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Charmaz, 2006; Dey, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Warren, 2002). Concepts and categories developed were considered conditional and contextualized (Charmaz, 2006; Dey, 2004). Inevitably, they were shaped by the values, beliefs, knowledge, needs, and expectations that I brought to the study and to the analysis process more specifically (Charmaz, 2009; Dey, 2004). The concepts and categories developed were used to inform my interpretation of the data rather than to develop theory (Dey, 2004). Understanding was developed through attaching meaning to the various incidents identified within the data, and these meanings were shaped by the context and purpose of the research (Dey, 2004). I was reflexive throughout the process in examining how my personal perspectives and assumptions may be influencing my data interpretation. Each stage and phase of the analytical process is described in detail below.

## **Stage One data analysis**

### *Case stories*

All interviews were transcribed verbatim by a contracted transcriber. As recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006), I then read and edited each transcript against the original audio recording to improve accuracy. While the original transcripts were of high quality, further editing was required to correct phases and terms specific to each interview or to evaluation more generally. Identifying references were also removed. Overall, I believe the two-stage listening process, first by the transcriber and then again by myself, led to a high level of transcript accuracy.

My reading of each transcript during the editing process was “...active” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87) as I consciously looked for initial themes, patterns, and meaning within the

data. While lengthy and laborious, the editing process was therefore an important part of my initial engagement with the data.

The final transcripts were returned to each participant for their review, and follow-up telephone interviews were conducted to receive their feedback (see below). A number of participants requested minor edits to the transcripts, typically to correct language or terms used, to clarify meaning or intent, or to better protect anonymity.

Individual case stories were then written from each of the interview transcripts (see Appendix H). The stories were used to present initial explanations for intent and practice regarding process use. During the writing of each story, emerging explanations were tested and developed by constantly examining them against new incidents in the data, and by searching for factors that either supported or refuted them. In this way, the analytical process used reflected the constant comparison method of data analysis (Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Verbatim quotes were used to directly represent the language of each participant. Care was taken in each story to distinguish my interpretations from any explanations directly provided by participants.

Each participant's case story was sent back to them for review. Participants essentially reviewed my interpretations of their interpretations of their intent and practice regarding process use (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Using a simple topic guide (see Appendix I), follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with each participant to receive their feedback. The interviews enabled participants to revise and add further to their story if they wished. The process was also used to address any questions or gaps in my understanding that had arisen during the writing of each story. Through this process, my depth of understanding was extended (Charmaz, 2002).

The level of feedback and further data generated by the follow-up telephone interview process ranged from relatively small text edits through to more substantive edits and additions. While meanings or inferences drawn were expanded or clarified in some cases, no participants disagreed with the story being told or required significant revisions.

The checking process conducted reflected the "...member checks" (p. 247) and verification process advocated within naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Such a process is also recommended by Schwartz-Shea (2006) given the complexity of interpretivist research and the importance of correctly understanding "...tacit knowledge,

insider vocabularies, and/or positioned understandings” (p. 104). Dey (2004) also advocates that a feedback process is undertaken to ensure that interpretations provide the “...most meaningful way of managing the data” (p. 92), and to potentially extend readings of it.

The follow-up interviews were audio-taped and the data was used to revise or develop each story as appropriate. The final stories were returned to each participant and they were able to provide further feedback if they wished. While some requested further minor edits, most chose not to provide further feedback other than to acknowledge receipt of their final story.

In summary, the stories provide a provisional synthesis of each interview (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In drawing out initial explanatory inferences about process use, they help to move the analysis towards the descriptive and explanatory stages of the analytical process. Read collectively, they also help to identify emerging similarities and differences across the participants.

The stories are a critical part of the naturalistic inquiry conducted in this thesis as they provide a complete ideographic narrative of each interview conducted. The analysis progressively structures and synthesizes the data at increasingly higher levels of conceptualization, a process that inevitably leads to some loss of individual story and voice. The depth and coherence of the individual accounts, available through reading each story, is also to some extent lost through the more synthesized level of reporting required in the thesis. For these reasons, the stories are presented in full as Appendices, and provide the primary evidence upon which my analysis builds. They are integral to this study and my ability to defend my interpretation of the data and the conclusions reached.

#### *Data management phase*

I re-read each of the first five interview transcripts, and using the thematic framework, coded each incident identified within the data to an existing concept or developed new concepts as necessary (Glaser, 1978, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The initial codes were assigned by considering what concept each incident referred to and what category or sub-category the concept fitted (Glaser, 1978, 1992). When required, incidents were coded to multiple concepts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The coding in this phase remained as close as possible to the surface meaning of what participants said and key terms and expressions

used (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Charmaz, 2002; Glaser, 1992; Ritchie, Spencer, & O'Connor, 2003). To ensure that each extract of text coded retained necessary context, the initial coding was mostly conducted using complete sentences or paragraphs.

New concepts were developed through comparing incidents in the data with existing coded incidents and considering whether they fitted existing concepts (Glaser, 1978, 1992). New categories and sub-categories were also developed when identified concepts did not fit those already existing (Glaser, 1978, 1992). Coding was therefore deductive, using concepts and categories initially developed, and inductive, as new codes and categories were identified within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through this process, the thematic framework evolved throughout the analysis process (Ritchie, Spencer, et al., 2003).

Table 2 shows extracts of data initially coded during the data management phase under the category of 'Values, Beliefs, Aspirations and Traditions'. The data was coded under the sub-category of 'Social Justice' and under the concept of 'Fairness/Justice.'

**Table 2: Data coded under concept of 'Fairness/Justice'**

Interview No.	Coded Data
4	...our kind of commitment to...social betterment if you like, to social justice, to making the world a better place...that is ultimately the reason we do it...
5	...[people say] I'm fair...that my evaluation work is fair so that people can see that I've kind of brought to the fore the challenges...[and] their successes...
7	...working in a regulatory organization...that has got legislation and powers...make sure we are doing it fairly and properly...there definitely is a justice principle underlying it and a fairness principle...
17	...And I guess underlying that is the whole social justice focus and wanting to reduce inequalities and all that sort of thing...
18	...I was excited [that an evaluator] could be employed by a government agency, or could be a consultant working in their own right...even be employed or find some way of doing a combination of pro bono and paid work...almost as a social agent for marginalized groups...
21	...I'm talking about a society in which Māori are fully participating citizens, where we don't have the social, economic, and educational disparity that we currently enjoy, where we are highly contributing alongside all other New Zealanders as Māori...
25	...[the] value position from where I come from and of being preoccupied with how do the majority get what is seen as access to reasonable public goods...

All the initial coding was undertaken directly on the interview transcripts and then the coded data was entered into Nvivo. This ensured that a paper copy of the coded data remained available if required. Copies were kept of the evolving thematic framework to evidence its development, and to ensure the availability of earlier versions.

In the last part of the data management phase, the coded data was reduced in volume through deleting unnecessary text. The transcript editing, verification, and coding process conducted in this phase was repeated for each of the three groups of interviews. Once all the interviews were coded within Nvivo at this level, the full data set was copied and saved as a separate Nvivo project. This ensured that a complete version of the data coded at this first level remained intact and accessible if required.

### *Description phase*

During this phase, the range of perceptions, views, experiences, and behaviours captured in the coded data were re-examined. As required, the concepts and categories were re-named, collapsed, or deleted so they more clearly discriminated the different dimensions of each phenomenon identified. Through this process, the conceptual hierarchy within the thematic framework became more defined, with higher level categories sitting above sub-categories and concepts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The higher level categories became more differentiating and interpretive (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ritchie et al., 2003; Spencer et al., 2003). The data coded under each concept and category were then re-examined to ensure they still fitted conceptually. Data were re-coded or moved to other concepts and categories as appropriate (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The data set at the completion of the descriptive accounts stage was again saved as a separate Nvivo project. This ensured the availability of a full version of the analysis, and provided evidence of the analytical movements that had occurred since the end of the data management stage.

Tables 3 and 3a over page shows extracts from the thematic framework at two points of time in the data analysis process (28/01/11 and 22/09/11). The tables show a selection of categories and concepts developed under two main areas of analysis: the values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions that underpinned participants' practice (Table 3), and their understanding and approach to evaluation (Table 3a). The respective categories and concepts show the analytical developments that occurred during the captured time period,

and prior to the point where the framework was developed further into higher levels of synthesis and categorization.

**Table 3: Extract from thematic framework (Values, beliefs, aspirations, traditions)**

<b>'Values, beliefs, aspirations, traditions'</b>					
<b>2.1. Social justice</b>		<b>2.2 Maori worldview</b>		<b>2.3 Democracy</b>	
<i>28/01/11</i>	<i>22/09/11</i>	<i>28/01/11</i>	<i>22/09/11</i>	<i>28/01/11</i>	<i>22/09/11</i>
2.1.1 Reciprocity	2.1.1 Reciprocity	2.2.1 Kaupapa Māori	2.2.1 Kaupapa Māori	2.3.1 Participation	2.3.1 Participation
2.1.2 Change	2.1.2 Change/make difference	2.2.2 Indigeneity	2.2.2 Indigeneity	2.3.2 Equality of representation	2.3.2. Equality of representation
2.1.3. Transformation	2.1.3. Transformation	2.2.3 Rangatiratanga	2.2.3 Rangatiratanga	2.3.3 Diversity	2.3.3 Diversity
2.1.4. Equality	2.1.4. Equality/equity	2.2.4 Empowerment	2.2.4 Empowerment	2.3.4 Voice	2.3.4 Voice
2.1.5 Diversity/multiplicity	2.1.5 Diversity/multiplicity	2.2.5 Contra western ideologies	2.2.5 Contra western ideologies	2.3.5 Critical analysis	2.3.5 Critical analysis
2.1.6 Social betterment	2.1.6 Social betterment/improvement		2.2.6 Respect/honour others	2.3.6 Reflexivity	2.3.6 Reflexivity
2.1.7 Feminist values	2.1.7 Feminist values		2.2.7 Whakapapa		2.3.7 Good governance
2.1.8 Democracy	2.1.8 Democracy		2.2.8 Whakawhauantanga		2.3.8 Accountability
	2.1.9 Do 'good'/help people		2.2.9 Past and future		
	2.1.10 Fairness/justice		2.2.10 Māori development		
	2.1.11 Well-being		2.2.11 Aroha love		
			2.2.12 Koha		
			2.2.13 Manaakitanga		
			2.2.14 Ako		

**Table 3a: Extract from thematic framework (Understanding and approach to evaluation)**

<b>'Understanding and approach to evaluation'</b>		
<b>3.2. Good evaluation</b>		
<i>28/01/11</i>	<i>22/09/11</i>	
3.2.1 Evaluative judgment/question	3.2.1 Is 'evaluative'	3.2.17 Is 'auditable'/rigorous
3.2.2 Is credible	3.2.2 Is credible	3.2.18 Enables organizational adaptation/development
3.2.3 Is used/has utilization	3.2.3 Is used/has utilization	3.2.19 Provides benefit/value
3.2.4 Deals with real world complexity	3.2.4 Deals with real world complexity	3.2.20 Is ethical
3.2.5 Transparent about values	3.2.5 Transparent about values/assumptions	3.2.21 Is reflexive/responsive
3.2.6. Transparent about evaluative reasoning	3.2.6 Addresses/identifies inequity	3.2.22 Is respectful/honouring
3.2.7 Accounts for inequity	3.2.7 Accounts for evaluation as an intervention	3.2.23 Policy relevance and utility
3.2.8 Accounts for evaluation as an intervention	3.2.8. Enables critical reflection	3.2.24 Undertakes triangulation
3.2.9. Enables systematic reflection	3.2.9 Is transformative	3.2.25 Meets needs
	3.2.10 Methods/design appropriate to the inquiry	3.2.26 Builds and maintains relationships
	3.2.11 Is participatory/collaborative	3.2.27 Has integrity
	3.2.12 Builds evaluation capability/capacity	3.2.28 Leads to Māori development
	3.2.13 Identifies/addresses important/right evaluation questions	3.2.29 Good project management
	3.2.14 Is accessible	
	3.2.15 Clear/concise/meaningful	
	3.2.16 'Gives' back	

<b>'Understanding and approach to evaluation'</b>		
<b>3.3. Philosophical/methodological orientation</b>		
<i>28/01/11</i>	<i>22/09/11</i>	
3.3.1 Methods focused	3.3.1 Methods focused	3.3.17 Learning orientated
3.3.2 Pragmatic eclectic	3.3.2 Pragmatic/eclectic	3.3.18 Kaupapa Māori
3.3.3 Utilization focused (participatory)	3.3.3 Utilization focused	3.3.19 Systems complexity/structural
3.3.4 Values focused	3.3.4 Values based	3.3.20 Quantitative
3.3.5 Judgment focused (explicitly 'evaluative')	3.3.5 Is 'evaluative'	3.3.21 Relationship driven/relational
3.3.6 Constructivist/interpretivist	3.3.6 Constructivist/interpretivist	3.3.22 Through Māori perspective/worldview
3.3.7 Empowerment/enabling	3.3.7 Empowerment/enabling/transformativ	3.3.23 Māori development
	3.3.8 Qualitative	3.3.24 Critical theory
	3.3.9 Community/people centred	3.3.25 Formative evaluation
	3.3.10 Democratic	3.3.26 Tikanga Māori
	3.3.11 Capability/capacity building	
	3.3.12 Post-positivist	
	3.3.13 Mixed method	
	3.3.14 Collaborative/participatory	
	3.3.15 Process driven	
	3.3.16 Knowledge management	

Using the memo writing function within Nvivo, I wrote conceptual memos throughout the data management and descriptive account phases (Charmaz, 2002; Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincon & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The memos were used to clarify and record my thinking regarding emerging concepts and categories within the data as well as key themes and issues. Table 4 over the page shows an extract of text taken from one of the interviews and a conceptual memo that was linked to the extract in NVivo. Table 5 shows a series of memos that were written in general response to themes emerging from the data analysis in a number of areas explored.

### *Explanation phase*

In this final phase of the Stage One analysis, possible explanations for participants' intent and practice regarding process use were identified through examining the patterns and relationships that existed between the many contributing factors identified in the data (Bevir, 2006; Hughes & Sharrock, 1990; Spencer et al., 2003). Explanations were initially examined using the practice context data derived from the first part of each interview. They were then explored at a sub-group level, with these analytical groups formed on the basis that group members selected the same or similar types of process use as important and intentional within their recent practice. The sub-group analysis enabled a focus to be maintained on individual perspectives and experience, thus satisfying the idiographic focus required for naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and the localized analysis demanded by postmodernism (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000).

**Table 4: Example of conceptual memo linked to interview text**

Extract of interview text	Conceptual memo
<p><i>I want you to sort these [process use types] in terms of intention and less intention...</i></p> <p>Okay. I'll explain what I've done. This pile here is probably completely intentional, and this pile here in the middle is more what I would argue rather...I see this as the mechanisms through which I intentionally achieve these things, these kinds of process uses...</p> <p>...Now this pile here is the kind of less intentional in some ways. This one here on focusing or refocusing on core goals or objectives, I suppose one of the reasons I put it there is that I think the process use often gets them to question some of these things actually, rather than necessarily remain focused on them or refocus on them. That sometimes those core goals or objectives as part of this process shift...</p> <p><i>Having described this one...this idea of what gets measured, gets done...</i></p> <p>Yeah, and I suppose I was also reflecting on you know the mission kind of organizations... and the extent to which the evaluation process can help them reflect on how much of their activity is actually contributing to their mission, so therefore they can refocus if you like on their missions. The stuff for me about goals and objectives is that I suppose I intentionally go in to help them question goals and objectives, quite intentionally, because I suppose I'm a bit of an advocate for putting objectives based evaluation to the side and looking at what's really going on and the kind of outcomes that they are actually achieving, as opposed to those that are stated objectives. Quite often those can be re-looked at as a result of this process. I think that's why I put that there...</p>	<p><i>Often the evaluation process gets people to check and revise existing objectives rather than bring them back to core objectives. This relates to wider observations/experiences about the limited state of programme planning and development often encountered when undertaking an evaluation (e.g. the evaluand is not always established, well-planned or conceptualized)</i></p>

**Table 5: Conceptual memos on emerging themes and issues**

Theme/Issue	Conceptual memo
<b>Relationship between intention and expectancy</b>	<i>Common for participants to identify PU examples as less intentional and important in their practice when the likelihood of these occurring is perceived by them as being influenced by others factors and when outcomes are less in the control of the evaluator - they appear to be less motivated to intentionally seek these-this may be explained by expectancy theory.</i>
<b>State of practice (level of program and evaluation planning)</b>	<i>There is a range of evidence re: how the extent/current state of practice (e.g. program planning, client understanding of evaluation, level of evaluative thought, shared understanding re: how good is good) that the evaluator confronts/has to deal with when developing and implementing evaluation- this almost inevitably forces the evaluator into roles and practices where it is all about process use outcomes (e.g. clarifying program intent/objectives, clarifying what program managers wish to know from the evaluation, focusing the evaluation question), typically, the evaluation task is not neatly and sufficiently conceptualized and presented to the evaluator-more typically, it emerges and is shaped through the dialogue and mutual learning process that occur through interaction between the evaluator and stakeholders - this process inevitably leads to process use.</i>
<b>Utilization-focused practice</b>	<p><i>Note importance and emphasis placed on utilization by NZ practitioners-frequent reference to Patton UFE and focus on processes designed to facilitate use-also referenced in the eclectic and pragmatic approach to methodology and approach. There is a focus on methods and processes that will get the job done and deliver value to stakeholders.</i></p> <p><i>Utilization is considered and discussed by all government based practitioners as very important-all the process use examples identified by them as important and intentional all relate to enhancing findings use in some way.</i></p>

**Table 5: Conceptual memos on emerging themes and issues (cont.)**

Theme/Issue	Conceptual memo
<b>Learn through doing and experience</b>	<i>Local evaluators often learnt on the job - they didn't necessarily bring a lot of existing evaluation theory/training with them to practice-therefore what often shaped their practice was the values and beliefs they brought with them to their practice (e.g. for Māori, there is a strong sense of the importance of process and importance of ensuring the evaluation process gives back in some way).</i>
<b>Link between participation and making a difference</b>	<i>Strong driver for participants is to make a difference through their work-common understanding that participatory approach will increase the likelihood of their work being used and thus make a difference, do good etc-understanding this link between participation and use reflects common understanding of this in the evaluation community and the evaluation literature generally, as well as wide support for evaluation to be participatory amongst the community of evaluators. For many, the participatory commitment also comes from a desire to practice a more equalitarian form of evaluation-this ties to a range of social and cultural values, beliefs and commitments. The strength of the participatory ethos and practice means that the general practice of participants is highly supportive of process use.</i>
<b>Participation and understanding of truth</b>	<i>Motivation for stakeholder participation in analysis and socialising of findings-recognition that the meaning and value of findings is created through the dialogical processing and assessment of findings, the co-creation of meaning rather than the data speaking for itself-the significance or meaning of the data does not exist externally to the context in which the data will be used.</i>
<b>Good evaluation</b>	<i>Good evaluation for government evaluators is commonly that which asks the right/important questions, is focused, gets to the answer, and therefore has utilization for the government client-links to their common choice of participation as means of enhancing findings use-so practice is process driven but usually because they understand the various ways this will support findings use.</i>

Explanations were either “...dispositional” (Ritchie et al., 2003, p.253), drawn directly from reported behaviour and intent, or “...situational” (p. 253), attributed by me to contextual or other explanatory factors, and through drawing on logic, common sense, and existing theory (see Chapters Five, Six, and Seven). Explanations were only considered plausible if associations or connections supporting them could be identified within the data, and after searching for rival explanations or contradictory relationships (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ritchie et al., 2003).

During the analysis process, simple thematic charts (Ritchie et al., 2003) were used to summarise and visually display the data. The charts were particularly useful for mapping the data across participants at the whole group, sub-group, or individual level (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and for identifying emerging explanatory relationships. Key themes and sub-themes within the data were visually displayed as columns, and participants or sub-groups as rows. The matrices created enabled the data at the different participant levels to be read across the themes and sub-themes, and enabled comparisons across participants and sub-groups.

Tables 6 to 8 show examples of thematic charts developed during the explanation phase of the data analysis process. Table 6 was used to summarize the characteristics of practice described by each participant. The chart shows whether participants described different characteristics of practice (y/n) and visually displays the extent each characteristic was described across all the interviews.

**Table 6: Thematic chart example: Characteristics of practice**

Characteristics of practice					
	Utilization focused	Participatory	Critical inquiry	Pragmatic	Social justice
Anna	y	y	y	y	y
Claire	y	y	y	y	y
Susan	y	y	y	y	y
Trish	y	y	y	y	y
Lorraine	y	y	y	y	y
Mary	y	y	y	y	<b>n</b>
Dianne	y	y	<b>n</b>	y	y
Anita	y	y	<b>n</b>	y	y
Bridget	y	y	y	y	y
Chris	y	y	y	y	y
Lisa	y	y	<b>n</b>	y	y
Steve	y	y	y	y	y
Sally	y	y	y	y	y
Lina	y	y	y	y	y
Mere	y	y	y	y	y
Richard	y	y	y	y	y
Ben	<b>not directly</b>	y	y	y	y
Shane	<b>not directly</b>	y	y	y	y
Peter	y	y	<b>n</b>	y	y
Atawhai	y	y	y	y	y
Tony	y	y	y	y	y
Aroha	y	y	y	y	y
Jack	y	y	y	y	y
Roy	y	y	<b>n</b>	y	y

Table 7 was used to display how the practice aspiration themes identified in the data were distributed across each of the three evaluator types recruited to the study. The chart shows the extent different aspirations were common to each of the types. For example, the aspiration to *make a difference* was particularly strong for the independent evaluators with 11 of 12 describing this. All seven of the government evaluators hoped that their practice would *lead to improvement*.

**Table 7: Thematic chart example: Practice aspirations**

Practice aspirations				
	<i>Effect change/ make a difference</i>	<i>Lead to improvement</i>	<i>Do good/ help others</i>	<i>Just and fair</i>
<i>Independent evaluator</i>	Anna, Shane, Lisa, Claire, Peter, Lorraine, Atawhai, Jack, Susan, Phil, Trish	Susan, Jack, Anita	Trish, Lorraine	Atawhai, Jack, Susan, Trish
<i>Evaluator working in evaluation consultancy</i>	Richard, Lina, Anita	Steve, Sally, Richard	Sally	Richard, Steve
<i>Evaluator working in government</i>	Bridget, Roy	Chris, Mary, Dianne, Tony, Bridget, Ben, Roy	Chris, Tony, Dianne	Ben, Bridget, Roy, Dianne

Table 8 was used to show how a characteristic of the practice context, and two explanatory sub-themes, mapped across each of the evaluator types. The characteristic of context was the need for formative and developmental input as an evaluator. The explanatory sub-themes were a low level of program planning and a low level of evaluation capacity amongst stakeholders. The chart shows that low levels of program planning were commonly encountered by evaluators working within evaluation consultancies. It was also a common experience for evaluators working in government, with four of seven describing this.

**Table 8: Thematic chart example: Characteristic of the practice context**

<b>Characteristic of the practice context – Need for formative developmental input</b>		
	<i>Low level of program planning</i>	<i>Low level of evaluation capacity</i>
<i>Independent evaluator</i>	Anna, Shane, Claire, Mere	Anna, Claire, Lisa
<i>Evaluator working in evaluation consultancy</i>	Richard, Steve, Anita, Sally, Lina	Sally, Steve, Lina
<i>Evaluator working in government</i>	Chris, Bridget, Mary, Tony	Bridget, Mary

Much of the conceptual synthesis in the explanatory phase occurred through the actual process of writing up the data. My initial reporting of the findings closely followed the structure of the thematic framework as it existed at the end of the description phase. While this provided for highly structured reporting, the range of concepts and categories initially reported was excessive and resulted in an overly detailed, complex, and repetitive analysis. Through repeated readings of these initial drafts, and guided by my supervisors' feedback, I was able to identify where existing concepts and categories could be categorized at even higher levels. This synthesis reduced the total number of categories and concepts and led to the final framework used in this thesis to report the research findings.

## **Stage Two data analysis**

### *Reflexive interpretation*

The approach to reflexive methodology undertaken in this study was hermeneutically focused as the process was used to interpret and understand meaning. The approach was based on the assumption that a literal reading of the data would provide limited understanding as participants were unlikely to fully see, understand, or describe their behaviour. Reflexive methodology was used to go beyond conscious and rational explanations for intent and practice regarding process use, and to examine underlying explanations not necessarily directly articulated by participants.

As both situational and dispositional explanations (Ritchie et al., 2003) were sought, a level of reflexive interpretation occurred throughout the Stage One analysis process. The process was then more explicitly used at the end of each findings chapter (Chapters Five and Six), and again during final conclusions (Chapter Seven). This further reading of the

data was highly interpretive as it followed my personal judgement and intuition (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). During hermeneutic reflection, further consideration was given to the social, political, historical, and cultural context within which participants practiced evaluation. The context, perspectives, and other assumptions influencing my interpretations of the evaluators' interpretations were also examined. The analysis conducted in Stage One was built upon and challenged through critical theory reflexivity. Consideration was given as to whether and how any underlying ideology or dominant power relationships may have privileged certain interpretations over others (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). In response to postmodernism, I kept my interpretive conclusions local and provisional (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). Alternative interpretations of the data, and how the data may have been shaped by the research process itself, were also considered (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000).

#### **4.8 Research quality**

The following section discusses the criteria used in this study to ensure its quality as qualitative, interpretivist research. Attention is initially drawn to the importance of using criteria that are consistent with the epistemological and ontological assumptions of any research conducted. A brief review of the literature on appropriate criteria for qualitative, interpretivist research follows. Through this review, the appropriateness of using Lincoln & Guba's (1985) framework of trustworthiness for this study is confirmed. The constitutive components of this framework, and how each component was addressed within the study, are then described.

##### **Quality in qualitative interpretivist research**

My approach to designing and conducting this interpretivist study is based on a rejection of the epistemological and ontological assumptions of positivism. Such a position may be interpreted as suggesting that no one research method can be regarded as being of better quality, or as providing more valid data, than another (Smith & Deemer, 2000). An alternative view is that interpretivist research does not necessitate doing away with quality criteria altogether, but rather requires attention to ensuring that criteria are appropriate to the epistemological stance and theoretical perspective adopted (Gasson, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 1992; Smith & Deemer, 2000; Yanow, 2006a). Interpretive research

has distinct criteria for determining quality (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwartz-Shea, 2006; Yanow, 2006a), and therefore quality determinations only become problematic in interpretive research if the criteria used to judge quality are drawn from positivism (Gasson, 2003).

What then are appropriate criteria for qualitative, interpretivist research, and for judging the quality of this study? According to Yanow (2006a), all research should provide a logically constructed argument. This criterion is met when research conclusions are adequately supported by evidence and are compelling and persuasive to the reader. While having modest expectations regarding the extent research is able to mirror objective or socially constructed reality, Alvesson & Skoldberg (2000) believe that appropriate criteria should be based on the expectation that a plausible empirical link is appropriate. Research should provide a “...strong feeling for the social reality under study” (p. 275). Derived theories or ideas should be grounded in “...signs of empirical conditions” (p. 275). Given the epistemological and ontological assumptions underpinning constructivist and interpretivist research, Smith and Deemer (2000) question the possibility of a universal and definitive list of quality criteria for this type of research. However, they accept that judgements of research validity will be made and that this creates the need for reflexivity and the ability to assess quality against accepted criteria. They believe quality criteria are needed to address practical and moral research concerns, for example, the need to manage and address the potential excesses of relativism (a practical concern), and the need for transparency regarding the basis upon which judgements about quality will be made (a moral concern). Consequently, there is value in an initial list of criteria that describes a provisional collection of features, more or less agreed to at any given time, as characterizing good and bad inquiry. Such a list would provide the starting point for discussions about the quality of any particular interpretivist study (Smith & Deemer, 2000).

It is possible that criteria suggested by Schwartz-Shea (2006) provide the list sought by Smith and Deemer (2000). Following an extensive review of criteria described in qualitative research method textbooks, she identified “...first order” (p. 101) criteria as thick description, trustworthiness, reflexivity, and triangulation. First order criteria are ubiquitous and commonly presented. Informant feedback or member checks, audit, and negative case analysis were identified as “...second order” (p. 101) criteria. While in widespread use, these criteria lack the ubiquity of first order criteria, and have not yet evolved to capture a wide breath of practices and expectations.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), it is the “...trustworthiness” (p. 290) of qualitative interpretivist research that is most important and appropriate within naturalistic inquiry. Trustworthiness is achieved when research meets criteria of credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability. The procedures and processes used in research are sufficient to persuade any audience that the research findings are worth attending to and taking account of. Trustworthiness for Schwartz-Shea (2006) requires the researcher to communicate all the steps undertaken to ensure that the research process and findings “...are self-consciously deliberate, transparent, and ethical” (p. 101). These requirements would appear to invoke the first and second order criteria identified by Schwartz-Shea (2006). They also seem to satisfy Yanow’s (2006) bottom line of a logically constructed argument, Alvesson and Skoldberg’s (2000) expectation that social reality will be reflected, and Smith and Deemer’s (2000) concern that criteria address practical and moral research concerns. While Schwartz-Shea (2006) notes that the criteria of dependability and credibility have been critiqued as too positivist for qualitative inquiry, I saw both to be appropriate within this study as I sought to meet quality expectations for both empirical and interpretive analysis.

Accepting Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) framework of trustworthiness as providing an appropriate quality framework for this study, the constitutive components of the framework are described below, followed by a discussion of how each component was addressed within this study.

### *Credibility*

In interpretivist research, credibility replaces the criteria of internal validity. It is a function of all the actions undertaken by the researcher to ensure that the research findings are credible and believable to research participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is similar to what Maxwell (2002) describes as “...interpretive validity” (p. 43). This is achieved when participants agree that the accounts of meaning drawn by the researcher are consistent with what things mean to them, and that meaning is expressed as far as possible through their words and concepts. While interpretive validity is concerned with inferences constructed by researchers from accounts given by participants, these accounts are always open to revision as they may be based on inaccurate recall, conscious, hidden, or unconscious intentions, beliefs, values, and feelings (Maxwell, 2002).

The credibility of research and the researcher is built through the researcher's "...prolonged engagement" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301) in the research setting, and ensuring that they understand relevant culture and context. My years of experience practicing evaluation in Aotearoa New Zealand may be considered a form of the engagement and understanding of context sought by Lincoln and Guba. Further, while I had limited contact with participants during the conduct of each interview, I had on-going engagement with them prior to and following the interviews. These interactions were intentionally used to build participants' trust and confidence in me and the study. The recruitment process ensured that participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, what was required from them, and how findings would be used.

Credibility is also developed through analytical procedures such as triangulation, peer review, attention to negative case analysis, and member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, initial explanations for intent and practice regarding process use were identified within each of the participant case stories. The evidence for emerging explanations was checked against and compared to previous and future incidents identified within each of the interview transcripts. Participants checked and validated my interpretations through the feedback processes described. The study findings were peer reviewed by my supervisors, and subjected to further review through the various public forums through which they were disseminated.

I believe participants saw me as an experienced member of the evaluation community and that this also supported the credibility of the study and participants' confidence that I would bring necessary contextual understanding to the study. I personally knew many of the participants, some better than others, and these existing relationships may have further supported credibility.

### *Confirmability*

The naturalistic researcher accepts that qualitative, interpretivist research is never neutral (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The notion of objectivity is therefore redundant in this study and was replaced with a concern for confirmability. This means that as far as possible, the research findings represent the situation being researched and not the researcher's own influences, biases, or theories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Similarities are apparent here with Maxwell's (2002) "...descriptive validity" (p. 43), that the researcher's account of what was

seen or heard is descriptively and factually accurate. The various member checking processes undertaken in this study were the primary means used to ensure confirmability.

Interpretivism assumes that to some extent all knowledge is influenced by existing values, beliefs, and interests. Confirmability therefore also requires the interpretivist researcher to be aware of their personal influence on all aspects of the research (Charmaz, 2002; Gasson, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwartz-Shea, 2006). They should acknowledge the various choices made during the course of the study, and identify the influence of these. They are required to identify the influence of any personal values, ideologies, ideas, feelings, assumptions, or investments (Gergen & Gergen, 2000; King, 1996). Reflexive methodology also requires the researcher to be attentive to the influence of the context within which research occurs (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). This context may be societal, intellectual, cultural, linguistic, political, and theoretical. The researcher recognises that the research data may be interpreted through any number of possible perspectives, and communicates the drivers, outcomes, and implications of the interpretive lenses they adopt.

I was reflexive throughout the study as a response to the need for transparency under the confirmability criteria. I reflected on how my personal values, beliefs, and experiences shaped this thesis in Chapter One. My influence, particularly in relation to the analysis of the interview data, is further considered through the reflexive interpretation undertaken in Chapter Seven.

As previously acknowledged, evaluators' accounts of their intent and practice may have been shaped by their perception of desirable responses given the purpose of this study. Their reports may not represent what they actually think and do. While I am primarily concerned with understanding participants' accounts, I believe the design of this study helped to minimize the potential for social desirability bias. Mitigating this bias also helps to satisfy the confirmability criteria. Care was taken not to impose the term 'process use' on participants, or to install the term with positive connotations. Participants were not informed of the interpretivist approach and that explanations were to be derived by connecting intent and practice to meaning, belief, tradition, and aspiration. The interview questions were focused on drawing out these connections and therefore constituted a form of indirect questioning. Such questions can mitigate social desirability bias (Fisher, 1993). Despite the indirectness of my questions, participants were also asked to illustrate their

intent with recent examples of what they did. As far as is possible through interviews (Soos, 2006), this requirement also helped to draw out actual rather than espoused practice.

According to interpretivism, behaviour reflects prior knowledge as the actor interprets and makes sense of their experience using existing theories and traditions (Bevir, 2006; Yanow, 2006). Therefore, rather than develop theory, this study examines how existing theory helps to explain intent and practice regarding process use. Theory is used as “...a means” and “...not an end” (Moses & Knutsen, 2007, p. 229). However, this approach does not assume that all future behaviour is pre-determined. There is always the potential for new beliefs and actions to emerge through the actor’s capacity for “...local reasoning” and “...situated agency” (Bevir, 2006, p. 287). Of relevance here is the extent to which participants’ accounts make sense when examined in relation to the evaluation literature and existing traditions of practice. When reports are consistent with existing knowledge, we are not surprised by them, and confirmability is strengthened. They are understandable given known theoretical, cultural, or other traditions. I accept, however, that such consistency may simply provide an explanation for social desirability bias. For example, a participant may espouse a certain belief, intent, or practice because they know it aligns to existing theory or tradition. Consistency here would be explanatory of the report rather than strengthening of confirmability.

In Chapter Six of this thesis, participants are allocated to sub-groups on the basis that members identified similar types of process use as important and intentional in their recent practice. This analysis allows intent and practice, and explanations that are common across group members, to be identified. The confirmability of common reports is strengthened when reports and explanations are consistent across group members who described similar types of process use. While these similarities may again simply indicate a shared understanding of existing theories and embedded practice traditions, the likelihood of reports being espoused is diminished by the triangulation achieved.

### *Transferability*

The research findings from this study are contextualized and idiographic, that is, situated and local rather than being representative and applicable to a wider population (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Context specific knowledge is defensible when, rather than prediction or control, research seeks *verstehen* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). *Verstehen* lies at

the heart of the objective of this study, that is, to explain by providing “...understanding or meaning experienced in situations” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.216).

The context specific knowledge of *verstehen* is always in the form of a working hypothesis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As carefully examined in this study, the influence of local factors must always be considered when determining the extent to which findings may be generalized to other contexts. Transferability in interpretivist qualitative research is concerned with whether findings found in one context may hold in another (Gasson, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The transferability questions of interest in this study are whether explanations for process use identified for evaluators in one setting may hold for them in other settings, as well as for other evaluators working in similar settings to those studied.

The positivist criteria of external validity requires the researcher to demonstrate, through representative sampling, the extent their findings are applicable to a wider population. In contrast, the naturalistic researcher is responsible for providing sufficient description of the context within which their findings are derived, so that others may assess the transferability of the findings to other contexts. The researcher is therefore required to provide “...thick description” (Lincoln & Guba, 1982, p. 247) of the “...sending” (p. 247) context so interested others may assess the similarity of the “...receiving” (p.247) context and potential for transferability.

The criteria of transferability provided another reason for the level of contextual analysis undertaken in this study. My examination of the influence of ethnicity, gender, and working context on intent and practice provides some basis for judging the transferability of the findings to other evaluators sharing these characteristics. The description of the evaluation practice context within Aotearoa New Zealand, provided in this study, also gives the reader some further basis for judging transferability to similar other evaluation settings.

### *Dependability*

Interpretivism rejects the possibility of a tangible, external reality and therefore also the positivist criteria that findings should be reliable and replicable. Within qualitative, interpretivist research, the focus is on ensuring that research is dependable and that findings, interpretations, and conclusions are supported by the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability also requires the interpretivist researcher to be attentive to

contradictory evidence or explanations, and again, to be reflexive in terms of their influence within the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Smith, 1996).

Dependability requires a level and detail of data to be displayed so that the reader is clear on the basis of data interpretations and conclusions (Gasson, 2003; Schwartz-Shea, 2006; Smith, 1996). A chain of evidence that links interpretations and conclusions to the data is required (Smith, 1996). Dependability is achieved if an independent audit concludes that an appropriate level of internal consistency and coherence exists within the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Smith, 1996). I sought to ensure a sufficient level of data display in this thesis through a number of strategies. The individual stories written for each participant provided a detailed and almost literal account of each interview (see Appendix H). In this way, the stories provide the reader with a very direct level of engagement with the data, and provide the basis against which my interpretations and conclusions can be checked. At the completion of each data analysis phase, a complete copy of the coded data was saved within Nvivo. Each copy provided a record of the analysis undertaken and the conceptual developments that occurred within each phase. Copies were kept of all the data display matrices developed during the course of my analysis, and which were used to identify explanatory patterns, and relationships within the data. Examples of matrices developed and used during the analysis process have been previously presented in this thesis.

Dependability also requires the researcher to define and communicate the data selection, analysis, and synthesis procedures used, and to make explicit the processes through which findings are derived (Gasson, 2003). As a consequence, readers should be able to interrogate the findings and the researcher's interpretations through their own "...interpretative dialogue with the data" (Smith, 1996, p.192). This study provides a detailed description of the data analysis processes used, including how the data was reduced and synthesized into higher levels of conceptualization and categorization. I kept research journals throughout the study and used these to document decisions, issues, and problems arising, as well as key activities undertaken. Memos were written to document and communicate any shifts in my thinking regarding objectives, theoretical frameworks, methodology, and methods (see Appendix J for an example). Dated, electronic copies were kept of all memos, providing a chronology of the studies evolution. Conceptual memos were written through the data analysis process and examples of these have been previously presented.

## 4.9 Cross cultural research ethics

The following section discusses how cross-cultural ethical issues arising as a consequence of my seeking Māori participation in this study were addressed. Ethical issues faced by the cross-cultural researcher are initially examined. This is followed by a discussion of how the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi provide an appropriate framework for guiding cross-cultural research within Aotearoa New Zealand. Description is then given to how the Treaty principles were used to guide processes and practices within this study to ensure it was morally and ethically defensible as cross-cultural research.

### **Moral and ethical cross-cultural research**

Social scientists who undertake cross-cultural research face challenges and questions of morals, ethics, and method (Banks, 1998). A key question faced is whether they have a legitimate role researching cultures other than their own (Banks, 1998). As I sought Māori participation in my study, this question was addressed, particularly as research conducted by non-Māori on Māori has historically been damaging to Māori (Bishop, 1998; Smith, 1999; Spoonley, 1999). Such research has led to unfavourable comparisons between Māori and non-Māori (Powick, 2002), deficit-based understandings of Māori, and negative stereotypes (Bishop, 1998, 1999; Forster, 2003). For these reasons, Māori have fought to regain control and accountability over the conduct and use of Māori research (Cram, 2009; Moewaka Barnes, 2003; Moewaka Barnes, McCreanor, Edwards, & Borell, 2009; Smith, 1999).

Māori are more likely to have the cultural competence and knowledge required to conduct valid and credible research with Māori (Glover, 2002). The appropriateness of non-Māori researchers conducting such research has therefore been questioned (Bishop, 1996; Hepi, Foote, Marino, Rogers, & Taimona, 2007; Jahnke & Taiapa, 1999; Walker et al., 2006). Rather than bringing neutrality and objectivity, conducting research with Māori as an outsider enhances the risk that research will be harmful to them (Walker et al., 2006). Such research may undervalue and belittle the legitimacy of Māori knowledge and practice (Bishop, 1999), and may alienate Māori from their aspirations for tinorangatiratanga (Henry & Pene, 2001).

According to Hepi et al. (2007), trust lies at the heart of appropriate non-Māori involvement in Māori research. Above all else, and regardless of whether researchers are

indigenous or bi-cultural, Māori seek researchers who are “...trustworthy” (p.40) and who demonstrate integrity through their actions. For Bishop (1998), the credibility and integrity of non-Māori researchers to work with Māori requires them to seek Māori participation on Māori terms. They must be willing to enter into a fully participatory relationship with Māori. Without such willingness and engagement, non-Māori researchers have no means of establishing identity and connection with Māori. As a result, they cannot achieve fully ethical participation by Māori.

Cross-cultural research may only be defensible when it provides relevance, benefit, and value to participants and their communities (Liamputtong, 2010; Powick, 2003). My seeking of Māori participation in this study may therefore only be justified if this study acts to decrease, rather than increase, inequalities between non-Māori and Māori (Hudson & Russell, 2009), and if all participants benefit equally (Gibbs, 2001). Should the participation of Māori in this research simply advance my interests over those of Māori, this research may simply contribute further to “...pākeha control of Māori” (Powick, 2003, p.5).

There is evidence that non-Māori researchers have responded to the possibility that their research may do harm to Māori by intentionally excluding them from their research (Tolich, 2001). While this potentially avoids harm, these researchers fail to meet their obligations under the Treaty to ensure that Māori have equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from research (Tolich, 2001). My decision to seek Māori participation in this study in part stemmed from my understanding of this obligation. However, I also considered Māori participation important acknowledgement of the centrality of process based values for Māori and within Māori evaluation practice. Examining process use within a Māori context was essential should this study make any claim in regard to advancing understanding of process use within Aotearoa New Zealand.

In seeking Māori participation in this study, conflicting tensions therefore arose. Questions could be asked whether, as non-Māori, I had any legitimate role conducting research with Māori. However, excluding Māori from the study would be contrary to Treaty obligations, and would ultimately undermine the validity, credibility, and value of this research.

## **Treaty of Waitangi as ethical framework**

The Treaty of Waitangi principles of participation, partnership, and protection provide the basis of a respectful relationship between Māori and non-Māori, and a relationship that supports Māori autonomy and well-being. Respectful relationships are regarded as fundamental to ethical cross-cultural research (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008; Hudson & Russell, 2009; Trimble & Mohatt, 2006; Wallace, 2006), and the Treaty principles have been widely advocated as a framework for guiding ethical research with Māori (Bishop, 1998; Cram, 2009; Hepi et al., 2007; Hudson & Russell, 2009; Moewaka Barnes et al., 2009; Powick, 2002; Te Puni Kokiri, 1994; Waikato Institute of Technology, 2000).

Reflecting the principles of the Treaty, the cross-cultural researcher develops respectful relationships with their participants because they are fundamentally interested in their welfare and dignity (Trimble & Mohatt, 2006). Relationship building in cross-cultural research begins with respect for cultural difference and acknowledgement that “...goodness, kindness, and justice” (Trimble & Mohatt, 2006, p. 326) provide the basis for moral and ethical decision making. The cross-cultural researcher seeks to develop an environment within which they can “...do good well” (Trimble & Mohatt, 2006, p. 326). Within such an environment, participants understand and trust that the researcher’s practice is guided by appropriate values, principles, morals, and ethics. These include trust, respect, prudence, integrity, benevolence, and reverence (Trimble & Mohatt, 2006).

Following the above, the principles of the Treaty were used in this study to guide responses to the cross-cultural tensions previously identified. The following discussion initially examines how each of the principles link to the “...relational ethic” (Wallace, 2006, p. 70) of cross-cultural research. I then discuss how each principle guided process and practices undertaken in this study to ensure that it was ethically and morally defensible as cross-cultural research.

### *Participation principle*

The principle of participation determines the right of Māori to participate in research and to receive benefits from this (Russell, 2004). This principle also determines the right of Māori to participate through all stages of the research process, and to ideally retain some control over the design and direction of the research (Hudson & Russell, 2009).

Indigenous participants may have “...historical memories” (Wallace, 2006, p.68) about research or evaluation. The cross-cultural researcher therefore works collaboratively and consultatively with them to address any embedded mistrust or other negative attitudes they may bring to the process. By actively involving indigenous participants in the research process, the researcher seeks to reduce power imbalances through ensuring their needs and perspectives are integrated within the research. They also ensure that participants understand how the research will be used, as well as the costs and potential benefits of their participation (Wallace, 2006).

Consultation is essential for negotiating Māori participation in research, ensuring equal opportunities for Māori to shape and receive benefits from research, and to ensure that harm is avoided (Health Research Council, 2008; Hudson & Russell, 2009; Sporle & Koea, 2004). Consultation occurred through my on-going discussions with my Māori supervisor regarding the relevance, appropriateness, and potential value of this study for Māori. These discussions informed decisions regarding the qualitative and interpretivist methodology used, the recruitment procedure (see later discussion), and the open-ended interviewing approach. Consultation also occurred through the piloting of the interview sorting process and subsequent discussions with the Māori evaluator interviewed. Consultation continued through the negotiations undertaken with each Māori evaluator regarding their participation in this study. Extending beyond the reading and one-off signing of a consent form (Moewaka Barnes et al., 2009), this process is discussed below.

I initially identified Māori evaluators likely to be eligible for participation. I rang each, introduced myself and the study, and explained why Māori participation was specifically sought. A tauaki, emailed to each contact, further explained the objectives of the study, my reasons for seeking Māori participation, my understanding of ethical and moral issues arising from this, and my commitment to addressing these (see Appendix K). The research information sheet (see Appendix A) was also sent to each contact to further support to their assessment of the respective risks and benefits of their participation (Hudson & Kelly, 2009).

I spoke with each evaluator on a number of further occasions to address any issues or questions arising in relation to their participation. When interest in taking part was expressed, conditions of participation were discussed and mutually agreed. This included how participants would maintain control over my interpretation of their interview data

through checking back procedures. Agreed conditions were confirmed again prior to each participant signing the formal written consent form, and prior to the commencement of each interview.

#### *Partnership principle*

The partnership principle determines that Māori should be involved as equal partners in research involving Māori (Hudson & Kelly, 2009). The partnership should respect the cultural knowledge and traditions of participants, and should ensure that Māori and non-Māori equally share in skills, outcomes, and benefits derived (Hudson & Kelly, 2009). The partnership principle links to the imperative that the cross-cultural researcher builds caring, empathetic, and emotionally connected relationships with participants, and works through these to ensure that the research process supports, rather than negates, well-being (Denzin et al., 2008).

My research comprised a situation where Māori were to be involved in the study rather than having a high level of control over it (Cunningham & Durie, 1998). While I sought to be responsive to their needs and interests, an obvious constraint to a more equal partnership was that I primarily controlled the study's design and conduct. I sought therefore to at least involve Māori in accordance with the principle of partnership. I consulted my Māori supervisor throughout the study. The negotiation undertaken with each Māori evaluator prior to their involvement in the study ensured that each was satisfied with the conditions and requirements of their participation.

#### *Protection principle*

The principle of protection determines that Māori should not experience negative outcomes as a result of their participation in research (Hudson & Kelly, 2009). It also determines the right of Māori to participate in research on their own terms, including as Māori; that is, following Māori values, principles, and practices (Moewaka Barnes et al., 2009; Powick, 2003).

The protection principle links to cross-cultural relational ethics such as beneficence, justice, and respect. The cross-cultural researcher acts beneficently through seeking to maximise positive outcomes for participants while avoiding or minimising the risk of negative outcomes (Wallace, 2006). Fair and reasonable research procedures are used, and

the costs and benefits of research are distributed fairly and equally (Hudson & Russell, 2009; Wallace, 2006). The researcher ensures that the research process protects the autonomy of participants and treats them with courtesy and respect (Wallace, 2006). The sovereignty, cultural knowledge, and traditions of participants are respected, and participants retain the right to negotiate their participation on a basis that is acceptable to them (Hudson & Russell, 2009). The researcher is reflexive regarding the boundaries of their role and participation within the cross-cultural setting. They accept that their intentions, presence, and practices will be rightfully scrutinised and questioned by members of the community of concern (Trimble & Mohatt, 2006).

I sought to minimize any risks for Māori primarily through my consultative approach. My supervision ensured that I did not exceed the boundaries of my cultural competence (Helms et al., 2006). Negotiations with each participant ensured that they participated under conditions understood by them as sufficiently protective of their cultural safety (Cram, 2009).

As I retained primary control over the design and conduct of the study, there were limitations to the extent that Māori were able to participate on their terms. However, qualitative research is recognized as particularly responsive and adaptive to indigenous needs, language, and traditions (Denzin et al., 2008; Moewaka Barnes et al., 2009). Therefore, while the decision to use individual in-depth interviews was mine, this choice provided some protection of the right of participants to take part as Māori, and the method enabled a level of responsiveness to Māori needs and expectations. In accordance with the importance of open and direct dialogue for Māori (Smith, 1999), all interviews were conducted face-to-face. The interview process enabled participants to tell their stories through their own expressions, terms, and concepts. Care was taken to avoid an excessive level of questioning, although probes were used extensively to check my understanding of meaning and intent. I sought to uphold the mana of my participants (Smith, 1999) through ensuring each participant was able to review and validate my interpretation of their data. The value and sacredness of each participant's knowledge, and experience (Smith, 1999) was acknowledged through the provision of koha and through the feedback processes described. My analysis of all Māori issues reported in the thesis was also returned to those Māori participants who addressed these issues during their interviews. This dissemination was followed-up with a telephone call to each participant to facilitate any feedback or critique they wished to make on the analysis. This process informed some minor edits

within the analysis while also validating my interpretation and final reporting. The interviews were also used to discuss with participants whether they wished to progress or disseminate in other ways, the issues and findings for Māori reported in the thesis. Interest in doing this was expressed and at the time of writing, initial discussions were underway as to how and in what form this may be achieved.

#### **4.10 Chapter summary**

The conceptual framework presented in this chapter comprises the theory of knowledge, theoretical perspective, and research methodology adopted in this study, and the methods used to collect and analyse the research data. It has been argued that each component of the conceptual framework is appropriate given my framing of process use as a constructed and interpreted phenomenon, and that they work together to ensure that this study is conceptually coherent. The epistemological stance adopted is constructivism and this is supported by the theoretical perspective of interpretivism. The theory of knowledge and theoretical perspective adopted supports the research methodology which integrates naturalistic inquiry and reflexive methodology. Given this methodology, it was appropriate to collect the research data using qualitative, in-depth interviews. The data were appropriately analysed using a two-stage approach that combined thematic analysis and reflexive interpretation. As qualitative interpretivist research, attention was paid to ensuring that this study was trustworthy, that is, it met the quality criteria of credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability. An attempt was also made to ensure that the study was ethically and morally defensible as cross-cultural research, in particular, that it did not perpetuate historical harms done to Māori as a consequence of non-Māori conducting research on Māori. The Treaty of Waitangi principles of participation, partnership, and protection were used to guide actions and processes undertaken to address the cross-cultural issues faced. Attention was paid to developing respectful and trusting relationships with the Māori evaluators who participated in the study. As far as possible, I sought to protect their right to participate as Māori, and to ensure that the research was of relevance, benefit, and value to them and to Māori generally.

The research findings are now presented and discussed in the following two chapters of this thesis. In Chapter Five, the context within which evaluators participating in this study practiced evaluation is described and consideration is given to how this might help to

explain their awareness and intent regarding process use. In Chapter Six, I examine specific types of process use identified and discussed by participants as intentional and important within their recent evaluation practice.

## *Chapter 5:*

### CONTEXT OF PRACTICE

The evaluation practice context of the evaluators participating in this study was purposively explored to help explain their intent and practice regarding process use. Four dimensions of this context are described in this chapter: the journey each participant took to becoming an evaluator, the values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions that underpinned their approach to evaluation, their understanding and practice of evaluation, and their existing awareness and experience of process use. The chapter begins with a brief introduction to each participant. Pseudonyms are used for the purpose of anonymity.

#### **5.1 Research participants**

Eighteen of the 24 interviewees self-identified as non-Maori. Of these, seven (Anna, Claire, Susan, Trish, Lorraine, Lisa, Jack) were self-employed evaluation consultants (SEC), five (Anita, Sally, Lina, Steve, Richard) worked within research and evaluation provider organizations (REO), and six (Dianne, Mary, Bridget, Chris, Ben, Roy) worked within government (GOVT). Six interviewees self-identified as Māori. Five of these (Mere, Shane, Peter, Atawhai, Aroha) were self-employed evaluation consultants (MSEC), while Tony worked within government (MGOVT). Overall, five of the government evaluators (Dianne, Mary, Chris, Roy, Tony) had managerial responsibilities, but also identified as evaluators.

#### **5.2 Journey to evaluation**

Diverse, circuitous journeys to evaluation were revealed through participants' accounts of how they became evaluators. Between them, participants' reported seventeen different fields of study at graduate, post-graduate, or doctoral level. Nine participants (Lisa, Shane, Ben, Tony, Jack, Roy, Lorraine, Jack, Lisa) had undertaken tertiary-level papers or courses in evaluation, while six (Anna, Lorraine, Anita, Chris, Sally, Richard) mentioned their relative lack of formal evaluation training.

While no participants described evaluation as a planned career choice, many had previous experience in research (Susan, Anna, Lorraine, Lisa, Sally, Richard, Tony, Peter, Bridget, Mary, Dianne, Chris, Roy, Trish, Lina, Atawhai, Steve). In various ways, Shane, Aroha, Mere, and Lisa had all begun to practice evaluation through whakapapa or personal connections. Claire, Jack, and Ben described previous work that, while not strictly research or evaluation, had been evaluative in nature. Reflecting on this experience, Ben commented,

...I was effectively doing evaluation by default...without being schooled in it, other than critical community development work [which] is evaluative by its very nature and critical of power structures. (Ben)

The relatively unscripted nature of how participants became evaluators was evident through their accounts of journeys undertaken. A common theme, that participants eventually ‘arrived’ at their practice of evaluation, was illustrated by Atawhai who recalled,

...no one in my family grew up wanting to be a researcher or an evaluator. Does anybody in anyone's family grow up wanting to? (Atawhai)

Aroha, Shane, and Susan had ‘fallen’ into evaluation, Tony had come across it “...accidentally,” while Claire had “...stumbled across” it. Anna had grown into her identity and practice as an evaluator through a process that was “...experiential” and “...organic.” Sally and Trish had both been approached to undertake evaluation despite having limited understanding of it. After some years in her role as a social researcher, Sally had been asked to “...do something called evaluation”. Trish recalled a similar experience while working within government in a research and policy position,

...someone one day said to me, “you know how to do evaluation don't you?” and I said, sure. (Trish)

Nine participants (Shane, Mere, Sally, Trish, Peter, Jack, Richard, Aroha, Anita) had developed much of their initial understanding of evaluation on the job, a relatively common situation according to Mere,

I've come to realize that this is the way everybody I know who is an evaluator became an evaluator; by being asked to do an evaluation and going “What is that?” Giving it your best shot and learning on the job basically. (Mere)

For some, the experiences, skills, and values they brought to their early practice were influential in their approach. Shane brought knowledge of tikanga Māori and skills in strategic thinking, interviewing, and relationship building. Sally drew on her training in psychology and intuition, and quickly understood the dialogical and relational nature of evaluation. Lina, Roy, Mere, Jack, and Trish linked their social justice concerns as evaluators to prior experiences. Lina and Roy had lived in countries characterized by extreme poverty and social inequality. Lina was therefore concerned that evaluation should represent multiple interests and address issues of power. Roy understood that evaluation inevitably dealt with issues of public good. Mere brought values and aspirations related to Māori development. She was immediately concerned with how evaluation could make a positive difference for Māori, and how the evaluation process could itself be “...beneficial.” Jack described personal experience of lost rights, a theme also discussed by Trish in relation to her experience as a beneficiary. Jack linked his experience to his concern for ensuring that the evaluation process was inclusive, just, and fair. Trish’s experience had shaped the social justice values she brought to her practice and her desire that evaluation lead to social betterment.

### **5.3 Values, beliefs, traditions, aspirations**

The values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions that underpinned participants’ understanding and approach to evaluation are now described. In this study, these factors are considered both sources and consequences of meaning (Bevir, 2006; Moses & Knutsen, 2007; Schwartz-Shea, 2006; Soos, 2006), and therefore potentially explanatory of behaviour. Four common practice orientations identified help to explain intent and practice regarding process use: social justice, the evaluator as change agent, equality, and tikanga Māori.

#### **Social justice**

Many participants (Susan, Trish, Peter, Atawhai, Jack, Ben, Bridget, Roy, Richard, Diane) believed evaluation should contribute to social justice. The process should be inclusive, give voice to those less powerful, and should help to ensure just and fair government. Trish believed evaluation should enable stakeholders to engage with “...existing power structures” and regain control over evaluative judgments that affected them. Susan believed the evaluation agenda should be of relevance to all stakeholders, not just the evaluation client.

Atawhai sought to give voice to Māori experience, knowledge, and meaning. She was accountable for articulating Māori needs and aspirations and therefore in any evaluation strove to ensure,

...some level of activity or engagement which is going to contribute to more directly articulating community aspirations, needs, or perspective, over and above what the funder wants. (Atawhai)

Jack's concern for an inclusive and empowering evaluation process satisfied not only his concern for human rights and ethical practice, but also his belief that such an approach was more likely to create necessary conditions for change and development. It established "...the ground from which change takes place", there are "...better outcomes", "...the pot grows...the system improves..."

### **Evaluation as change agent**

Many participants believed that evaluation should effect change or make a difference. For Mere, Peter, Atawhai, Shane, and Aroha, this was about contributing to Māori development. Mere doubted she would be an evaluator if the evaluation process did not offer such opportunity,

...Māori are my people and I see so much wonderful richness and goodness and good things, then I see so much despair and lack of hope and stuff as well...we have all these programmes in place, and if there's ways to do them better and evaluation can help to do that, or if there's stuff that's working really well and by having an evaluator tell that story, so that it can have on-going funding or be expanded to work in other areas...then that to me is job satisfaction...that's why I do it. (Mere)

Atawhai and Shane believed evaluation made a difference for Māori by informing effective policies and programs and building Māori capacity. Shane had seen the capacity building potential of evaluation early in his career. He aimed "...to leave people with a learning experience..." Atawhai believed evaluation should enhance the ability of Māori to advocate and argue for what they aspired to achieve. Ultimately, she wished to see,

...a society in which Māori are fully participating citizens, where we don't have the social, economic, and educational disparity...where we are highly contributing alongside all other New Zealanders, as Māori. (Atawhai)

Aroha also questioned the point of evaluation if it did not support learning and development outcomes of value to stakeholders. Peter was optimistic he could contribute to positive change. His work as an evaluator followed his empathy for others and desire to see “...good things” and “...people doing well”.

Effecting change, whether making a difference, helping others, or informing improvement, was also important for many non-Māori evaluators (Trish, Jack, Susan, Claire, Lisa, Lorraine, Jack, Lina, Richard, Anita, Sally, Roy, Chris, Tony, Dianne). Considering evaluation to be fundamentally concerned with social betterment, Trish predicted that many evaluators were likely to be motivated to make “...the world a better place.” Susan was motivated by the potential of evaluation to “...improve the state of the world...” It was important to Jack that as a result of his work “...something better results”. Lina described evaluation as a means of acting upon her desire to be a useful and contributing member of society who made a difference.

Anita’s move into social research and evaluation had followed her desire to undertake meaningful work that in some way contributed to social change or betterment. Richard’s practice was guided by social justice principles and a desire to make a difference. Such contribution gave him satisfaction and seemed worth-while. Like Lorraine, he also felt an obligation to work for social betterment,

...I feel very privileged to be in the situation I am in, living in New Zealand and being well educated, having a job that I enjoy. I guess one of my things in life is to have more people have the opportunity to enjoy their lives as much as possible.  
(Richard)

Government evaluators commonly saw their work within the public service as a way of making a difference. It enabled Chris to help others and to improve policy and programs. Mary sought a stronger relationship between evaluation and organizational decision-making that would lead to more effective government. Roy was drawn to evaluation as a means of enhancing government effectiveness and efficiency. For Dianne, evaluation helped ensure

good government and a public service that performed justly and effectively. Bridget hoped her work would ultimately enhance outcomes for users of public services.

Ben believed evaluation could hold government to account by requiring officials to re-examine how they understood and responded to social problems. Through this process, the “...repertoire” of possible solutions was potentially expanded,

...if it's like Henry and Mark<sup>2</sup> suggest, if [evaluation] has moral compass, if it has social purpose, if it's about social betterment, then you need to understand really what the options are. (Ben)

Consultants outside government, Susan, Jack, Sally, Steve, Richard, and Anna, also discussed the accountability role of evaluation. For Susan, it could empower stakeholders through providing access to information regarding the performance of public programs. Good evaluation for Jack opened up services and systems to scrutiny. For Sally, it ensured the cost-effective use of public resources, a theme also addressed by Richard. Steve was concerned with using evaluation to ensure equality of access and outcomes. For reasons of accountability, Anna firmly believed that evaluation should facilitate critical reflection regarding decisions and action,

...otherwise people just go on doing the same old stuff with no consciousness around why or what is coming out of it. I see this again and again and again... (Anna)

## **Equality**

The value and aspiration of equality underpinned the practice of many participants. For example, the evaluation process should address issues of power, lead to mutual benefit, and embed evaluative thinking and action. For Anna, good evaluation was accessible and meaningful for lay people; it didn't just exist in “...the realm of experts and theorists.” Trish realized that giving up some of her own power in the evaluation process led to better outcomes. Lorraine no longer viewed the evaluator as an expert who was ‘right’, but someone who worked in partnership with stakeholders in mutual learning. Lisa was clear that evaluators were not “...gurus.”

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<sup>2</sup> Evaluation theorists

Addressing issues of power also meant acknowledging and integrating the existing skills, knowledge, and experience of stakeholders. This was integral to Lisa's practice and her commitment to stakeholder engagement and ownership. Susan's partnership approach was based on "...humility." She sought a partnership based model of practice consistent with the Treaty. Jack sought to integrate,

...the reality, the choices, the way of seeing the world that [stakeholders bring]...being really conscious of my own world view...so that I can minimize the impact of that on the person. (Jack)

Good evaluation for Peter was collaborative and engaged stakeholders at a level appropriate to their capacity. Shane saw all stakeholders bringing knowledge and competencies and sought to draw these out, for example, through evaluative questioning. Mere recognized stakeholders brought valuable experience and opinion, but not always positive previous experiences of evaluation. Evaluation for Atawhai was a mutual learning process to which no one came as an "...empty vessel." She reflected,

...many people in the community are experts in their communities. So it's better not to play the expert language. It's better to say look, I know a few things, you know a few things, I think together, nā to rourou, nā taku rourou, when we come together and work collaboratively, or whatever the hell we call it, then all will be well.  
(Atawhai)

Ensuring mutual benefit was another way of addressing issues of power. Sally recognized that her concern for giving back reflected Māori and Pacific values. For Susan, the expectation that stakeholders would give to the evaluation process established an obligation to return utility or value,

...I see every contact as some kind of a partnership really. They're giving me their time and their trust and I'm not giving them five eighths of bugger all really when I think about it. I'm just taking a whole bunch of stuff away. So if there is something that I give back, I guess that at some semi-conscious level, I'm looking for that [process use] stuff all the time. (Susan)

Ensuring stakeholders received something of value from the evaluation process was for Mere an expression of her commitment to valuing people. For Atawhai, a failure to give

back meant the evaluator acted in self-interest. Recognizing her skills had accumulated over years of experience and opportunity, Aroha felt an accountability to return utility and value,

...if it was just about myself I would probably be going and doing something totally different, but I think we have an obligation and an accountability that is beyond me, which is why we do what we do. (Aroha)

Aroha had realized early in her career that whether and how evaluation findings were used could be determined by factors beyond her control. Because of this, she couldn't assure Māori stakeholders that evaluation would be used for their benefit. Consequently, she was increasingly focused on using the evaluation process to build the effectiveness, sustainability, and autonomy of Māori organizations and communities.

For Peter, building evaluative capacity ensured that evaluation left stakeholders "...better off" and provided utility long "...after I have been there". Similarly, Shane sought to leave stakeholders "...as they were" or "...in a better place." He observed,

...there's that kind of like...reciprocity of that koha taking place. Your koha is your time, my koha perhaps is some of the skills that I have to offer... (Shane)

Anna, Sally, and Claire described evaluative thinking and action as ideally integrated into the routine practice of stakeholders and organizational systems and culture. Anna provided evaluation training that developed capacity at a community or grass-roots level. Sally was interested in the democratization of evaluation through the use of simple, practical methods. Claire was increasingly focused on building organizational evaluation capacity that enhanced organizational effectiveness and the ability to sustain longer term benefits from evaluation.

Trish, Atawhai, Aroha, and Shane described evaluation as fundamental to human development and assumed that stakeholders had inherent evaluative capacity. Trish described evaluative thinking as an essential human activity, used from birth to develop and sustain life. Both she and Atawhai regarded professional evaluation as simply bringing structure and intent to such thinking. For Aroha, evaluation enhanced awareness of the values brought to learning and evaluative judgements. Atawhai observed that daily living for Māori had historically been informed by decisions built from existing knowledge and through observation of process and outcomes. Informed by evaluative criteria, decisions

were concerned with survival, wellbeing, and the effective use of resources. It was also evident to Aroha that robust evaluation methods had historically been used within indigenous communities to ensure survival, adaptation, and sustainability,

...Māori, Pacific, indigenous [peoples] have been evaluators for thousands of years; hence we can survive for thousands of years because if we weren't good evaluators, we wouldn't have survived... (Aroha)

### **Tikanga Māori**

Shane, Atawhai, Aroha, Mere, and Peter all described tikanga Māori as a framework that guided their approach. While Shane integrated different evaluation approaches, his practice came first and foremost “...from me, as a Māori.” Evaluation methods were simply “...tools to use.” Atawhai’s practice was orientated to “...seeding Māori values and practices.” She remarked,

... I am Māori. Evaluation or research is what I do. It is not what I am. (Atawhai)

Her approach to evaluation was guided by what was right by and for Māori. Her practice was process driven and relational because she knew that for Māori “...what we do” and “... how we do” mattered,

...I do what I do because I believe in them. I do what I do because I think they make a difference. Or I do what I do because over time my experience has told me, or shown me, or someone's told me, that this is the bit that's important, that this is the bit that makes a difference. (Atawhai)

Atawhai understood that process was the mechanism through which the values and intent of the evaluator were signalled. While process could help secure Māori engagement in evaluation, and could therefore be pursued as “...a means to an end”, it was often “...an end in itself.” It was determined by what was “...tika...correct”. In this way, process was not driven by evaluator self-interest. It wasn’t necessarily intentional or unintentional. It simply often was.

Aroha described tikanga as providing “...a stake in the ground” that defined her values and who she was. Tikanga shaped what she did regardless of activity or context. Her

practice was defined by her values, not evaluation terms or concepts. For example, in the case of koha,

...it doesn't kind of work backwards. It is not like I am going to give you a koha because that is what it says [in an ethics application or evaluation plan]...it actually starts [in the centre] and it informs or spreads out everywhere. (Aroha)

Tikanga meant her primary concern was for the kaupapa of the evaluand and how it was going to benefit "...Māori, Pacific women, children, families, whanau." Tikanga, rather than ethics based on Eurocentric values, established her interactions and accountabilities with stakeholders. Evaluation methods and methodologies were again tools drawn upon to enhance existing practice or approach,

...I see other skills that I do, like data collection, synthesis and analysis...is just a skill...it is a tool I use to integrate into who I am... (Aroha)

In a similar way, philosophy and values, rather than methodology or method, shaped Mere's practice. Methodologies and methods were drawn from her "...kete" as required. Guided by his tikanga marae framework, Peter's practice was not imposed or predetermined. The evaluation process was negotiated and emergent, shaped in response to the evaluation setting. Reflecting marae protocols, the evaluator was invited in. Relationship and intent were established. The approach and process were shaped through stakeholder engagement. The evaluation process was responsive to local events, order, and process. In this way, evaluators didn't just enter a setting and conduct evaluation with no regard to context. Rather, they "...adhere [to tikanga]." Just as visitors leave the marae "...better, because of what you have said, because of what you have contributed", the evaluator also had a responsibility to add and return value.

Relational values were evident across the Māori participants who described tikanga Māori as their framework for practice. Shane was concerned with "...whanaungatanga", "...being cognizant of where you are from", "...respect", "...trusting", "...reciprocity", "...looking after things, treasuring things and treasuring people", "...manākitanga," and "...aroha". Atawhai described an ethic of "...responsibility", "...care" and "...manākitanga." Mere's practice built upon whakapapa and whakawhanaungatanga. At the start of all evaluations, she introduced herself to stakeholders, who she was, where she was from, her connections to them, and her understanding of evaluation. Describing

process use, she knew the process often changed stakeholders' regard for evaluation, "...they get that this is a really valuable thing..." Aroha's practice was underpinned by "...wairuatanga, kotahitanga, tinorangatiranga, aroha, manākitanga." Peter's tikanga marae framework was assisting him to align his practice with values such as whakawhanaungatanga, whakapapa, manaakitanga, awhi, koha, and aroha. In doing so, evaluation was becoming a vehicle through which he could express "...who I am". He commented,

...where I was before, you just kind of lose touch with the humanity of the discipline, whereas now it's kind of like "aah, this is good, I can be me, and I can have more control over what I do as opposed to being controlled by the process."  
(Peter)

Shane, Atawhai, Mere, Aroha, and Peter all described an accountability to use evaluation to support Māori development. Atawhai carried this responsibility "...wherever you go." Mere regarded evaluation as a "...hikoi" or journey. The evaluator and stakeholders were "...on the same team." Guided by tikanga, she walked alongside stakeholders and was increasingly confident that an appropriate evaluation design would emerge from the process.

## **5.4 Evaluation practice**

Participants' understanding and approach to evaluation was explored in-depth to aid understanding of their practice context. Participants' accounts revealed four common characteristics of practice that helped to explain intent and practice regarding process use: a utilization-focused approach, a pragmatic and contextually responsive approach, a relational approach, and an approach orientated to achieving learning and developmental outcomes.

### **Utilization focused approach**

A concern for utilization was evident through most participants' accounts of practice and what was considered good evaluation. Almost all independent consultants, all organizational consultants, and almost all government evaluators, were intentional in undertaking practices that would enhance the likelihood of findings use (this being a

common form of process use). Bridget, Chris, Susan, Lina, Anna, Anita, Tony, Richard, and Sally understood that stakeholder participation made it more likely that findings would be used, while Steve, Claire, Dianne, Roy, and Bridget recognized this same effect in relation to unfavourable findings.

Participants were aware of how a participatory approach enhanced use. For Susan, it enabled her to identify "...the stuff that's actually most important" to stakeholders. For Anna, evaluation was more likely to meet stakeholders' need, while for Anita, the process was more likely to satisfy what the client had set out to address. For Tony, a participatory approach ensured shared understanding of intended end use, which in turn helped to ensure that a useful evaluation would be designed. Sally also understood this. She was more able to understand and meet the needs of clients when they engaged in the evaluation process.

Dianne, Chris, Bridget, Claire, Steve, Lina, Sally, and Richard understood that participation enhanced stakeholder trust, buy-in, and ownership. Dianne suggested this occurred because perceptions of evaluation quality, credibility, and validity were enhanced. Lina observed,

...I see the whole evaluative process as a social process which means that there is a level of engagement, there is a desire to seek to understand multiple perspectives, there is acknowledgement that it has to be used, and the only way it will get used is if people have a role to play and have a contribution to make, their voices are heard, their voice is captured and they are engaging in ways that then help the socialisation process. (Lina)

Sally also understood that stakeholder engagement could enhance perceptions of evaluation quality and eventually utility,

...it doesn't matter how thin your report is, how many gaps are in it, they get it because they already understand what you have done. (Sally)

However, if clients were only engaged through the delivery of findings, they were more likely to feel "...short changed". Regardless of quality and comprehensiveness, reports often did not match clients' expectations, and in the absence of process engagement, they were more likely to feel "...that's a helluva lot of money to spend on that document."

Claire understood that participation enabled stakeholder values to inform evaluation criteria, and believed that this enhanced stakeholders' perceptions of evaluation credibility and validity. She was always thinking,

...how am I going to get [stakeholders] to buy into the findings, and one way to do that is to make sure that their voices are heard when we are defining what quality and value mean, and that they are involved in interpretations of the stuff that they might consider contentious and that they might resist when I trot it out at the end of the story... (Claire)

The expectation that stakeholder values would shape criteria was seen by Claire as a unique feature of local practice, and one that inevitably led to a participatory approach. In her experience,

...unless people see their values or how they define quality and value built in to what you've done, they don't see it as credible and they are not going to use it.  
(Claire)

#### *Concern for instrumental findings use*

The evaluation practice of evaluators working in government reflected the needs and constraints of their organizations. The emphasis these participants placed on findings use was an example of this. Chris was adamant that evaluation needed to produce useful “...things”, that is, findings. Managers were unlikely to commit time and resources to evaluation without such utility. Good evaluation asked the right and most important questions and was timely in delivering answers. Recommendations were practical, feasible, and responsive to context. A methodologically sound evaluation could have little use if end-users had not had the opportunity to be involved in and to learn from the process. Inevitably, he described his approach as both participatory and utilization focused.

Tony described utilization as integral to the “...public value and service...” of evaluation. Like Chris, he recognized that he worked within an organization that was primarily focused on findings use. His utilization orientated approach, and definition of good evaluation, was shaped by “...work imperatives” and “...political requirements”. Stakeholder participation was important so that end-use needs were identified and fulfilled. Good evaluation followed the organizational, technical, project management, and political capabilities required to design and conduct an evaluation that addressed the right questions.

However, Tony was also pragmatic about the extent of evaluation use and influence within his organization. Evaluation wasn't always "...first on people's minds" and tended to be considered "...a little after ideas have been cemented in place." Bridget was also realistic about the level of influence evaluation had within her organization. It was often undertaken for accountability reasons or to meet a ministerial directive. In general, it lacked a professional domain or mandate.

Similar to Tony and Chris, Dianne's utilization focused approach was also shaped by her organization's needs and context. Good evaluation was "...worthwhile." There was some point to it in terms of informing organizational decisions, action, or performance. Good evaluation asked important questions and answers were "...taken notice of".

Roy also described the need for utility as the strongest influence shaping his utilization focused approach. The final test of good evaluation was the extent it was "...utilized well." Similar to Tony, he observed on-going need to convince internal stakeholders that evaluation should be considered,

...right at the beginning...an integral part of the policy government process...[not] a discreet activity which people switch on and off. (Roy)

Roy saw government departments making limited use of evaluation as a reflective tool or as part of iterative cycles of evidence gathering. There was some cynicism about evaluation within the public sector. Evaluation suffered from a level of resistance and risk aversion typical of any public sector.

Similar to Tony, Roy, and Bridget, Ben also questioned the extent of evaluation influence within his organization. He also perceived some aversion within his workplace, and in the public sector generally, to using evaluation as critical reflection. The institutional culture was "...hostile to self-examination." Such reflection was likely to be punished for revealing what might be interpreted "...as a performance problem." Evaluation was "...marginalized in the structure," often "...an afterthought." Operational staff were not "...really that interested in the critical facts" nor in the notion of a "...critical friend." His pursuit of critical analysis was "...guerrilla work". Rather than through organizational structure or process, the diffusion of evaluation knowledge and influence was more likely through personal relationships and perseverance.

## **A pragmatic and contextually responsive approach**

Participants often described their approach to evaluation as pragmatic, particularly consultants working for organizations and those working within government. A pragmatic approach was practical, eclectic, responsive, and adaptive. It inevitably led to a participatory and collaborative approach.

Evaluation conducted within Dianne's organization was pragmatic because it was shaped by internal needs and opportunity. Trish considered it part of the evaluator's core competencies to be able to conduct evaluation that was "...contextually credible." Mere used tools and processes that made sense to stakeholders in context. Peter described good evaluation as responsive and flexible. Adaptability was respectful as well as a practical necessity. Evaluators needed to be "...mindful" of situation or context, and should be prepared to use multiple or alternative methods if required. Anita and Lorraine both understood that methodologies needed to be responsive to context, including stakeholders' needs and expectations.

Chris accepted that evaluation was inevitably "...tempered with practical realities" and that there would always be some uncertainty within evaluative conclusions. Lisa believed that evaluators needed to be adaptable, flexible, and able to cope with less than ideal situations. Lina knew that decision making was influenced by a range of factors, not just evaluation evidence, and that methods were inevitably constrained. Anita also accepted this and knew that the ability to meet clients' needs required the practical ability to utilize and adapt a range of methods.

Claire questioned the local relevance of the concept 'process use' as typically described in the literature. While the concept was often discussed in the context of external evaluation, evaluation conducted locally was often an on-going and responsive process, where evaluators worked alongside programs and organizations. External evaluation of a discrete evaluand was not always the right 'tool' to improve outcomes. For example, she saw a particular need to develop the technical capability of commissioners to purchase and use evaluation effectively,

...whether you call it process use, or whether you call it evaluative capacity, or evaluative thinking, or building an evaluative culture...any number of a range of things...I think a lot of it is about building evaluative capacity...if you ask most clients, of all the money they have spent on evaluation over the last five years, what

percentage of that would they consider money well spent, not much of it I would imagine, 5-10% maybe if we are lucky. That's brought us to rethink what's actually needed... (Claire)

## **A relational approach**

Almost all the independent consultants, as well as Lina, described the relational nature of evaluation. Mere's practice was underpinned by whakapapa, whakawhanaungatanga, collectiveness, and aroha. Shane described a variety of relational practices: powhiri, mihi whakatau, karakia, waiata, the sharing of kai, and koha. Aroha described evaluation as a transformative process where the evaluator and stakeholders worked together in mutual co-creation. Under Peter's tikanga marae framework, relationship was re-positioned as core to practice; the "...humanity of evaluation" was reaffirmed.

Atawhai's relational approach followed her understanding that this was important to Māori, and for ensuring that evaluation led to outcomes of value to Māori. Engagement was critical to evaluation credibility and validity. While social scientists might believe these outcomes required distance from the evaluand, she observed,

...If you go into a Māori community and you don't know anybody, you don't know how communities work, you don't understand what makes this community tick, then you have no credibility. So your ability to engage, to draw out what is important, to make sense of that, is not enhanced in any way by this notion of independence. (Atawhai)

In this context, Atawhai believed that externality was more appropriately understood as an issue concerned with data quality, rather than bias or subjectivity. These latter risks were best addressed through ensuring transparency and shared understanding regarding how evaluative conclusions were derived through the evaluation process.

Claire also recognized that "...who" rather than "...what" was an important local determinant of evaluation quality. She commented,

It's about credibility, validity, and utility in the end...if those three things are compromised, if we skip the participation aspect, particularly in this country...people [in the US] have much more respect for credentials and power...[locally] we just want to see the content of what people can do, we want to

see them in action and hear them thinking on their feet, so it's that interaction that helps us believe this is something worth listening to, not a resume full of fancy letters. (Claire)

She continued,

...I find if I don't have a process that gets client values built into it, then I don't have good validity, and I don't have good face validity, and if you don't have good face validity, you don't have good credibility and people aren't going to use it anyway. (Claire)

In Lisa's view, relationships constituted the "...absolute central tenet" of evaluation. Relationships required the development of trust, and trust was the basis upon which stakeholders typically entered into an evaluation relationship. Susan believed that authentic and respectful stakeholder relationships were essential. While such relationships could enhance findings use, they were not pursued simply for these ends,

...it is about creating a relationship that is not just confined to that evaluation or to evaluation...so the relationship that you create, to the extent that it is appropriate and possible in the circumstance...it's about creating lasting relationships that evaluation becomes just one part of... (Susan)

Many participants stressing the relational nature of evaluation also sought transparency within their practice. This was also important for Trish and Roy. The honouring of others was central to Lisa's relational practice and how trust developed. Trust required the evaluator to be open about the evaluation process, including what was required from stakeholders. Good evaluation was inclusive and open, not "...smoke and mirrors." Stakeholders should understand,

...how we got to where we got to, there is no black box; they feel part of the process... (Lisa)

Peter also sought open and honest relationships. Good evaluation was a shared, rather than imposed process; again not "...smoke and mirrors." Similar to Lisa and Peter, Trish believed that evaluators should explain "...how the whole [evaluation] process hangs together..." and how conclusions are derived. Claire had similar views. Good evaluation

was transparent about the evaluative reasoning and logic that lead descriptive findings to evaluative judgements.

Roy believed that it was important that stakeholders understood why evaluation was being conducted and its intended use. Such transparency supported stakeholder engagement and data quality. It was also ethical and respectful. It demonstrated that the evaluator was “...concerned with people” and “...fairness.”

Transparency was central to Jack’s practice at a number of levels. He was intentional in communicating to stakeholders the values and beliefs that underpinned his practice. He ensured that evaluative criteria and standards were collectively determined and understood. Good evaluation opened the evaluand up to scrutiny. He sought meaningful and honest stakeholder relationships. Recognizing that “...everyone has got their own values in play,” Aroha was also upfront in communicating how her values shaped her practice. If potential clients or other stakeholders found this difficult, “...fine, I’ll go off and do something else”. Good evaluation for Anna was similarly transparent about the influence of values and biases brought to the process by the evaluator and stakeholders. It was important that stakeholders understood,

...what you are about...where you are coming from...what they are going to get  
when they hire you...(Anna)

### *Connectedness*

The issue of interpersonal connectedness underpinned a relational approach. It was a central consideration when working with Māori, and was inevitable when working within a small population context. Evaluation credibility and validity were determined for Atawhai by the evaluator’s ability to engage appropriately within a cultural context. Peter understood that relational obligations continued well after the completion of an evaluation. Mere also understood this. Due to whakapapa or other connections to stakeholders, she could occupy a range of internal to external positions within any evaluation. Both the evaluator and stakeholders brought to the evaluation process “...all the people” and experiences that had shaped them. The evaluation process was part of an on-going journey that was as important as “...the end result.” The journey could continue well beyond the evaluation, “...for generations often”. Shane also understood that through whakapapa, all evaluations

linked to past and future. While whakapapa could help to establish connection and trust with stakeholders, it also meant additional process accountabilities. He observed,

...If we make a mistake, it's not us...making the mistake, it's my father that's making the mistake, and all my people behind me and his people and [my partner's] people.  
(Shane)

Shane he could be interviewing someone one day, and the next, walking onto a marae with them and “...doing the dishes together”. While roles may differ, “...the relationship is still the same”. He commented,

...I just know that one day they will either say I remember you, or they might have some of the old people there in the room and there might be somebody there... I don't remember you, but I remember what you did with my nephew. (Shane)

Claire's participatory approach followed her understanding that connectivity was an important local determinant of evaluation quality. Locally, externality was considered a barrier rather than enabler of credibility and validity. She observed,

...we live in a small country that values connections and we actually have to be connected in order to be critical...it is kind of like only your best friend can criticize you and expect to be heard. (Claire)

Working within a small population context, Lisa might encounter the same person repeatedly within different evaluation contexts. When working with Māori, this might occur “...five or six times”. Honest and respectful relationships were therefore critical. People would remember “...how we related...whether I was of my word”. Susan understood that word of mouth could help secure her future access to evaluation stakeholders or settings. This effect may be felt in later and possibly unrelated evaluations, particularly within Māori communities. Sally had interviewed the same person three times in 10 years, each time concerning a different evaluation. Reflecting on her work with Māori, she observed,

...you are going to meet them at some runanga committee and they are going to be a cousin. So there's this culpability thing that you have, this reciprocity, this accountability that's quite unique I think to being in a small country. (Sally)

## **A learning orientated approach**

A learning orientated approach to evaluation was commonly described. Almost all the independent evaluators, some consultants working within organizations, and most government evaluators, saw evaluation as a learning process. Intent to facilitate stakeholder learning through the process was common. As a “...naive questioner”, Lorraine enabled stakeholders to think about their practice differently. The whole point of evaluation for Anna was to get stakeholders to consider new thought or action. As public servants often experienced rapid timeframes, high staff turnover, “...change” and “...churn,” Lina sought to create a space where they could engage in critical reflection and consider new ways of thinking and doing. Trish saw the evaluator as a facilitator of critical reflection. The evaluation process might involve,

...unlearning...relearning...new learning...some disruption of paradigm, of models of the world... (Trish)

Ben described evaluation in similar terms. Good evaluation re-examined the way social problems were framed and addressed. It often involved “...disruptive thinking” and “...cognitive dissonance.” Aroha was also intentional in using the evaluation process to get stakeholders to “...push back into their own thinking.” Susan described evaluation as “...discovery through exploration”. It enabled the critical re-examination of existing assumptions, beliefs, and practices. She was a conduit, synthesiser, and facilitator who enabled stakeholders “...to look at stuff in ways that ...[everyone]...can learn from” or “...in a way that they might not have [done] before...”

Tony, Steve, and Chris recognized that evaluation often provided a structure and opportunity to learn through critical or evaluative thinking. In Tony’s experience, the “...structure” of stakeholders’ work meant that such thinking was not necessarily routinely undertaken. Chris was surprised at how often stakeholders had not thought about what program success looked like when asked during an evaluation.

Participants understood that the tools and frameworks of evaluation could be intentionally used to facilitate learning. Sally recognized that logic modelling taught stakeholders how to engage in reflective practice. Shane similarly valued logic modelling as a structured way of drawing out stakeholders’ assumptions regarding program theory. Peter described rubric development as a framework for critically examining values underpinning

definitions of success. For Mary, rubric development was critical reflection and had the potential to fundamentally change the way stakeholders thought about quality and success.

### *Formative orientation*

Many participants used the evaluation process to support learning and development outcomes regardless of the type of evaluation they were conducting. Common reasons for this were limited program and evaluation planning often encountered prior to undertaking an evaluation, and the limited evaluation capability of stakeholders. Some of the independent consultants, all of the organizational consultants, and most government evaluators, had experienced inadequate program or evaluation planning. Anna described program objectives as often “...inappropriate”, “...hazy”, sometimes “...not there” at all. Anita was surprised at how often stakeholders lacked shared understanding regarding what they were doing or why. In one program, in operation for 10 years, “...no one could say, in a nut shell, this is what we are doing.” Richard preferred to work as formatively as possible to ensure that things were “...right before you start”. Steve’s approach was similar. Most evaluations he undertook required the further input of “...evaluation minds.” Even if the evaluand was specified through logic modelling, consensus regarding program or evaluation objectives may still be lacking. In Sally’s experience, the “...heavy thinking” regarding the evaluand or the evaluation was often missing. Programs could lack an obvious evidence-base or shared agreement about this. She could not assume that sufficient evaluability assessment had been conducted. New Zealanders were good at doing but not so good at “...thinking and stopping and writing”. Ben similarly described New Zealanders as practical and action orientated people who liked “...to be seen to be acting on something.” In doing so, they were less likely to reflect on underlying cause or reason,

...we feel better doing something, than doing nothing, even though the doing something obscures...the issue that we are really acting on and closes off more justifiable or potentially useful actions. (Ben)

Working within government, poor or hurried program design was a common experience for Bridget. Tony often had to clarify program intent, strategy, or implementation alongside evaluation planning. There might be a lag or gap between operational activities, strategy, and planning. Stakeholders were not always clear how their evaluation questions linked to organizational goals or objectives.

Shane described early career experiences where, due to weaknesses in design or implementation, it was clear to him that programs would never work. As Māori, he was concerned that such programs got “...foisted on our people”. A formative approach made it more likely that evaluation could make a positive difference for Māori. Aroha also favoured a formative approach that would build capacity and success,

...if people want to start an endeavour, some kind of journey, some kind of project, program or whatever they want to call it...service, it is much better for them to apply that evaluative thinking at the outset of that journey. (Aroha)

Experiences of limited evaluative capacity and capability amongst stakeholders were common. The first task for Anna, in most evaluations, was to work with the commissioner to develop the brief. Typically, commissioners did not know how to conduct evaluation, “...they just want it done”. Sally often had to address inappropriate expectations regarding program outcomes. Her work would be “...pretty quick and short” if evaluations were better conceptualized prior to commissioning. Steve had also experienced commissioning agencies having unrealistic expectations regarding program outcomes, and limited ability to specify appropriate questions. While he would ideally prefer to see greater clarity at the commissioning stage, he didn’t “...see that happening a lot of the time”.

Working within government, Bridget also experienced stakeholders having unrealistic expectations regarding evaluation. Mary often worked with stakeholders who had limited understanding of their evaluation need, evaluation criteria, and intended use. She had come to accept this as reflective of how difficult it could be to achieve a more planned or strategic approach to decision-making within political environments,

...we used to feel alarmed by the absence of clear framing around [evaluation purpose]...seemingly you are doing this for a purpose and therefore you must have some decision to make? What is the decision that you are going to make?...A couple of years ago I would have been quite vocal and frustrated about the inability of people internally to articulate what decisions they need to make, but I think in retrospect I would say that's a more kind of naive evaluation view of the nature of decision makers...or with the policy process, or how strategic and planned organizations can actually be, especially in a political environment. (Mary)

In Lina's experience, the thinking and detail behind policy and program development was often tacit; implicit in the minds of staff, yet not clearly articulated in written form. Staff turnover was a contributing factor. Inevitably, the evaluator was required to clarify and make meaning from what was or was not documented. In Claire's experience, while government agencies were often able to articulate intended outcomes from their work, they often lacked common understanding regarding what desired progress and performance would look like, that is,

...what success would look like...how good is good, how good is good enough, how good is fantastic? (Claire)

Because of this, organizations could be "...trundling away on hamster wheels" and not getting any closer to usefully understanding performance and outcomes through evaluation. Limited client expertise in evaluation was considered as much a contributing factor to this as the skills and competencies of evaluators. She reflected,

...I think when we talk about the quality or the value of evaluation, there is often a default position that it must be technically inadequate and the evaluator's no good, but to me a lot of the fault lies on the client's side, or not so much fault but lack of capacity as well as fault, for not having that know-how and savvy to know what they are commissioning. (Claire)

Lisa made a similar observation. Earlier in the day of her interview, a client had said to her,

...we haven't got a clue about how to do this [evaluation]; we don't even know where to start. (Claire)

She considered this situation similar to an earlier time in the market research industry when researchers had to carefully specify what they were doing and why. However, "...once the market grew up, you didn't have to do that anymore."

## **5.5 Awareness and experience of process use**

All participants described some level of existing awareness and experience of process use. While participants did not necessarily identify the process-based learning and development

outcomes they described as process use, the label is used in the following section for editorial purposes. While a general awareness of process use was revealed, four specific types were also commonly discussed. These were: evaluation as capacity building, dialogue as learning, logic modelling as learning, and the participation of stakeholders can enhance findings use. Participants' experience of the latter type is not discussed below as this has been extensively described in previous findings.

### **General awareness**

Many of the independent consultants, most organizational consultants, and some of the government evaluators revealed general awareness of process use. Trish believed that most of the stakeholder learning that occurred through her practice was through process use. While agreeing that evaluation was primarily concerned with determining merit and worth, she believed this definition had resulted in evaluation being commonly defined as the product of this inquiry. She now saw these determinations as something that the evaluator did throughout the evaluation process. Mary's thinking had evolved from framing evaluation through "...a traditional research model." Historically, this lens had focused her organization's attention on evaluation as a product. She had come to understand evaluation as a learning process and much more than the production and dissemination of findings. Good evaluation required shared understanding of need, purpose, organizational context, intended use, and the basis for making evaluative judgments. The process was inevitably participatory and negotiated.

Lisa and Susan considered process use integral to good evaluation. For Lisa, it occurred when practice was transparent, respectful, ethical, and genuine in wanting to help people. Practices that facilitated process use ultimately enhanced quality, validity, and credibility. Process use was central to Susan's understanding of evaluation and aspirations as an evaluator. It could occur across all stages of the evaluation process, and for stakeholders and evaluators alike. Her engagement in interviews had frequently led her to a new resolve to be, think, or act differently. As an external consultant, she knew that she could not fully control findings use and this enhanced her intent regarding process use.

Dianne believed that definitions of evaluation focused primarily on findings use failed to capture the enabling outcomes that occurred through the process. Sally recognized that evaluation included all the process-based learning that occurred in addition to formal

reporting. Bridget also believed that much of the utility from evaluation occurred “...along the way” and through interactions facilitated by the process. As a consultant, Lina was constantly asked to deliver “...products” in the form of findings. Regarding evaluation as a process of learning, she considered a singular focus on findings use as “...too low level”. Anna was aware that use also occurred when stakeholders became “...more reflective.” Learning often followed the critical thinking enabled by the evaluation process. This was indicated when stakeholders made comments such as,

“You know, we've actually done quite a lot. We've done more than we thought” or  
“We didn't realize this or that about the project.”(Anna)

For Mere, the potential for evaluation to lead to learning and development of value to stakeholders was “...ideal”. Chris believed that the journey of evaluation was as important as the “...end destination”. Clients only interested in the end were likely to “...miss out on a lot.” They were potentially “...afraid” of the process, or were likely to be approaching evaluation primarily as a “...matter of compliance.”

Steve recognized that evaluation provided stakeholders with an opportunity to step away from ‘doing’. It provided space to engage in critical thinking. Jack saw evaluation as a series of interactions that could impact either positively or negatively depending on the evaluator’s conduct and intent. Good evaluation occurred when the evaluator was intentional in ensuring that impacts were constructive and enabling. Lorraine had similar beliefs. The evaluator was a “...good resource in clear thinking” and should be used accordingly. In this way, the evaluator could contribute to the “...success of the whole thing”. As did Steve, she saw the evaluator having a duty to intervene in the evaluand if required.

Lisa, Ben, and Susan linked their awareness of process use to experiences prior to becoming evaluators. Lisa had previously conducted mental health research, Ben had worked in social services, and Susan had completed a PhD. Lisa’s experience had demonstrated to her that it was inevitable that the research process would impact on participants, and that there was a requirement to plan for this. A concern for social justice had underpinned all of Ben’s previous professional roles and he saw evaluation no differently. The evaluator had a responsibility to act in the interests of marginalized and disadvantaged groups. The evaluation process could impact positively or negatively

depending upon the evaluator's intent and approach. Reflecting on her PhD, Susan had come to see how her research questions were likely to have impacted her participants. As a feminist researcher, she understood that "...as soon as you take an action [as a researcher]...other people are affected." She knew that just writing a report at the end of an evaluation and "...moving on" was not how the process made a difference.

### **Evaluation as capacity building**

Many independent consultants were intentional in using the evaluation process to build the evaluative capacity of stakeholders. This intent lay at the core of Trish's practice. Jack understood that it signalled an implicit concern for process use. Anna sought generally to develop evaluative culture within the organizations she worked with. Claire was concerned with building the capacity of stakeholders to better understand what difference their work was making.

All the independent Māori consultants were intentional in building stakeholder capacity. For Mere, Atawhai, and Shane, this was one way that evaluation could make a difference for Māori. For Mere, learning and capacity development outcomes were "...hugely important". Her preference was to describe such learning as "...evaluation, building capability," rather than process use. Atawhai also regarded the term as having limited relevance for her, yet accepted that process use could be considered, implicitly and explicitly, a part of all her work. Her intent to build capacity might be the "...process use end" of her practice. However, this was more appropriately described as being intentional in facilitating "...learning by doing," or ensuring that the evaluation process supported stakeholders "...to do things better when you leave". Aroha regarded evaluation as a process of continuous and mutual learning, and capacity development. Peter's increasing focus on building capacity was in part a response to his previous dissatisfaction regarding his practice and professional development. He had moved from regarding evaluation as just a job to seeing it as a process through which he could "...leave behind" value.

### **Dialogue as learning**

Many of the independent consultants, as well as evaluators working in government, recognized that evaluation dialogue inevitably facilitated process use. For Trish, much of the learning facilitated by evaluation occurred through evaluative questioning. The process

was potentially disruptive. Lina considered every evaluation related interaction, interview, or meeting as an opportunity to effect change. Rather than conduct interviews as a question and answer session, Lorraine was purposeful in facilitating discussions that engaged participants in critical reflection. Anita understood that interviews could lead participants to new understanding and ways of thinking. She recognized that participants,

...do get stuff out of participating...We do focus groups ...usually at the end you've got people going "That's really interesting. I hadn't thought of some of those things..." (Anita)

Chris knew that interviews could trigger "...a whole lot of thought stuff." Bridget had always understood that interviews could have profound effects on people through enabling "...cathartic expression." Peter had experienced how interviews could facilitate self-reflection and could lead participants to new insights and behaviour change. Participants could feel listened to and heard. The potential for interviews to have psychological or emotional impact meant they were never simply just another data collection method.

Through ensuring that the interview process respected and dignified participants, Ben believed that interviews could be affirming and enabling. The process could facilitate insight, options, or optimism,

...I think that you change things as soon as you talk to people in a good way. (Ben)

Aroha also sought to conduct interviews that were respectful, responsive, and potentially transformative. The interview process created,

...a sort of learning space, like I am learning from them and they are learning from me and we are learning and creating from each other, so it should be kind of transformative in some way. It is not just me digging and getting answers from them and writing stuff. (Aroha)

### **Logic modelling as learning**

Participants understood that program logic modelling could generate process use, particularly shared understanding. Mere described the process as having the potential to facilitate cross-stakeholder communication, critical reflection, shared understanding, and transformative learning. In Dianne's experience, the process often enabled stakeholders to,

...suddenly work [it] out “Oh yes, that's what we're doing and why we are doing it. Actually, that might not work but something else will work if we [did it this way]...”  
(Dianne)

Tony described similar experiences. Given the relative simplicity of the process, he was surprised at how useful internal stakeholders, particularly policy analysts, typically found the process. Sally also often received positive feedback from stakeholders regarding the learning derived through logic modelling,

As soon as you start getting that back, you know you have done a good job. And that is nothing to do with the final report; this is all process use. (Sally)

## 5.6 Discussion

The assumption is made in this thesis that the context within which evaluators practice evaluation will help to explain their intent and practice regarding process use. Consequently, a detailed account has been provided of the practice context of the evaluators who participated in this study. Participants’ existing awareness and experience of process use was also explored.

Some participants reported that process use was integral to their understanding and approach to evaluation, and that it was inevitable given their practice. Many participants were aware of specific types of process use. These initial findings are consistent with earlier descriptions of local practice as uniquely process driven (Williams, 2003).

I now consider potential explanations for the finding of some existing orientation to process use amongst local evaluators. Explanations are initially considered in relation to how this study was designed and conducted. The explanatory potential of the values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions that shaped common orientations to practice is then examined. I then summarize the characteristics that defined participants’ evaluation practice, suggest how these link to underlying values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions, and consider how the identified characteristics may also help to explain existing awareness and experience of process use. The findings are finally re-examined using reflexive interpretation, and implications for evaluation practice are considered.

### **Existing awareness and intent regarding process use**

Some types of process use identified by participants appeared more intentional than others. Intent was most obvious in relation to involving stakeholders in the evaluation process to enhance findings use, using the process to build evaluation capacity, and ensuring that the process influenced stakeholders constructively. Other types of process use were indicated as more inevitable, given participatory practices adopted, rather than necessarily intentional. This included the process use generated by deliberative questioning, logic modelling, and rubric development.

The term ‘process use’ is used throughout this thesis to represent the range of process-based learning and development outcomes reported by participants. However, it is not assumed that participants recognized or called these outcomes ‘process use’, either at the time they believed they occurred or when discussing them during interviews. Care must therefore be taken in comparing my findings to Harnar and Preskill (2007) who essentially ‘tested’ respondents’ understanding of the term ‘process use’. Nonetheless, the level of evaluator awareness regarding process use identified contrasts with this earlier study, and in particular, the finding that many respondents did not recognize or understand the concept of process use, or were unable to describe it in a meaningful way.

### **Methodological explanations**

The evaluators participating in this study were asked to retrospectively consider process use within their practice. In doing so, the level of awareness they demonstrated indicated the priming effect anticipated by Preskill et al. (2003). That is, their awareness was likely to have been stimulated through their engagement in this study, and the research methodology acted in support of this. Participants frequently told me that the research had enhanced their consciousness of process use, or that the concept had provided them with a useful heuristic for thinking about evaluation influence within their practice.

The level of awareness of process use identified also vindicates three key methodological decisions. First, the decision to use in-depth interviews on the basis the method could draw out participants’ experience of process use and could facilitate deep inquiry into this experience (Johnson, 2002; Lewis, 2003; Warren, 2002). Second, the decision to select more experienced evaluators to participate in the study as they would be more likely to recognize process use (Harnar & Preskill, 2007). Third, in response to the

recall concerns of Forss et al. (2002) and Preskill et al. (2003), the decision to limit the period for recalling the occurrence of process use to 12 months or less.

### **Values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions**

Participants' orientation to equality clearly helps to explain their awareness and experience of process use. Māori and non-Māori participants used the evaluation process to achieve more equal relationships with stakeholders and more democratic processes. There was intent to 'give back' power or control to stakeholders. Participants did this by drawing out stakeholders' existing knowledge, skills, and experience, by building evaluative capacity, and by returning evaluation ownership and control. Such outcomes align to the three main process use typologies: cognitive, behavioural, and attitudinal/affective.

Tikanga Māori, as a framework for practice, was shown to support process-based utility, and the use of evaluation as a change process. Underpinned by an ethic of responsibility, the independent Māori evaluators sought to 'give back' and ensure that evaluation contributed to Māori development. Values underpinning their approach included relationship and connection, respect, trust, reciprocity, support, care, and love. Their desire to satisfy such values was evidenced through a number of practices that would generate process use, for example, the integration of stakeholders' skills and knowledge, and the use of the evaluation process to build autonomy. It is self-evident that such practices could lead to process use, including enhanced engagement and ownership, and more favourable attitudes to evaluation and its use (Greene, 1998; Patton, 1997, 2007; Taut, 2007).

Participants' concern for social justice was expressed in a variety of ways, for example, the belief that evaluation should be inclusive, empowering, just, and fair. These beliefs link to concerns for making a difference, social betterment, and equality. In the context of such beliefs, it is understandable that participants would be aware of and intentional in seeking process-based utility. A participatory approach to evaluation, commonly described by participants, is also understandable, and further explains awareness and experience of process use. A participatory approach is consistent with the observation of previous authors who have described local evaluators as being particularly concerned with issues of inclusion, democracy, well-being, and social equity (Datta, 2003; Perrin, 2003).

I predicted that process use was likely to be an integral and perhaps inevitable part of evaluation practice under the ideologically orientated tradition (Abma & Widdershoven,

2008), and the findings provide some support to this. Many of the practices used by participants to satisfy social justice concerns aligned to the ideologically orientated tradition and would likely generate process use. According to Abma and Widdershoven (2008), evaluators working under this tradition engage closely with stakeholders in order to address issues of inclusion, power, and control. The evaluator and stakeholder relationship is typically interactive, interpersonal, and collaborative, and is therefore a relationship more likely to support process use (Amo & Cousins, 2007; Forss et al., 2002; Preskill et al., 2003).

### **Breadth of the explanatory context**

Some participants' awareness of process use, and preference for a participatory approach supportive of process use, was shaped by their experiences in non-evaluation settings. In these cases, explanations were revealed through understanding how meaning and belief came about (Soos, 2006). The breadth of the explanatory context was also demonstrated. This was particularly evident for those Māori evaluators whose practice was shaped by historical, social, cultural, and political concerns. Their intent to support Māori development and autonomy is understandable in the context of Māori experience of colonization and aspirations for tinorangatiratanga (Bishop, 1998, 1999; Cram, 2009; Smith, 1997). Given that research and evaluation have historically been oppressive and damaging for Māori (Cram, 1991; Forster, 2003; Mataira, 2003; Powick, 2002; Smith, 1999), their concern for ensuring the evaluation process returns value and benefits to Māori is also understandable.

### **A concern for utilization**

The participants in this study were united in wanting their work to be useful and used. Many regarded utility as central to good evaluation, and a utilization focused approach was evident in most accounts of practice. These findings are not surprising given that evaluators have long considered utilization to be important (Ayers, 1987; Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Cronbach, 1980; Greene, 1988; Weiss, 1979). The participatory practices commonly described clearly reflected the utilization focused tradition (Abma & Widdershoven's, 2008; Patton, 1988, 1997, 2008) and participatory approaches under this tradition (Ayers 1987; Brisolara, 1998; Bryk, 1983; Cousins, 1996; Cousins & Earl, 1992; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998).

Participants' concern for utility provides a context for understanding their intent to achieve a common form of process use; that is, the use of participatory practices to enhance findings use. This finding is not surprising as evaluators have long understood that stakeholder participation encourages use (Alkin, 1985; Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Fleischer & Christie, 2009; Johnson et al., 2009). They also have considerable understanding of how and why this relationship exists (Ayers, 1987; Cousins, 1996; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Geva-May & Peretz, 1991; Greene, 1988). These findings confirm my prediction that intent to achieve this type of process use may simply be explained because utility is important to evaluators, and because they understand the relationship between utility and stakeholder participation.

Evaluators working within government were united in their concern for instrumental findings use, and commonly accounted for their participatory approach on this basis. These findings made sense given the strong situational influence (Ritchie, Spencer, et al., 2003) of their workplace context. All worked within environments where utility was commonly understood as the provision of useful findings. There was pressure to demonstrate the value of evaluation on this basis. In this context, the intentional adoption of participatory practices to enhance the likelihood of findings use is understandable. However, given the political nature of their workplaces, findings use and evaluation influence was never guaranteed, and the intention of many of these participants to also achieve other types of process use may be also be explained by this. When findings use is uncertain, it makes sense that evaluators would seek other ways to provide utility and value through the evaluation process.

### **Pragmatic and responsive approach**

A pragmatic and contextually responsive approach to evaluation was commonly described and also helps to explain participants' awareness and intent regarding process use. The approach reflected concerns for utilization, equality, and making a difference. It suggests that participants understood that the ability of the evaluator to operate appropriately within context is an important determinant of utilization (Johnson, et al., 2009). It indicates their acceptance that evaluation should be responsive to the different needs and expectations that stakeholders bring to evaluation (Bickman, 1994; Fetterman, 1995; Mark, 2001; Patton, 1996; Shadish, 1994). It also suggests that participants understood that responsiveness to

need, as well as methodological eclecticism, supports the production of locally useful evaluation knowledge (Greene, 1990).

Participants describing a pragmatic and responsive approach also spoke of engaging with stakeholders to understand context. They sought to clarify local definitions of success, existing capacity, and stakeholder expectations. Resultant learning influenced the evaluation process, for example, methods used. Evaluation was negotiated, emergent, and adaptive. Stakeholder relationships were inevitably interactive and interpersonal, and therefore likely to support process use (Amo & Cousins, 2007; Forss et al., 2002; Preskill et al., 2003).

A pragmatic, responsive approach brings to mind Schwandt's (2001, 2005) view that evaluation requires practical knowledge and reasoning. According to Schwandt, good practice is shaped through assessment of context including client needs, local knowledge, relevant principles and values, political considerations, individual goals, and available resources. Participants sought to understand and respond to factors similar to these. The relational and dialogical nature of evaluation is also described by Schwandt (2001, 2005). The evaluator and stakeholders learn from each other, and practice is continuously shaped through the learning that occurs through engaging with others in context. Doing and using evaluation become one and the same. Schwandt is in essence describing process use, and in many ways, the practice of participants who described a pragmatic and contextually responsive approach.

The practice of many evaluators in this study developed through their experience of doing evaluation. Many began to practice with little or no evaluation training. This situation reflects the relative infancy of evaluation practice in Aotearoa New Zealand (Lunt, 2003; Saville-Smith, 2003; Shaw & Eichbaum, 2005) and until recently, a scarcity of training (Trotman, 2003). It may also help to explain a pragmatic and responsive approach as well as heightened awareness of process use. With limited training, evaluators may be less likely to approach evaluation with a fixed idea of what evaluation 'should' be, and more likely to adopt a participatory approach which facilitates experience of process use.

### **A relational approach**

Almost all the independent consultants, as well as Lina, described evaluation as a relational practice. The accounts of practice provided by these participants indicated an approach to evaluation aligned to the hermeneutic and constructivist tradition (Abma & Widdershoven,

2008). They believed that the evaluator had a moral and ethical duty of care to develop respectful and caring relationships. In their experience, learning from evaluation was facilitated through stakeholder dialogue and engagement (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008; Greene, 2001; Schwandt, 2001, 2005).

When evaluation is framed relationally, it is understandable that evaluators will be conscious of how the evaluation process can impact or influence stakeholders. It makes sense that evaluators would use the evaluation process to demonstrate relational intent, achieve relational goals, and satisfy relational ethics. Concern for integrity, honesty, and respect, is also not surprising. These participants believed that the evaluation process should be open and transparent. It should build upon what stakeholders brought to the process and develop their ownership and control. The evaluation process was commonly used to build evaluation, and in this way, the process 'gave back'. All these concerns reflected relational values such as *whakapapa*, *whakawhanaungatanga*, respect, trust, *aroha*, reciprocity, and humility. Links to broader themes of social justice, change, and equality are evident.

Cognitive process use seems likely when the evaluation approach is relational and the evaluator is therefore focused on achieving outcomes such as a transparent process and shared understanding across stakeholders. Attitudinal or affective process use also seems likely. Engaged as equal and respected partners, the evaluation process may well change stakeholders' feelings about themselves, the evaluand, or evaluation. Behavioural process use may also be encouraged. For example, when evaluation criteria and performance standards have been developed collaboratively, stakeholders may be more receptive to using evaluation findings to guide appropriate program or organizational developments.

The finding that connection is considered an important local determinant of evaluation quality also supports a relational approach. Claire described the importance of stakeholder values being reflected in evaluation criteria and the evaluator being able to demonstrate competence within the evaluation setting. Atawhai made a similar observation in relation to working within Māori settings. A relational approach makes sense within these contexts, as does an awareness of process use, particularly attitudinal and affective types.

The position that evaluation quality for Māori requires a relational approach and understanding of context is understandable given Māori experience of negative outcomes from research and evaluation done to them (Bishop, 1998, 1999; Cram, 2009; Smith, 1999).

The position that the threat of bias and subjectivity is best addressed through transparency and shared understanding is also not surprising. Both positions reflect kaupapa Māori criteria that the inquirer's authority and expertise is determined by their appropriateness and capability to contribute usefully within a Māori context (Bishop, 1999; Walker et al., 2006).

### **Practice orientated to learning and development**

Many participants intentionally used the evaluation process to facilitate learning and development regardless of the type of evaluation they were conducting. There was intent to prepare the evaluation setting to be conducive of learning, and deliberateness in using evaluation tools and frameworks to facilitate learning. Many regarded evaluation as a cyclical process of critical reflection on action. Stakeholder participation was not just used to ensure responsiveness to context and to support findings use, but also to facilitate evaluative thinking. A participatory approach was used to generate cross-stakeholder communication, shared understanding, common focus, and the development of evaluation capacity. All of these outcomes are described in the literature as examples of cognitive process use (Forss, et al., 2002; Green, 1988; Patton, 1998, 2007; Weiss, 1998).

Many participants saw themselves as facilitators of learning (King, 2008; Preskill, 2008; Preskill & Torres, 2000; Rossman & Rallis, 2000) and reported practices consistent with adult learning theory. In the context of adult education, learning is considered a process where learners construct meaning through direct experience and through leveraging existing knowledge and experience (Jackson & MacIsaac, 1994; Lewis & Williams, 1994; Marsick & Watkins, 1990). Questions and dialogue are used to facilitate continuous cycles of critical reflection on action and existing thinking (Brookfield, 1986; Jackson & MacIsaac, 1994; Schunk, 2009). The adult educator builds the capacity of learners to weigh evidence, evaluate arguments, and to be open to alternative ideas (Brookfield, 1986; Mezirow, 1991). The educator is re-positioned as co-learner, facilitator, resource person, manager, coach, or change agent (Brookfield, 1986; Caffarella & Barnett, 1994; Claxton, 2009; Knowles & Associates, 1984). The experience and prior knowledge that learners bring to the learning process is regarded as a resource that should be drawn upon (Knowles, 1980; Mezirow, 1991; Schunk, 2009). The adult educator intentionally develops the learning setting to be supportive of critical thinking, group dialogue, and reflection, and for undertaking appropriate action (Caffarella, & Barnett, 1994; Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 1991).

I predicted that a learning orientated approach to evaluation may help to explain intent and practice regarding process use, and the findings provide some support to this. If an evaluator understands that facilitating learning through the evaluation process requires a purposeful approach, then awareness and intent regarding process use is understandable. An understanding of how learning orientated practices lead to learning outcomes may help to explain practices adopted. Some evidence is found for this relationship. Many participants understood that stakeholders could learn through being involved in the development of logic models and rubrics. Theorists have previously identified this potential. Funnel and Rogers (2011) discuss it in relation to adopting a purposeful approach to the development of program theory, while Davidson (2005) discusses it in relation to the development of performance standards. Commenting on a participatory approach to rubric development, Davidson (2005) observes,

This process of defining “how good is good” can be an incredibly valuable exercise for helping all sorts of organizations to think through what they mean by quality or value. In participatory evaluation, this part of the process forms an important part of the groundwork for the evaluation and doubles as an intervention that helps people to focus on what is really important about the work they do (p. 138).

Some participants adopted a learning orientated approach because it was their preference to use evaluation to build capacity and success. However, insufficient planning, and modest levels of evaluation capability and capacity within stakeholders, also helped to explain participants’ focus on process-based learning. Cognitive, behavioural, and attitudinal/affective process use was often necessary should a useful evaluation be possible. It is self-evident that the need to use the evaluation process in this way will reinforce awareness and regard for process use. Less clear from the findings are reasons for the limited program or evaluation planning often encountered. Possible explanations are the relative infancy of evaluation practice in Aotearoa New Zealand (Lunt, 2003; Saville-Smith, 2003; Shaw & Eichbaum, 2005) and that historically there have been limited options for tertiary level education in evaluation (Trotman, 2003). Mary, Bridget, Chris, Tony, and Lina all described how sound planning can be difficult within a political environment, and when the organizational focus may be reactive and short term. Sally and Claire observed that the responsibility for evaluation within government departments often lay with staff who had limited training or experience in evaluation.

## 5.7 Reflexive interpretation

The evaluation orientations and practices identified in this chapter reflect the dimensions of local context purposively explored in this study. Data analysis was influenced by the research purpose, the interpretivist stance adopted, my own experience and views as an evaluator, and the existing literature. These biases are accepted in interpretivist analysis (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Charmaz, 2002; Dey, 2004) and are fundamental to naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

This chapter describes aspects of local context that help to explain evaluators' existing awareness and experience of process use. The orientations and practices reported do not necessarily fully describe how participants approach and practice evaluation. It is not claimed that this is how these evaluators *always* undertake evaluation. Rather, the orientations and practices reported are described because they were to some extent held in common by participants, and because they help to explain awareness and experience of process use. The orientations are therefore complementary of each other, and the practices make sense in relation to the orientations. The orientations are reflective of the values, beliefs, traditions, and aspirations that shaped participants' approach to evaluation, and the reported practices are a means through which these are expressed.

Using reflexive interpretation, I now explore what else might be said or implicated by the findings presented in this chapter. In particular, I consider what is indicated about the particularities of the local evaluation context, what tensions arise regarding evaluation practice, and what the findings might indicate about the risk of process use misuse.

Trish believed that kaupapa Māori practice has broadly influenced both Māori and non-Māori evaluators in Aotearoa New Zealand. She reported that local practice developed during a time of considerable social, cultural, and political change. This included the rise of neo-liberal economic policy, the "...dismantling" of the welfare state, increasing recognition of the principles and responsibilities established under the Treaty, and a renaissance of Māori identity and rights. The development of evaluation was inevitably "...grounded" in this context.

Many of the orientations and practices identified in this chapter reflect the influences identified by Trish. However, they also align with observed developments in evaluation practice and known practice traditions. The level of consensus in the data is therefore not

surprising, and the findings do not necessarily indicate a distinct local practice. For example, orientations to social justice, equality, and making a difference, make sense if social betterment is a fundamental objective of evaluation (Mark & Henry, 2004). Most evaluators would report an utilization focused approach, and at some level would be pragmatic and contextually responsive when working in ‘real world’ settings.

Limited programme or evaluation planning helped to explain learning orientated practices, and there seems little reason why this situation would not also exist in other practice settings. In this situation, it is inevitable that the evaluation process becomes part of the intervention. In facilitating learning and development, the evaluator may not be judging merit or worth and may therefore not be undertaking ‘evaluation’ (Scriven, 1996). However, they are often doing what is practically necessary to conduct evaluation. Roles undertaken and the purpose of evaluation are inevitably intertwined (Fetterman, 1995). In this ‘real-world’ context, distinctions between role and purpose may offer philosophical rather than practical value (Fetterman, 1995). Evaluators should be responsive to developmental needs and the specifics of context (Bickman, 1994; Mark, 2001; Patton, 1996; Shadish, 1994). They are required to undertake multiple roles (Patton, 1997; Skolits et al., 2009). A pragmatic and contextually responsive approach should not in itself confuse or divert attention from the purpose of evaluation. Indeed, an understanding of context and need should come first in any evaluation, and should inform questions, methodology, and method (Patton, 2003).

The findings suggest that in the local practice context, the question isn’t *whether* evaluators should adopt learning and development roles and practices, but rather, *how* they can manage this requirement without compromising the core purpose and integrity of evaluation. These questions were alluded to by Preskill, Zuckerman, & Matthews (2003) who suggested that future research should examine how evaluators plan for process use, and what are the implications for evaluators who actively try to facilitate it. While such questions were not directly examined in this study, they are considered further below. Relevant insights also emerged when participants described examples of process use they considered both important and intentional within their recent practice, and these findings are presented in the following chapter.

Perhaps most significant in the current findings is the extent to which participants appeared comfortable with their use of process-based utility. At one level, this is again not

surprising given what is known about the breadth, mechanisms, and value of evaluation influence. These are more experienced evaluators and it is understandable that they may have developed the skills and confidence necessary to pursue process-based utility over time. However, the orientations and practices identified also show that awareness of process use is particularly likely when the approach to evaluation is democratic and pluralistic. This is not the evaluator, as expert, doing evaluation for or to the ‘other’. There is an attempt to re-engage stakeholders who may have been previously excluded from the process. Their interest and stake in evaluation is reasserted. Stakeholder values are integrated into determinations of merit and worth. The criteria, performance standards, and evaluation logic that enables determinations of merit and worth to be derived from descriptive data are collectively determined. The process offers opportunities for learning. Evaluation expertise and credibility is equated with competence and responsiveness within the evaluation setting. Evaluation becomes critical reflexivity and pedagogy. It is interactive and dialogical, and it is inevitable that process use occurs.

Does this re-orientation threaten the quality or credibility of evaluation, or confuse its core purpose? Importantly, is the impartiality and integrity of the evaluator threatened? For example, is there a risk of the evaluator becoming ‘co-opted’ to stakeholder needs and expectations at the expense of their role in accounting for public interventions? Does the intentional use of participatory practices signal an intent by the evaluator to ‘soften’ stakeholders up to buy into findings, or does it represent a commitment to ensuring findings of value and utility to them?

Answers to such questions may reflect the lens through which evaluation is viewed. If externality and ‘independence’ are considered necessary for deriving credible judgements of merit and worth, the answer may be yes. Implicit here is some requirement for differentiation between the ‘evaluator’ and the ‘evaluated’. If the evaluator is to judge the ‘other’ without bias, they must maintain a level of disengagement, and the ‘other’ must be kept at some distance from the process of judgment.

However, it was notable that many participants regarded a more collaborative approach as helping to support, rather than undermine, the process of determining merit and worth. Through informed engagement, stakeholders were more willing to accept and use evaluation results. The findings indicate some attempt to reconcile a more relational approach with credible evaluative judgement. The suggestion is that quality criteria should

relate to inclusion, rather than exclusion. Indeed, there is no concept of ‘otherness’ within a kaupapa Māori approach and an orientation of collectiveness is considered critical (Bishop, 1999). Transparency and shared understanding are the mechanisms through which bias and the risk of the evaluator being co-opted are controlled, and through which the core purpose of evaluation to judge quality and success is maintained.

These issues require further consideration as they were not directly examined in this study. There are other risks and these should also be addressed. For example, there will always be constraints on how inclusive the evaluation process can be, and the extent to which all stakeholders’ interests can be represented. There will be limits on the extent the evaluation process can be used to develop capacity, self-determination, and ownership. Not all stakeholders will want or need to engage in such development. If the engagement process is in-authentic, the process may be manipulative and may create expectations that cannot be fulfilled. Alienation and disempowerment may well result.

Some participants appeared to be mitigating such risks, although not necessarily consciously. For example, a number understood the importance of authentic relationships and the need for transparency regarding what the evaluation process could or could not deliver. Atawhai worked hard to meet her dual accountabilities and to manage Māori expectations. Claire was focused on ensuring that the evaluation process provided evaluative conclusions, and was strategic in using process use to enhance the quality of judgments and the likelihood they would be used. She understood that developing the ability of stakeholders to think and act evaluatively was not about teaching them how to do evaluation. Mere was similarly reluctant to say she was building evaluation capacity as she understood the commitment and process required to truly deliver on this. Anita recognized the risk of raising stakeholder expectations about process use when factors beyond her control may compromise eventual outcomes. Trish was similarly concerned that stakeholder learning and benefits from process use could “...get killed in the swipe of a pen,” due to political decisions beyond the control of the evaluator or other stakeholders.

As a cultural outsider, it is not for me to judge tikanga Māori as a framework for evaluation practice. Māori evaluators were acutely aware of their multiple accountabilities and this indicates reflexivity regarding any risk of process use misuse. Ensuring that the evaluation process is responsive to socio-cultural and historical context, and being committed to Māori development and the re-engagement of Māori in evaluation, need not

confuse the purpose of evaluation. When these aspirations drive practice, ensuring that the basis of evaluative judgement is transparent may be a particularly effective way of maintaining rigour, and preventing any stakeholder, including the evaluator, from dominating or abusing the evaluative process.

The intent and practice described by the Māori evaluators in this study is a claim for evaluation to be undertaken with and ‘as Māori’. This is a re-establishment of the stake and right of Māori to be involved in determining the merit and worth of public interventions that impact Māori. Similar to other participants in this study, the Māori evaluators observed an enhanced desire of Māori stakeholders to use evaluative judgement when they were able to participate in the judging process on a more informed and equal basis.

## **5.8 Chapter summary**

In this chapter I initially described the context within which evaluators participating in this study practiced evaluation. Drawing on this context, I then considered explanations for the level of awareness and intent regarding process use that participants demonstrated through their general accounts of practice. Explanations were traced to values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions underpinning participants’ practice of evaluation, in particular, common concerns for social justice, equality, change, and tikanga Māori. I suggested that forms of practice commonly described by participants were understandable given these concerns, and were likely to facilitate process use. Common practices were utilization focused, pragmatic and contextually responsive, relational, and orientated to learning and development. These practices were further explained by a number of influences or pressures that existed within the practice context. These included overarching concerns for addressing injustice and disadvantage experienced by Māori, the extent to which interpersonal connection are important within Aotearoa New Zealand, and limited evaluation capacity and capability amongst evaluation stakeholders and stakeholder organizations.

The next chapter builds from the practice context findings presented and discussed in this chapter. Drawing on the data generated from the second part of each interview, I seek explanations for intent and practice in relation to specific types of process use considered by participants as important and intentional within their recent practice.



## Chapter 6:

### INTENT AND PRACTICE

Reasons for participants' intent and practice in relation to specific types of process use are explored in this chapter. Explanations are considered at the level of four sub-groups that were created on the basis that group members identified similar types of process use as important and intentional within their recent practice. Reflecting the types identified, these groups were labelled, *evaluation as process*, *evaluation as capacity building*, *evaluation as development*, and *evaluation as findings use*.

The sub-group analysis identifies the explanatory factors that were common to group members in relation to the type of process use they discussed in common. Through this analysis, further evidence is provided of how these factors helped to explain intent and practice, as well as how they explained in similar and different ways.

The findings for each sub-group are presented and discussed separately. I initially introduce group members, describe the types of process use that unified them, and summarize the evaluations from which members drew their selected types. Evaluation practices, commonly adopted to achieve selected types, are then described. These were identifiable across all the sub-groups as participatory, learning orientated, and capacity building practices. Reasons for intent and practice are then explored by considering the outcomes members believed occurred as a result of the process use they sought and the practices they adopted. Guided by Means End Theory (Gutman, 1982), the extent perceived outcomes realized expected outcomes, and satisfied values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions of importance, is assumed to validate intent. The extent outcomes realized expectations regarding the efficacy of adopted practices to achieve desired outcomes, is assumed to validate practice.

When discussing the findings for each sub-group, I also consider the extent to which the practice orientations identified in Chapter Five were common to group members. When the sub-group analysis shows that the evaluation practice of members was shaped by similar values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions, the explanatory potential of these factors is reinforced. Where appropriate, I also consider how the evaluations from which

participants drew their selected types of process use may also help to explain intent and practice.

## **6.1 Evaluation as process**

Members of this group, Susan (SEC), Lisa (SEC), Sally (REO), Lina (REO) and Ben (GOVT), described process use as integral to their practice of evaluation. Susan, Lisa, and Sally chose to discuss their intent and practice generally, while Lina and Ben discussed evaluations that they believed evidenced multiple types of process use. Lina referred to an evaluation of an in-service professional development program, while Ben drew from an evaluation which examined community responses to a social marketing campaign.

### **Practices commonly adopted**

Group members intentionally used participatory, learning orientated, and capacity building practices to achieve process use. The participatory nature of participants' practice generally was detailed in Chapter Five and I focus here on learning orientated and capacity building practices.

#### *Learning orientated practices*

Susan, Sally, and Lina intentionally positioned evaluation to stakeholders as a learning process that could itself deliver value and utility (i.e. through process use). For example, Susan encouraged stakeholders other than the client to identify their own learning goals within any evaluation,

...my first message to [the person representing the evaluand] is that my reasons for doing the evaluation, no matter what the Ministry or funder's reason is for doing it, is for learning. And whatever it is that we have been asked to evaluate, we can only evaluate with your good input and so what do you think this evaluation can do that will be useful for you and for this thing that we are supposed to be evaluating..

(Susan)

Sally was committed to ensuring that clients purchased an appropriate evaluation, yet understood they might lack the time or inclination to fully engage in the process. While they might bring assumptions about their need, for example, that only a survey was

required, she encouraged them to re-examine such beliefs (cognitive process use). A concern for ensuring shared understanding across stakeholders (cognitive process use) also explained her learning orientated approach. This was fundamental to her ability to conduct effective evaluation. As utilization was her professional responsibility, she couldn't "...walk past" the need to develop shared understanding when required,

...if you are not clear on what you are trying to achieve, then there is no way you are going to know if you got there...I've been forced into doing all sorts of things, that I guess justify that you have got to do these steps and the only way I can do that is to bring them on the journey so that they learn about it, otherwise they think what I am doing is a complete overkill, complete waste of time, [they say] "all I want you to do is collect some data". (Sally)

Sally intentionally used evaluative questioning to facilitate necessary dialogue between stakeholders, and to establish appropriate expectations about outcomes and accountabilities (cognitive process use). She might inquire, "...I'm a bit worried that you are really looking to prove this. Is that correct?" Such questions inevitably facilitated learning (cognitive process use) and potentially program or organizational development (behavioural process use).

Lina also understood the importance of preparing stakeholders to engage in evaluation as learning. The process could challenge existing beliefs and meanings (cognitive process use), and stakeholders therefore needed to trust her and the process (attitudinal/affective process use). She ensured that stakeholders understood,

...I don't do the ones where you just expect people to just go in and collect data and come back and do a bloody good job in presenting your findings. That's not what you are getting me to do. (Lina)

The need to develop various aspects of the program and evaluation she discussed helped to explain her learning orientated approach. Becoming involved in the program some 18 months after its implementation, she encountered a poorly conceived program theory, a lack of shared understanding regarding program goals, considerable implementation drift, high staff turnover, and limited evaluation capacity and capability across stakeholders,

...nobody really knew what...the underpinning drivers for that initiative [were] and what I was trying to do was build a kind of consistency in what the key principles and drivers might be, so I could anchor the evaluation. (Lina)

All members of the *evaluation as process* group described themselves as facilitators of learning. They were conduits, synthesizers, sense-makers, collaborators, brokers, and co-learners. Sally understood she was engaged in a process of drawing out stakeholders' existing knowledge and experience, and that cognitive process use was inevitable in the process,

...they are just like “wow, I can't believe that you've told me all about my program” and I'm like, no, you've told me and I have just structured it for you. (Sally)

Lisa recognized that the willingness of stakeholders to engage in a learning process (attitudinal/affective process use) required constructive relationships, managerial support, as well as stakeholder understanding and ownership. She sought for the process to be transparent and collaborative. Stakeholders might be involved in stages of data interpretation, for example in the merit determination stage of rubric development. Resultant understanding (cognitive process use) and acceptance (attitudinal/affective process use) often meant that stakeholders,

...[are] comfortable about you going away and doing the rest of it because they have actually [learnt]...they really get how it is done. (Lisa)

Members commonly used evaluation tools and frameworks to facilitate evaluative thinking and capacity development (cognitive process use). Susan intentionally designed data collection tools so they would provide opportunities for learning. Like Lina, she believed that all stakeholder engagements provided opportunities for mutual learning and evaluation influence. Within his evaluation, Ben intentionally designed an intercept interviewing process that would facilitate learning for community stakeholders engaged in the process (cognitive process use). Given the lack of shared understanding across stakeholders in her example, Lina had intentionally used logic modelling, data collection processes, and other engagements to encourage their critical thinking regarding the program's purpose and theory of change (cognitive process use). She recalled,

...Every conversation I had with each of those providers...it was really getting them to start thinking about [the program] from an evaluation point of view...to think about what was the intent of the project and how what they do will achieve [intended] outcomes. (Lina)

Like Susan, Sally intentionally framed interview questions to facilitate critical reflection. She described her use of naive questioning for this purpose, and the inevitability of cognitive process use through the process,

I always double question, so I am like, “Why are you doing that? I don't understand. Tell me why. What does that do?” I'll get emails [following interviews saying] “Wow, that was the best interview I've ever had...I've never ever realized we are doing so much.” (Sally)

Sally also understood that stakeholder engagement in logic modelling could facilitate stakeholder communication, shared understanding, and common focus (cognitive process use). It could inform changes in the evaluand and lead to program or organizational development (behavioural process use). She reflected,

...from this diagram you know what it is you are delivering. Now it makes total sense to them. It's like...“ooh, that person understands what I'm doing. And I understand it better now than I ever did.” (Sally)

### *Capacity-building practices*

Stakeholders in Ben's example adopted roles within the evaluation that helped to develop evaluative capacity, while Lisa deliberately engaged stakeholders in rubric development for similar purpose (cognitive process use). A sense of responsibility to give back and to build capacity underpinned Sally's approach generally. She mentored and built the capacity of stakeholders through involving them in activities such as evaluation planning and evaluation framework development (cognitive process use). She noted,

...because I'm working with the service on the ground, they often don't get a lot else out of what you are doing. I don't want to just take their information. I want to make sure it's two way. So if I can take some information and go and give it to the Ministry so they can work out what they are doing, if I can then leave them with some skills about how this program and any other program might be articulated better and/or evaluated, great. (Sally)

## **Outcomes from process use**

Members of the *evaluation as process* group commonly reported three outcomes from process use: increased stakeholder engagement, learning and development outcomes, and capacity building outcomes.

### *Increased stakeholder engagement*

In Susan's experience, a partnership approach to evaluation based on trust enhanced the willingness of stakeholders to divulge information, even if this didn't show them in "...good light". Lisa knew that stakeholders would be more willing to judge their work when they understood and were engaged in the judgement process. Ben believed that respectful stakeholder engagements could enhance the quality and utility of data. While a relationship-driven approach required time and careful budgeting, Lisa described it returning value to both the evaluator and stakeholders. It facilitated efficient processes, responsiveness to inevitable changes in need and context, and cross-stakeholder communication. Lina and Lisa had both experienced situations where stakeholder engagement had expedited responsiveness to findings,

...By the time I came to the findings they already knew what the findings were going to be because they had already been socialized into that entire process very early on. (Lina)

...when the report comes back, they go "Yep, yep, yep" because actually half of it was what they had said in those sessions. They were seeing themselves in there and the findings were not smoke and mirrors. We genuinely built in their expertise. (Lisa)

### *Learning and development related outcomes*

All members of the group believed that their participatory approach had facilitated learning outcomes. For example, through their engagement in logic modelling, stakeholders in Lina's example better understood the intervention logic and intended outcomes of the workforce development program. This learning had informed the program and organizational developments necessary for getting the program "...back on track." Ben's intercept interviewing process had raised participants' consciousness regarding their knowledge, skills, and options in relation to the campaign issue. The process had reinforced

primary messages of the campaign and the possibility of new social norms. In enabling some participants to tell their “...change stories”, the interviews had provided opportunities for self-reflection and examples to others regarding how change might occur.

### *Capacity-building outcomes*

Sally believed that her practice developed stakeholder capacity through enabling them to better understand and improve their work. Stakeholders involved in Ben’s interview process had developed research skills and positive regard for evaluation. Through their involvement in developing and using rubrics, stakeholders in Lisa’s example had better understanding of how evaluative judgements were derived. They were more equal partners in the process, had higher levels of ownership and control, and were more likely to accept and act upon findings. They had positive regard for evaluation. She reflected,

...[evaluation then] becomes a real dialogue, because at that point you've transferred the power over to them...You've got to get the power out of your hands at that point as fast as you can...It's about how do we get that to the point where they own it and it's theirs. (Lisa)

...they really get how we make the judgements when they are involved in the process themselves...they will read the rest of the report because they have been part of the process, they tell us the judgement process works for them and they trust it. Values are not up for debate, they were sorted out way earlier in the evaluation. Part of this is you become a trusted advisor by that point. (Lisa)

## **Discussion**

The evaluation practice of members of the *evaluation as process* group was underpinned by a number of common values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions. The explanatory potential of these factors in relation to members’ intent and practice regarding process use is therefore reinforced. I predicted that intent was likely under the utilization focused, ideologically orientated, and hermeneutic and constructivist traditions (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008). The findings support this prediction by showing that members’ approach to evaluation aligned to these traditions and that process use was integral to their practice. They brought prior experiences to their practice that heightened their awareness of the inevitability of process use, as well as their intent to achieve it. They understood that learning occurred

through the evaluator's interaction with others, and within the context of practice. Like a number of evaluation theorists (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008; Rossman & Rallis, 2000; Schwandt, 2001), they understood that the process of doing and using evaluation was not easily separated.

An analysis of the values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions identified in Chapter Five, and held in common by group members, showed that they shared three practice orientations: a concern for utilization, evaluation as change, and a concern for learning and capacity development. Group members commonly described participatory, learning orientated, and capacity building practices to achieve process use. Such practices align to the three evaluation traditions common to their approach, and are practices known to support process use (Amo & Cousins, 2007; Forss et al., 2002; Preskill et al., 2003).

Reflecting the utilization focused tradition, members were commonly concerned with findings use and this helped to explain their participatory approach. However, evaluation was more than the determination of merit and worth and the collection, analysis, and reporting of data. They agreed it should contribute to learning, development, and improvement (Fetterman, 1995; Greene, 1997; House, 1994; Lincoln, 1994; Mark, 2002), and that these outcomes could be achieved through the broad influence of evaluation (Kirkhard, 2000). Evaluation was regarded as an intervention with prescriptive capabilities and which should be used for social betterment (Mark & Henry, 2004). Group members considered themselves accountable to relational ethics and morals (Schwandt, 2001, 2005), and believed they should act in the interests of stakeholders, particularly those with less power (Mertens, 2001; Mertens et al., 1994). As described in Chapter Five, Susan believed evaluators should address issues of power, inclusion, and the control of constructed knowledge. Lisa felt that evaluation should ensure equitable access and outcomes from public interventions. Ben was committed to social justice and the interests of marginalized groups. Evaluation provided Lina with a way to be a responsible, contributing member of society. Sally regarded evaluation as a public service and a process that should be inclusive and responsive to issues of power. In these ways, members' understanding and approach to evaluation could also be positioned under ideologically orientated traditions.

Members sought not to reinforce inequality or injustice through the evaluation process. They described their practice as accessible, caring, transparent, respectful, and enabling. The potential for process use through such practice is self-evident. Stakeholder

relationships were described as interactive, interpersonal, and collaborative, and therefore also likely to support process use (Amo & Cousins, 2007; Forss et al., 2002; Preskill et al., 2003). Members' concern for ensuring that stakeholders had appropriate levels of control over decision making indicated the tradition of transformative participatory evaluation (Brisolara, 1998; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998) and again, the likelihood of process use.

The relational approach commonly described by members followed their understanding that evaluation knowledge was generative, experiential, and socially constructed (Schwandt, 2005). Their intentional use of practices to facilitate learning indicated a learning orientated approach (King, 2008; Preskill & Torres, 1999b; Torres et al., 2005). They understood that learning occurred through cycles of critical reflection on action. Their description of themselves as facilitators of learning positioned the evaluator in the role of adult educator. Such positioning further indicated ideologically orientated and hermeneutic and constructivist traditions (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008; Greene, 2001; Schwandt, 2001, 2005) as well as the inevitability of process use (Morabito, 2002).

I predicted that evaluators' understanding of the antecedents of learning from evaluation might help to explain practices intentionally adopted to achieve process use. Literature reviewed in this thesis informs the possibility of this explanatory relationship and guides my inquiry in four ways: by describing the different forms of learning and influence indicated by different types of process use (Amo & Cousins, 2007; Cumming, 2002; Greene, 1998; Patton, 1997), by clarifying the levels and mechanisms through which learning and influence from the evaluation process occurs (Henry & Mark, 2003; Kirkhart, 2000; Mark & Henry, 2004), by articulating how resultant change leads towards desired outcomes (Henry & Mark, 2003; Mark & Henry, 2004), and by describing the factors and contexts that support learning from the evaluation process (Johnson, 1998; King, 2007; Preskill et al., 2003).

Group members commonly reported using participatory, learning orientated, and capacity building practices to achieve process use. They commonly believed that these practices enhanced stakeholder engagement and led to stakeholder learning and capacity development. These outcomes can be considered validating of the expectancies that members held regarding how their practice would lead to desired outcomes. They can also be seen as satisfying values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions of common importance to group members, particularly that evaluation should lead towards social justice and social

betterment, and that it should provide learning and development of value and utility to stakeholders.

Examples are considered below of how expectancy of a relationship between practice and process use might help to explain practices intentionally adopted by members of the *evaluation as process* group. Learning orientated practices adopted by Sally are understandable on the basis that she believed these would develop the shared understanding across stakeholders necessary to conduct useful evaluation. Lina and Lisa recognized that trusting and respectful relationships were essential should stakeholders be willing to engage in evaluation as a learning process. Their dialogical, transparent, and respectful practice indicated that they understood that the likelihood of process use was influenced by the extent a supportive learning environment was created (Preskill, et al., 2003). Lisa understood that managerial support was needed to conduct evaluation as a learning and capacity building process (King, 2007; Preskill, et al., 2003). This understanding helps to explain her intent to build stakeholder trust and understanding, and her transparent, inclusive approach. Members' intent in using evaluation tools to facilitate learning suggests that they understood that the likelihood of learning through evaluation is related to the extent the process creates opportunities for cross-stakeholder communication (Johnson, 1998). It also suggests they understood that the likelihood of learning is related to the extent to which stakeholders are able to share information, challenge assumptions, ask questions, and reflect on experience (Preskill et al., 2003). Ben, Lisa, and Sally anticipated that stakeholders would develop evaluative capabilities through their engagement in evaluative processes. This expectancy is not surprising given that participatory orientated evaluators have long understood this relationship (Ayers, 1987; Cousins, 1996; Cousins & Earl, 1992).

In conclusion, the *evaluation as process* group reinforces the inevitability of process use when evaluation is understood and approached in the way commonly described by group members. When evaluators regard evaluation as a social learning process, they will recognize its influence beyond findings use. When they seek social justice and equality, it makes sense that they will be reflexive of power and will ensure that the process does not reinforce injustice and inequality. When evaluation is understood as a relational process, it is not surprising that the evaluator will adopt inclusive, respectful, and transparent practices. Learning orientated, participatory, and capacity building practices are understandable. Utility inevitably becomes entwined with the process of doing evaluation

(Rossman & Rallis, 2000; Schwandt, 2001, 2005). In Sally's words, practices generative of process use are "...ingrained" and "...sub-conscious." In regard to the issue of intent, Ben provides appropriate final comment,

...when you talk about 'process use'...it's a bit like evaluation comes from a disinterested tradition...therefore we have to reinject or intellectualize a personalizing component in it which is called 'process use'. We try and demonstrate interest and show an investment in what is going on in the moment for the people you are engaged with, whereas where I come from every moment [as an evaluator] is a moment of service... (Ben)

## 6.2 Evaluation as capacity building

Members of this group, Claire (SEC), Trish (SEC), Mary (GOVT), Mere (MSEC), Shane (MSEC), Peter (MSEC), Atawhai (MSEC), and Aroha (MSEC) were intentional in using the evaluation process to develop stakeholder capacity. Through the sorting process used in each of their interviews, non-Māori members selected and discussed the following type of process use as important and intentional within their recent practice, *The participation of evaluation participants and/or stakeholders in the evaluation process has developed their ability to think and act evaluatively*. Unprompted, all Māori members of the group responded to the concept of process use by discussing their intent to use the evaluation process to build stakeholder capacity.

Members drew from recent evaluations to illustrate their attention to capacity building. Claire had worked with stakeholders in her evaluation to develop an evaluation rubric and methodology. Trish discussed an evaluation that was deliberately used to develop the evaluative capacity of staff within a mental health service. Mary described an evaluation where the capacity of stakeholders had been intentionally developed through their involvement in developing and using rubric methodology. Mere described an evaluation of a prevention program delivered by Māori. Peter discussed a rubric development workshop conducted with staff as part of an evaluation of a Māori service provider that was moving from a mainstream to a specifically Māori model of delivery. Atawhai referred to an evaluation of a program that was transitioning to fund provider organizations on the basis that services facilitated 'as Māori' participation. This meant the provision of services that enabled Māori to participate in ways consistent with Māori values and practices. Aroha

discussed an evaluation where she was working with Māori health service providers to develop their evaluative capacity in relation to the delivery of whanau-centred health programs.

### **Practices intentionally adopted**

Group members commonly described intentionally using learning orientated and capacity building practices to develop stakeholder capacity.

#### *Learning orientated practices*

In her example, Trish had intentionally developed a relationship of trust with stakeholders (attitudinal/affective process use) so that the evaluation process could be used to develop capacity. Shane similarly understood that stakeholders needed to trust him, and the evaluation process, should they be willing to engage in critical reflection (attitudinal/affective process use). He intentionally built relationships with stakeholders so he could have “...honest, open conversations about improvement”. Mary recalled that learning began in her example when the client was encouraged to re-examine their evaluation need (cognitive process use). Through this process, the focus and approach of the evaluation eventually conducted had shifted considerably.

Peter deliberately spent time with staff to build their understanding and trust of evaluation, and to position it as a collaborative, learning process (attitudinal/affective process use). Stakeholders in the evaluation discussed by Atawhai were similarly engaged in hui that were initially focused on developing relationship, understanding, and trust (attitudinal/affective process use). Later hui were used to collectively identify evaluation criteria that defined ‘as Māori’ participation. Aroha was also intentional in positioning evaluation as a learning process,

...I say [to stakeholders], it’s of no use for me to do everything because what is the purpose, how will you learn to think about it, or how will this person know if they are...doing well? (Aroha)

Like members of the *evaluation as process group*, members were intentional in using evaluation tools and frameworks to facilitate learning. When conducting interviews, Aroha sought to create a “...learning space” where the evaluator and participants could engage in

“...learning from and creating with each other”. Trish allocated as much time as necessary to collaborative rubric development and data synthesis sessions to ensure that necessary reflection, dialogue, and learning occurred (cognitive process use). Claire intentionally used evaluative questions to draw out the expertise and values of stakeholders within rubric development. She used the process to facilitate stakeholders’ re-examination of the beliefs and assumptions they held about the evaluand (cognitive process use). Peter similarly used rubric development to enable stakeholders to critically examine the values that underpinned their definitions of success (cognitive process use). Atawhai also approached rubric development this way. She used the process to enable stakeholders to determine evaluation criteria that were important and meaningful to them.

Mere and Share intentionally used evaluative questioning and logic modelling to facilitate stakeholders’ re-examination of assumed program theory. Mere recalled,

...just asking those questions all the time. So what's Māori about that? And what's innovative about it?...I wasn't answering the questions. I was just asking them and they would be like “Oh, yeah true”...And then they would unpack that. (Mere)

If program theory was missing, Shane used evaluative questions to link practice to desired outcomes. As did Mere, he used questions that built upon existing knowledge and experience, “...How come it's like that? How could you have done this differently?” The process not only guided the evaluation, but also developed evaluative capacity and provided learning of independent value to stakeholders (cognitive process use). They developed new regard for evaluation (attitudinal/affective process use), and the process became more equal. According to Shane, through this process, the evaluator became a “...critical friend” rather than “...expert.”

### *Capacity building practices*

All members reported the use of participatory practices to develop evaluation capacity. Claire, Trish, Mary, Atawhai, and Peter discussed evaluations where stakeholders were involved in developing and using rubrics. They all regarded the process as capacity development. As stakeholders in Claire’s example were to later use and train others in using rubrics, she was concerned that they understood the evaluative reasoning and logic that underpinned the approach. She therefore involved them in the development process, including initial logic modelling. In Atawhai’s example, hui were used to develop the

capacity of providers to participate in the development of rubrics, and then to collect and interpret data using the methodology. The workshop discussed by Peter was undertaken to ensure that stakeholders understood rubric development (cognitive process use), had ownership over the process (attitudinal/affective process use), and had the skills required to use rubrics successfully (behavioural process use).

Stakeholders were intentionally involved in the evaluation discussed by Aroha to develop their evaluation capacity. They participated in evaluation planning, developed resources, and undertook aspects of fieldwork. She believed it would be appropriate for her direct involvement in the evaluation to decrease as stakeholder capacity increased,

...It is better for me to maybe work more intensively at the beginning and then less and less because then I haven't done my job if I still have to be there in five years time...it is more rewarding to see that people are still going and still doing well after I have been there...(Aroha)

### **Outcomes from process use**

Group members reported three common outcomes from capacity development: increased stakeholder engagement, learning and development related outcomes, and capacity building outcomes.

#### *Increased stakeholder engagement*

Trish, Mary, Mere, Peter, Shane, and Atawhai described enhancements in stakeholders' trust, ownership, and willingness to engage in evaluation. The trust that Trish had built "...at the front end" of her evaluation had opened up "...a free space" to work within the organization. Stakeholders were motivated to engage in rubric development, to judge their work, and to confront "...difficulties and problems." They were willing to engage in evaluation as they understood their stake, power, and expertise within the process. Rather than resist the process as something "...done to them," it was "...about them, they can see themselves in it." The stakeholders in Mary's example were also more willing to engage in deep and honest reflection regarding performance. Through the participatory and learning orientated approach adopted, stakeholders had been,

...rewarded for being open and reflective and learning orientated and quite able to focus on failure in a quite constructive fashion as opposed to doing it in a defensive mode... (Mary)

Mere described collective ownership over the program and evaluation she discussed. There were "...blurred insider/outsider boundaries." Program staff considered themselves part of the evaluation team while Mere saw herself part of the project team. Staff understood the utility and value of evaluation. It was "...there to help and support them to do the very best job they can do." They were willing to receive and use evaluative judgements, "...excited" to receive feedback on performance, and not afraid to "...find out that things didn't work."

Staff in Peter's example had also developed more favourable attitudes about evaluation. He believed that evaluative judgements were likely to be "...more palatable" to staff as they understood how they were derived. The participatory and transparent process had demystified evaluation; it was no longer "...scary." The reputation and credibility of evaluation had been enhanced. The process had,

...taken away the sort of cloak and dagger approach where [participants are left questioning]...what's the evaluator doing? (Peter)

Through focusing on potential and stakeholder capacity, autonomy, and confidence, Shane believed that his approach lead to the evaluation process and evaluator becoming,

... aroha for some of these groups. So that's one of the other things that underpins what we do and how we do it and why we do it...and why I do it. It's so that it can be useful... (Shane)

Mere, Trish, Mary, and Atawhai reported greater engagement and use of evaluation within the organizations they had worked with. They considered this evidence of capacity built. In Mere's example, evaluation frameworks were being shared with other stakeholders and across the organization. Rubrics were being similarly used and shared in Trish's example. The rubric developed in Mary's example had become an integral part of implementation decision-making, organizational learning, and the capacity of the organization to think and act evaluatively. Atawhai discussed a similar process where the rubric developed was being used by providers to guide necessary program development.

Reflecting on the performance standards established against criteria within the rubric, she observed,

...you could then say things like...if you included a greater level of te reo Māori, you could move from a one or from a two. If you had some of your activities, instead of them all being at the local sports field, if you had put some of them on a marae, you would move from a one to two... (Atawhai)

The rubric was also being used by providers, not funded under the program, as a guide to necessary development should they wish to be funded,

...it actually provided a strong program rationale for them to be working in the spaces that they wanted to be working in...kohanga...kura...schools with a high proportion of Māori...Many of them had been wanting to do some of that stuff but they had to do all of this other stuff as well...(Atawhai)

#### *Learning and development related outcomes*

Outcomes of shared understanding across stakeholders were commonly reported. Stakeholders in Claire's example had been equipped with skills to use rubrics and were therefore more able to use evaluation for accountability purposes. Stakeholders in Trish's example had come to see what was shared and not shared regarding how they understood their work and how they defined success. They better understood what they could directly influence through their work and how outcomes could be both demonstrated and enhanced.

Peter, Mere and Atawhai believed that stakeholders had developed further understanding of the cultural foundations of their work. Cultural meaning and practice had been validated. Rubric development in Peter's example had enabled staff to articulate the program theory underpinning the cultural practice model. Staff in Mere's example had extended their "...horizons" beyond previous "...boxed in thinking." Logic modelling had freed them from a mainstream program theory and allowed them to re-conceptualize their work through Māori values and perspectives. Shared understanding of this, and the affirmation of cultural imperatives, had guided the development of tikanga-based practices and protocols within the program. These were no longer "...government processes or definitions." Staff were confident to undertake such development without thinking "...is this the right thing?"

Stakeholders in Atawhai's example had better understanding of what was different and important about 'as Māori' participation, and why contracted providers required a unique set of skills. They understood why it was important to use evaluation to evidence the need for the new program model as well as outcomes achieved.

### *Capacity building outcomes*

Claire, Trish, Mere, Atawhai, and Peter believed that stakeholders were better able to advocate for their work as a result of capacity developed. In Claire's example, stakeholders were able to use rubrics independently and communicate evaluation findings. Stakeholders in Trish's evaluation were more confident and willing to communicate program quality and outcomes to others, including funders,

...up until that time I think they had a lot of anecdote and qualitative story about the service but had never understood how they might systematically draw other data together to tell that story... (Trish)

In Mere's example, staff had been using the logic model developed to communicate their work to stakeholders. The tool was being used to describe "...good ways to work with Māori" and how "...tikanga leads to having the right foundation, [how it] leads to [desired] outcomes..." Their ability to describe their work was helping to build credibility and trust with other stakeholders, and had enhanced their confidence in dealings with their funder. Through the affirmation of cultural practice and perspective, Atawhia also believed that stakeholders in her example were more able to communicate the program to others. They were better able to "...push back" against those who may question the need for 'as Māori' programming. They were more able to "...hold that space without kind of getting into a big fight". Peter also believed that his workshop process had positively impacted participants' feelings about their work and in doing so, the process had been enabling,

...it provided them with a great deal of clarity and optimism and hope that things can happen. At least they know where to start or what to work on... (Peter)

## **Discussion**

Members of the *evaluation as capacity building* group shared a number of practice orientations: concerns for utilization, capacity development, equality, and tikanga Māori as a frame for methodology. The potential of these orientations to explain the common intention of

members to develop capacity is therefore reinforced. Given the shared orientations, it makes sense that members sought a more equal and enabling evaluation process. Understandably, they used learning orientated and capacity building practices. Their practice aligned to tikanga Māori, the ideologically orientated evaluation tradition, the constructivist and hermeneutic evaluation tradition (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008), and transformative participatory evaluation (Brisolara, 1998; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998).

Members had shared concern for delivering findings to clients while also believing that evaluation should be useful and used by others. They understood that evaluation did not necessarily provide utility or value to stakeholders when the evaluator held primary responsibility or control, or if there was a predominant focus on findings use. Stakeholders required skills and positive regard for evaluation if they were to derive most value and utility from the process. This understanding of utilization helped to explain their capacity building practices. For example, Claire, Trish, Shane, Atawhai, and Aroha regarded evaluative thinking as innate and sought to strengthen this. They believed that a certain level of evaluative capacity was necessary if stakeholders were to use evaluation most effectively. Mary understood that evaluation capacity was critical to the value and utility her organization was able to derive from evaluation. Utilization for Atawhai and Mere meant that evaluation was meaningful and useful for stakeholders, and they used a variety of capacity building practices to ensure this.

Members knew that stakeholders often needed to learn how to engage in evaluative processes, and how to learn from this. This helps to explain their understanding of themselves as trainers and facilitators. As detailed in Chapter Five, Mary believed that good evaluation built the capacity of stakeholders to engage meaningfully in the process. Trish was intentional in using critical reflection to lead stakeholders to new ways of understanding and acting. Claire ensured that stakeholders understood the evaluation reasoning and logic of rubric methodology. Aroha, Atawhai, Mere, Shane, and Peter saw evaluation as a mutual learning process. Aroha intentionally sought opportunities for the evaluator and stakeholders to engage in such learning. Atawhai saw the evaluator bringing evaluation skills and tools to a learning partnership. Mere was intentional in facilitating the learning that could occur for stakeholders when engaged in the evaluation process. Using the evaluation process to facilitate capacity development was foundational to Shane's practice and increasingly important for Peter.

A learning orientated approach to evaluation was evident. Members understood that a level of organizational evaluative capacity was necessary should evaluation be effectively used for continuous inquiry and critical reflection (King, 2007; Preskill & Torres, 1999a) and organizational learning (Preskill & Torres, 1999b; Torres & Preskill, 2001). They sought to shape the evaluation process in response to organizational needs (Torres, 1994), and were intentional in integrating evaluation into routine operations (Rossman & Rallis, 2000).

An orientation to equality was commonly expressed and was therefore further reinforced as explanatory of capacity building intent. In this context, views of evaluation as a negotiated and emergent process are understandable, as is the belief that stakeholders derive greater value from evaluation when they engage as more informed partners. Trish, Shane, Atawhai, and Aroha believed that evaluation was more likely to effect change when stakeholders were able to influence, conduct, and use the process appropriately. Trish believed that such capacity development helped build stakeholder control and ownership. Trish, Peter, and Atawhai believed that evaluation should be inclusive of different voices and perspectives, and should develop the capacity of stakeholders to participate meaningfully and authentically. Mary sought to develop organizational level evaluation capacity as she regarded this essential should her organization use evaluation more effectively.

While unprompted as to what process use might look like, all the Māori members of the group discussed their intent to develop Māori capacity. They commonly and intentionally used participatory, learning orientated, and capacity building practices to do this. As discussed in Chapter Five, their intent and practice here can be understood within the context of tikanga Māori as a frame for methodology. Practices were relational, respectful, validating, enabling, transparent, and caring. Evaluation was conducted with intent to address past, present, and future concerns. Participants sought to maintain the mana of stakeholders by integrating their knowledge and experience. They reciprocated the contribution made by stakeholders by using the evaluation process to return value and utility, including capacity development.

Principles of Ako were evident through Māori members' accounts of tikanga as a frame for methodology. They were intentional in creating environments supportive of learning (Metge, 1984; Nepe, 1991; Pere, 1982). The evaluator and stakeholders were understood to

be connected through whanaungatanga and whakawhanaungatanga (Bishop, 1999). The evaluation process was understood to be building upon existing knowledge and competencies (Hemara, 2000; Pere, 1982). The evaluator was positioned as co-learner and guide (Smith, 1987). Learning through evaluation was commonly understood as experiential, inclusive, co-operative, and contextually situated (Pere, 1982; Pihama et al., 2004). There was an intentional focus on enhancing the well-being and capacity of stakeholders, and on ensuring evaluation made a positive difference for Māori collectively (Metge, 1990; Smith, 1987). While members did not undertake these processes, or seek these outcomes, because they sought 'process use', it is understandable that learning and development outcomes for stakeholders were enabled through the practices they described.

All Māori members felt responsible for using evaluation to support Māori development, and commonly accounted for their capacity building practices on this basis. Enhanced evaluation capacity could support organizations or communities to become more effective, sustainable, or autonomous. Effective services and improved outcomes for Māori were more likely to follow. The accountability and commitment of members to use evaluation in this way was understandable within the historical, social, cultural, and political contexts that shaped their experience and concerns as Māori evaluators. Atawhai captured this when she reflected,

...I'm over the pop-in, drop-in evaluator, you know, pop in, pop out. It doesn't leave anything for the organization at all. Just as a way of working, whether that's a pragmatic way of working, whether it's a tikanga, whether it's a Māori affirmation or Māori development way of working, it's a better way...It better suits the aspirations that I have for Māori development and enables me to do my little bit. That's one. And I think because you do get the learning...when I see the providers emailing us about a little framework or tool that they are now using you know, I've helped them do something...you just feel good that you've actually contributed that little bit...  
(Atawhai)

The evaluation examples discussed by members also helped to explain their capacity building intent. In all examples, capacity development was integral to intended outcomes. Stakeholders in the evaluations discussed by Claire, Mary, Mere, and Atawhai were all involved in collecting and analysing data. Claire and Mary both sought to develop organizational level capacity. While Mere's intent reflected her role as formative evaluator,

she was committed to a developmental approach regardless of the type of evaluation conducted,

...I think that's ultimately how I would like it to be with all the projects, because they are learning skills and things too that they take with them wherever they go after this... (Mere)

Atawhai's intent reflected that she was conducting developmental evaluation, that there was a limited evaluation budget, and the "...Māori supporting Māori development" context. Evaluation was being used to clarify the 'as Māori' funding model, why it was required, and to provide evidence of outcomes. Stakeholders required a level of evaluative capacity to engage in this process, including their active participation in later evaluation.

Most members of the group practiced as independent evaluation consultants and this 'workplace' context may have also at least supported their ability to practice in a way aligned to their values. While Claire and Trish did not directly make this connection, their independence enabled them some choice over how and with whom they worked. In order to align her practice and values, Aroha had deliberately become more focused in her practice on process use, particularly capacity development. Atawhai had made a series of moves within her career before feeling satisfied that her practice and values were appropriately aligned.

Members identified common outcomes from practices used to develop capacity. Stakeholders had enhanced and shared understanding of their work. Cultural perspectives and practices were validated and integrated into their work. Stakeholders were more engaged in evaluation and its use. They were more able and willing to communicate and advocate for their work. Such outcomes are likely to have satisfied members' expectations regarding the efficacy of their practice as well orientations of importance to them.

Brief examples follow of how members' expectations of a relationship between practice and process use may also help to explain practices adopted. Learning orientated practices adopted by Trish, Shane, Peter, Atawhai, and Aroha indicated their understanding that supportive learning environments are supportive of learning outcomes from evaluation (Preskill et al., 2003). They intentionally created such environments through building stakeholder relationship, trust, and understanding. Trish specifically understood the importance of management level support (King, 2007; Preskill et al., 2003). Members' use

of evaluation tools to facilitate learning indicated that they understood that the likelihood of process use was related to the extent stakeholders were afforded with opportunities to engage in dialogue, critical reflection, and mutual learning (Preskill et al., 2003). Members commonly involved stakeholders in the development and use of rubrics and expected this would develop useful evaluative capacity. This intent and practice is understandable as evaluators have long understood that stakeholders could develop evaluation-related skills through engaging in the evaluation process (Ayers, 1987; Cousins, 1996; Cousins & Earl, 1992).

### **6.3 Evaluation as findings use**

The *evaluation as findings use* group comprised Dianne (GOVT), Bridget (GOVT), Richard (REO), Roy (GOVT), and Chris (GOVT). Through the sorting process used in each interview, Dianne, Bridget, Richard, and Roy selected and discussed the following type of process use as intentional and important within their recent practice, *The participation of evaluation participants and/or stakeholders in the evaluation process has enhanced their willingness to receive or act upon the findings*. Chris discussed an evaluation where he believed *The participation of evaluation participants and/or stakeholders in the evaluation process has helped programme and/or organizational development*. However, a concern for findings use was evident throughout his account and he is included in this group on this basis.

Diane discussed an outcome evaluation of an important policy initiative within her organization. Bridget drew from an evaluation of a funding program that used experts to interpret outcome data for different projects under the program. Richard referred to an evaluation of a professional development training initiative, and Roy discussed an employment initiative. Chris reflected on an evaluation of a pilot program that sought to change an area of primary health care practice.

### **Practices intentionally adopted**

Members were united through their common use of participatory practices to achieve the type of process use they discussed.

### *Participatory practices*

All members discussed the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate stakeholder participation and had intentionally used these to facilitate findings use. Bridget had used an on-line methodology to facilitate the participation of the experts in her evaluation while Dianne, Roy, and Chris had established advisory groups. Richard used a range of practices to ensure that stakeholders in his example remained engaged throughout the evaluation.

Bridget anticipated that through their participation, the experts in her evaluation would be committed to using and disseminating findings (attitudinal/affective process use). Recognizing that she lacked expertise within specific project areas under the program, she believed the experts' participation would also give the findings a credibility that would make it difficult for stakeholders not to use them (attitudinal/affective process use).

By facilitating stakeholder involvement in key decisions, Dianne expected that her advisory committee would generate stakeholder buy-in (attitudinal/affective process use) and their eventual use of findings. Chris similarly described his steering group as a means of developing stakeholders' understanding of the pilot program (cognitive process use). It enabled their stake in the change process to be acknowledged and their knowledge and experience to be integrated. He anticipated that through their participation, stakeholders would better understand the reasons for the changes in practice sought through the pilot (cognitive process use). Through this understanding, stakeholders would develop ownership and a commitment to change (attitudinal/affective and behavioural process use). Rather than "...done to" stakeholders, the pilot and evaluation would become "...less frightening" and stakeholders would feel a "...part of this big, bold experiment" (attitudinal/affective and behavioural process use).

Reflecting on his example, Roy believed that a participatory and transparent approach would build stakeholder engagement and ownership (attitudinal/affective process use). Stakeholder engagement had begun prior to the commissioning of the evaluation in anticipation this would enable stakeholder input into design, and would develop shared understanding regarding purpose and intended use (cognitive process use). The establishment of his advisory group had enabled joint governance by stakeholders located in New Zealand and overseas. All these practices were understood as helping to ensure that the evaluation provided authentic understanding of program outcomes and eventual findings use.

The participatory approach adopted by Richard followed his understanding that this would build stakeholder ownership and trust (attitudinal/affective process use), and would support findings use. To demonstrate that the evaluation would work in with the provider and to develop trust, he deliberately held a start-up meeting in the provider's office. The meeting was intentionally followed by lunch and time spent building positive relationships with key staff. He ensured that staff understood the learning orientated focus of formative evaluation (cognitive process use). They were provided with opportunities to review the evaluation design, including a draft program logic model. He ensured open lines of communication, held regular project meetings, and provided on-going feedback on emerging issues and findings.

### **Outcomes from process use**

Reflecting their shared concern for findings use, group members commonly reported that their participatory practices had increased stakeholder engagement, including their use of findings.

#### *Increased stakeholder engagement*

The expectation that participatory practices would enhance findings use was universally realized. Dianne's advisory committee had enabled stakeholders to influence methodological decisions and she believed this had increased the evaluation's utility and value for them. The support provided to the evaluation by committee members had also strengthened the extent internal stakeholders considered the evaluation and its findings to be important.

Consistent with her expectations, the experts in Bridget's example had "...no bones" debating the findings with government officials and raising questions about the funding program. While less sure about the extent of findings use achieved, she believed that the credibility and authority of the findings had provided decision makers with salient messages regarding the need to respond to key findings.

The early engagement of stakeholders in Roy's example had developed shared understanding regarding the purpose and approach of the evaluation. Stakeholders appreciated the evaluation team didn't just "...walk in and then tell them that this is what we found." Stakeholder ownership was evident through the level of engagement

maintained throughout the evaluation, “...nobody dropped off”. Stakeholders accepted and were willing to use findings that identified the need for program improvements. The findings were consistent with their “...own perception or understanding of reality”.

Stakeholders in Chris’s example had come to appreciate why changes sought through the pilot were necessary. They were able to see and have “...hands-on around the benefits.” They had on-going opportunity to reflect upon the aims of the pilot and the extent change had been achieved. Trust, commitment, and interest had been demonstrated as stakeholders didn’t “...switch off”, they “...participated well...they...kept coming back”.

Richard acknowledged that his participatory approach in the evaluation he discussed was partially in response to previous projects where a lack of stakeholder engagement had undermined findings use. Reflecting on this, he doubted whether the provider’s willingness to accept formative recommendations in his example would have occurred had he not been so intentional in his relational and participatory approach.

## **Discussion**

Members of the *evaluation as findings use* group sought outcomes from their work that were similar to other group members. They aspired to make a difference, uphold accountability, and ensure equitable and effective public programmes. They believed that evaluation should contribute to social betterment and social justice, and sought an inclusiveness and transparent evaluation process. Members were, however, distinguished from other sub-groups in emphasizing findings use as critical to the value and utility of their work. This form of use was commonly equated with good evaluation and their ability to make a difference. They understood that stakeholder participation could enhance findings use and commonly accounted for their participatory practices on this basis. There was less evidence that these practices were adopted for ideological or value-driven reasons. Their understanding and approach to evaluation aligned to the utilization orientated tradition (Abma & Widdershoven, 2008) and practical participatory evaluation (Brisolara, 1998; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998).

The sub-group findings reinforce the Chapter Five findings which showed that participants across this study intentionally adopted participatory practices in pursuit of findings use. The findings further support my prediction that such practice may simply be explained by evaluators’ knowledge of how and why stakeholder participation supports the

use of findings. Evaluators have long understood this (Alkin, 1985; Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Fleisher & Christie, 2009; Johnson et al., 2009) as well as the mechanisms activated that lead to use (Ayers, 1987; Cousins, 1996; Cousins & Earl, 1992; Cousins & Whitmore 1998; Geva-May & Peretz, 1991; Greene, 1988).

Members' accounts of their practice suggested that they understood how and why a participatory approach would support the use of findings. Stakeholders were intentionally engaged so that they had the opportunity to influence the evaluation focus and approach. Members expected this would enhance findings use through a variety of mechanisms, for example, by enhancing relevance, ownership, and trust. They expected that a transparent process would increase stakeholders' understanding of how evaluative judgements were derived and therefore their willingness to use findings. Attention was given to ensuring that findings were timely, relevant, practical, and responsive to need. In Bridget's case, experts were intentionally involved to ensure that findings were credible.

Given the importance of findings use for government evaluators across this study, and the strong situational influence (Ritchie, Spencer, et al., 2003) of their workplaces, it is not surprising that four members of the *evaluation as findings* group worked within the public sector. Bridget considered it essential that organizational lessons were learnt through the findings in her example given the resources invested in the program she had evaluated. Her findings required "...oomph." Roy noted some general resistance to evaluation across the public sector, and considered quality data vital to the ability of his team to make credible assertions regarding program performance. Given the operationally focused environment that Chris worked in, he questioned why evaluation would be funded by his organization if it didn't provide useful findings. Dianne was also focused on addressing questions that were useful to her organization. In all these ways, the sub-group findings reinforce the simple explanation that group members considered the type of process use they discussed as important because findings use was important. They intentionally adopted a participatory approach because they expected this would enhance the likelihood of this form of utility.

Richard worked within an organization typically contracted by government to answer specific questions. It was understandable that he considered findings use to be the primary way that his work was used and how it would make a difference. He acknowledged being less focused on "...what's in it" for other stakeholders. There was generally little "...fat" in

budgets to attend to issues beyond what the client wanted. A more intentional approach to process use was likely to require additional time and resources not necessarily available to him. He was “...first and foremost” a social researcher and evaluation was a part of what he did within this role. He was less concerned about differentiating research and evaluation and believed that much of his work could be labelled interchangeably. Evaluations conducted often entailed limited involvement by stakeholders and therefore provided limited opportunity for engagement in ways likely to facilitate process use.

Members’ expectations that a participatory approach would support findings use were largely satisfied in the evaluations they discussed. They used a variety of participatory mechanisms in the expectation they would facilitate the management, implementation, and communication of evaluation in a way that would support stakeholder learning, capacity development, and eventually the use of findings (King, 2007). This provides a simple example of how an expectancy of a relationship between practice and process use outcomes helps to explain practices intentionally adopted, in this case, to facilitate and support the use of findings.

## **6.4 Evaluation as development**

Members of the *evaluation as development* group, Anita (REO), Anna (SEC), Lorraine (SEC), Jack (SEC), Tony (MGOVT), and Steve (REO), discussed different types of process use as intentional and important within their recent practice. On this basis, the group is the least unified of the four identified. However, members are grouped together because the types discussed indicated a common concern for using the evaluation process to inform development of the evaluand. Through the sorting process, Anna identified the following type of process use, *The evaluation planning process has impacted or informed implementation of the evaluand*. Anita and Jack discussed, *The participation of evaluation participants and/or stakeholders in the evaluation process has helped program and/or organizational development*. Lorraine and Steve selected, *The evaluation process has helped programs, organizations, or services remain focused, or to re-focus, on core goals and/or objectives*.

Anna drew from an evaluation of an environmental enhancement and community development program. Anita referred to an evaluation of a program focused on changing front-line practice within a government agency. She predicted program or organizational development might follow from the way she had conducted the evaluation, rather than

being intentionally sought process use. Lorraine had assisted stakeholders in her project to develop an evaluation framework and methodology for a planned workshop. Jack drew his example from a recently completed developmental and formative evaluation undertaken with a non-governmental organization. Steve referred to a formative evaluation of a program of health sector reform. Tony discussed an evaluation which he believed illustrated an important but not intentional example of process use. Through the course of the evaluation, the program provider had come to understand their limited capability to collect outcome data, as assumed to be occurring throughout the program.

### **Practices intentionally adopted**

Group members commonly described intentionally using participatory and learning orientated practices to achieve developments related to the evaluand.

#### *Participatory practices*

Anna ensured that her evaluation planning process was responsive to the needs and expectations of stakeholders. She believed the evaluation was more likely to inform the positive development of the evaluand if stakeholders trusted and had ownership over the process (attitudinal/affective process use). She was deliberate in developing stakeholders' understanding of the evaluation (cognitive process use) and therefore their willingness and ability to engage meaningfully. Through such engagement, the evaluation was more likely to go beyond a "...surface" level of understanding and utility.

Steve was also intentional in facilitating stakeholder engagement. A stakeholder management committee was established in his project, and regular stakeholder workshops were held. Jack intentionally adopted a participatory and highly visual approach to developing a program theory within his example. Logic modelling was intentionally used to help stakeholders re-examine what they believed in relation to their work (cognitive process use). He recalled,

...you had this interactive process of them trying to describe what it was they were trying to do and what were the outcomes, what were the main activities which were taking place and what were they trying to achieve ultimately. Their vision was up for grabs as well...(Jack)

Stakeholders found developing the program theory to be highly valuable and determined it should be the primary activity undertaken in the evaluation. In this way, the development process itself became the main way that the evaluation influenced their decisions and actions.

### *Learning orientated practices*

Most members intentionally used learning orientated practices to support development. In her example, Anna intentionally positioned evaluation as a learning process and herself as a facilitator of learning. She deliberately communicated to stakeholders her belief that evaluation was a,

...discernment process, an assessment process rather than a judgment, in that blame kind of way...[a]...genuine exercise in learning and reflection for mutual benefit...(Anna)

Lorraine understood how logic modelling and evaluative questioning could facilitate learning and used both to develop shared understanding across stakeholders regarding the purpose of the workshop and underlying program theory (cognitive process use). She understood this as evaluation capacity development (cognitive process use) and as process use. Jack described his evaluation as a “...real active learning opportunity.” Any final report was a secondary outcome. The stakeholder organization had a “...strategic plan that wasn't very alive.” Staff needed to re-examine whether they had shared understanding of what they did and why. A formative evaluation approach would support necessary programme and organizational development (behavioural process use) as well as build evaluation capacity (cognitive process use). Stakeholders in Steve’s evaluation lacked a common vision regarding the purpose and intended outcomes of the reform. He also intentionally used the process to encourage stakeholders to critically examine this. A series of stakeholder workshops enabled the lack of shared vision to surface and helped facilitate shared understanding of how it was impacting. The process re-energized stakeholders regarding the problem, developed shared understanding of goals and objectives (cognitive process use), and focused attention on required actions (behavioural process use).

Anita considered program or organizational development (behavioural process use) to be a possible future outcome from the evaluation she described. The process had required stakeholders to re-examine their assumptions regarding the purpose, theory, context, and

performance of the evaluand (cognitive process use). In this way, stakeholders had moved closer to the shared understanding (cognitive process use) that was likely to be required should program or organizational development occur. Anita believed generally that learning through evaluation occurred through formal and informal stakeholder engagements. Interviews not only collected data, but also enabled reflexive learning exchanges. Stakeholder workshops and exit meetings had similar potential. She mentioned the reflexivity that occurred through a chance engagement she had had with a stakeholder in the evaluation she discussed,

...Oh, oh [he said], I haven't thought of that. I need to think about it in this context...So his brain's ticking over...feeding in thoughts and ideas...I saw him the next day...I was thinking about what you were saying and I was thinking...and then that starts [further reflection]...(Anita)

This reflexivity was a form of giving back that occurred appropriately throughout the evaluation process and not just at the point of presenting findings,

...for someone to say to me, Well, what do you think?...I am not going to go, "I'm not going to tell you [until I report findings]"...(Anita)

However, Anita considered reflexivity and learning to be an outcome from her approach to evaluation, rather than necessarily intentional process use. Her view here appeared to be influenced by her workplace context where she was balancing her organization's commitment to meaningful work with maintaining a viable business. Her primary goal was to conduct evaluation that contributed to social good outcomes and that did so through practices that were ethical, had integrity, and were as far as possible "...enhancing" for participants. Process use inevitably occurred as a "...by-product" of such practice. She accepted that a range of factors determined how participatory any evaluation might be and whether process use might occur. A participatory approach was therefore described as more of a pragmatic, rather ideological decision, and process use as something not fully under the control of the evaluator. For example,

...I don't know about actually even claiming added value through...process use. To me it's opportunistic and it's contract specific, so some contracts are driven, we want this very participatory, great, we are in that mode. (Anita)

...There is only so much we can do within our contracts and in the timeframes you are there; you can set up expectations that you can't deliver against. (Anita)

### **Outcomes from process use**

Group members reported three common outcomes from their focus on supporting development of the evaluand: increased stakeholder engagement, learning and development related outcomes, and capacity building outcomes.

#### *Increased stakeholder engagement*

Lorraine believed that clarity and shared focus developed through her approach had enhanced stakeholder engagement and ownership. Stakeholders had realistic expectations regarding the evaluation and were more receptive to receiving findings. Anna described a similar enhancement of stakeholders' trust. This led to "...a relaxing...a loosening and an opening up" that had enhanced her ability to understand "...the heart of what the [evaluand] was, what it is, its approach, and its model." It had enabled "...an honest story [to be told] about what the [evaluand] was and what it was doing." Programme staff had also begun to use logic models independently within their own work. In his example, Jack also described stakeholders' on-going and independent engagement in evaluative processes,

...on their own bat [they were] going to try to explain and sit down and try and bring [non-participants] up to speed for the next session. I wasn't initiating any of that...

..they wanted to put [the evaluation model and theory] up on the wall so that they could come back to it to help them make judgments in the future. Where does it fit, what we are proposing today?...(Jack)

Staff had used the evaluation framework to identify their own questions regarding the merit and worth of their activities. It was not only being used to consider "...what they were doing...why...and how well..." but also, were they "...doing the right thing?"

Jack and Steve also described affective and attitudinal process use. Morale and unity had improved amongst staff in Jack's example as well as their understanding and confidence regarding the organization's performance. Staff had also become more confident users of evaluation and more confident in their dealings with funders. Steve believed that

stakeholders in his evaluation had become more empathic regarding how the reform impacted partner organizations, as well as accepting of what they were required to contribute. Government agencies better understood the issues and costs incurred by community stakeholders, while community stakeholders better understood why government agencies required certain information from them.

#### *Learning and development related outcomes*

Lorraine, Steve, Tony, and Anita all described learning and development outcomes for stakeholders. The evaluation process in Lorraine's example had developed their common understanding regarding the purpose and objectives of the workshop (cognitive process use), and had inevitably informed its design and implementation. She reflected,

...What I'm feeling I'm doing at that moment is, I feel I'm contributing to the success of the whole thing. (Lorraine)

Stakeholders in Steve's example had developed mutual understanding of the "...back story" of respective stakeholder groups. They better understood the needs, constraints, and expectations that groups brought to the reform, as well as their respective contributions. The communication facilitated by the evaluation helped groups to better understand wider issues or needs, for example, how and by whom specific forms of data required to be collected would be used. Such understanding had enhanced stakeholders' regard for the importance of the data and their willingness to collect it. The evaluation overall developed shared understanding regarding the need for consistent messages about the reform programme and this had informed developments within the communication strategy.

The evaluation described by Tony had created a forum that enabled dialogue between stakeholders. There was shared understanding within the provider organization regarding the capabilities and capacity required to collect useful outcome data. He was certain this understanding would inform the planning of any similar programs in the future. Anita recognized that she had herself learnt through the process use generated by the reflexive processes she described. She had gained understanding of how the implementation and performance of the evaluand had been influenced by context and of future evaluation needs and direction.

### *Capacity building outcomes*

Lorraine, Steve, Anita and Jack described enhancements in the evaluation capacity of stakeholders. In Lorraine's example they more clearly understood appropriate activities to undertake within the workshop, as well as the purpose of the evaluation. Steve described increased understanding of the program theory underpinning the reform program. Stakeholders in Anita's example better understood quality and likely outcomes in relation to the evaluand. She believed this knowledge would inform any subsequent organizational or programme development. Through the logic modelling completed in Jack's example, stakeholders had common understanding of the program theory that linked activities to intended outcomes.

### **Discussion**

While members of the *evaluation as development* group discussed different examples of process use, the types indicated a common concern for using the evaluation process to develop the evaluand. Practice orientations unifying the group were similar to those of participants across the study. Members wanted their work to be used to effect change and to make a difference. They believed that these outcomes could be achieved through using the evaluation process to develop the evaluand and commonly accounted for their participatory practices on this basis. The whole point of evaluation for Anna was to impact the evaluand "...for the better". Evaluation for Jack was a means of effecting change and development at an individual, group, or system level. Lorraine was comfortable with the evaluator influencing the likelihood of the evaluand being successful. She was "...very keen" on effecting "...service improvement". Anita was drawn to the potential of evaluation to effect change in programs or organizations, while Steve described its potential to improve systems, policies, programmes, and services.

As did participants across the study, members understood that stakeholder participation could enhance the use of findings. However, they also commonly accounted for a participatory approach on the basis that it could directly support development of the evaluand. Their accounts indicated an approach to evaluation aligned to the utilization orientated tradition, formative evaluation (Duignan, 2003), and practical participatory evaluation (Brisolara, 1998; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998).

Members of the *evaluation as development* group also commonly accounted for learning orientated practices on the expectation that enhancements to the evaluand would follow. Outcomes commonly reported included stakeholder engagement and ownership, learning, shared understanding, and common focus. Regarding these outcomes as having supported developments related to the evaluand, their intent to pursue this type of process use was validated.

Examples are provided below of how members' expectancy of a relationship between practice and process use may also help to explain practices intentionally adopted to inform development. Anna's learning orientated approach suggests that she understood that the likelihood of process use was related to the extent a supportive environment for learning was created (Preskill et al., 2003) and the extent stakeholder interactions were facilitated (Johnson, 1998). Her understanding of these relationships was indicated through her care to ensure an inclusive evaluation planning process, and her focus on building stakeholder trust and ownership. Jack's deliberateness in using a highly participatory process for developing program theory suggests he had similar understanding.

Lorraine, Jack, and Anita were deliberate in using evaluation tools to facilitate critical reflection. This suggests they understood that process use was more likely when the evaluation process is interactive, dialogical, and experiential (Preskill et al., 2003). Steve's establishment of an evaluation management committee indicated that he understood this mechanism would help ensure the evaluation process facilitated useful learning outcomes for stakeholders (King, 2007).

The sub-group findings indicated situational explanations for Anita's and Tony's response to the concept of process use. Anita was balancing both social and business concerns in her role. She understood that process use was determined by multiple factors (King, 2007; Preskill et al., 2003) and that clients could exercise control over these. Therefore, process use may or may not occur and there was a risk of the evaluator raising unrealistic expectations for stakeholders regarding learning and development outcomes. This was understood as an ethical issue, particularly in regard to the imperative that evaluation does no harm. For these reasons, Anita was reluctant to claim process use as something intentionally sought or always considered important. Similar to Forss et al (2002), she suggested that the intentional pursuit of process use may be inappropriate in

certain contexts. For example, collaborative practices enabling of process use may conflict with a more distant positioning sometimes required from the summative evaluator,

...our job is not always to tell good news, our job [can involve reporting]...quite unpleasant things that will have consequences for people and organizations...(Anita)

Tony's approach to evaluation was also shaped by his workplace setting. While he regarded process use as an important form of use, his organization was primarily concerned with findings use. As a manager, it was understandable that he described the project management necessary to derive useful findings as good evaluation. Process use would inevitably occur through the questioning and dialogue necessary to plan and deliver good evaluation. In this way, it was more of an understandable outcome from the evaluation process, rather than necessarily intentionally sought. The example of process use he discussed fitted this mould. While the learning he described eventually became a finding and was important, it was learning that largely emerged as a secondary outcome.

## **6.5 Reflexive interpretation**

Further readings of the sub-group findings are now considered, including whether the potential for process use misuse is indicated. The findings suggest possible tensions between government agencies prioritizing evaluation findings and external evaluators who value forms of utility in addition to those sought by the client. While evaluators appear to be acutely aware of the risks should necessary process not be observed, clients may face conflicting pressures, for example, the provision of timely information. However, while government and non-governmental evaluators favoured different types of process use, members across all the sub-groups strove to achieve findings use. A range of process use types were regarded as supporting this goal and therefore this research does not necessarily indicate that the quality of findings may be compromised by the intention to also achieve process-based utility. However, tensions may arise if client agencies do not understand how the investments that facilitate this utility may ultimately strengthen findings, the evaluand, or the likelihood of intended outcomes.

The sub-group findings suggest that the intent to achieve process use may enhance rather than undermine or divert attention from the core purpose of evaluation. Process use outcomes were commonly described by participants as building necessary foundations for

credible evaluative judgements as well as stakeholder responsiveness to these. For example, shared understanding, trust, respect, managerial support, capacity development, ownership, and positive regard for evaluation were all considered important. Such findings are indicative of a shift in *how* the core purpose of evaluation is fulfilled, rather than necessarily an undermining or confusion of this. However, questions remain regarding whether the evaluator is able to maintain the core role of evaluation to account for public interventions while also attending to process-based utility.

Evaluators in this study commonly believed that the client and other stakeholders alike should derive utility from evaluation, and that this was supported when stakeholders had the capacity to participate in the process on a more informed and equal basis. This indicates some aspiration to ‘reclaim’ evaluation from the bureaucracy and to establish a more democratic process within which the evaluation stake and interests of the state are balanced with those of other stakeholders. While this process does not necessarily pose risks to the quality or integrity of evaluation, questions are raised. For example, how do evaluators determine the stakeholder groups to be included? What risks might emerge should the needs and priorities of any one group be prioritized over another? Could this lead to any stakeholder group imposing their preferences or exerting excessive influence within the evaluation process? What safeguards might be needed to ensure that through engagement processes, the evaluators own views are not used to suppress or dominate others? What happens if the evaluator cannot fully deliver upon raised expectations, particularly those related to self-determination, ownership, or empowerment?

There is little indication in the current findings of evaluators favouring the interests of one stakeholder group over another. While participants sought to meet the utility needs of stakeholders beyond the client, they were also intentional in engaging clients so that a useful evaluation was eventually commissioned. They sought to generate process use for commissioners, clients, and other stakeholders alike and regardless of the context or type of evaluation conducted.

The sub-group analysis raises further questions regarding the apparent dissolution of boundaries between the evaluator and evaluated and whether this undermines the purpose, quality, or credibility of evaluation. Of particular concern is whether this process may lead to the evaluator being co-opted in such way that evaluative judgements are compromised. Whether a more partnership based approach is considered to present such risks may again

depend on one's view of evaluation. The interactive effects of evaluation were generally accepted by participants in this study and the possibility of evaluator 'independence' is challenged by this. Members across all groups recognized that influence and impact from evaluation could continue over time. Some were clear that the process did not have a discrete beginning and end in the way this might be defined in evaluation terms. Participants' intent to develop capacity, and to ensure that the evaluation process provided benefits to stakeholders long after the 'completion' of an evaluation, also suggests some acceptance that the attainment of merit and worth may be a continuous process (Fetterman, 1995). The requirement and possibility of distinct boundaries between the evaluator and evaluated seems less certain within this re-examination of the temporal context.

Many participants believed that the value of evaluation was enhanced when it is used to build the capacity of stakeholders to participate in the process, and when evaluative thinking and action is embedded within routine practice. A re-orientation of the political role of evaluation is indicated through these developments. For example, it becomes a tool and process for affirming cultural validity. It becomes a means through which service providers are themselves better able to engage with their funders, ultimately for the purpose of improving quality and success. The central role of evaluative thought and action within the program planning to delivery cycle is reinforced.

Many evaluators in this study accepted interactive effects within the evaluation process and that these effects would be intertwined with intervention and program effects. There was also a belief that evaluators should be transparent about the beliefs and value commitments that underpinned their practice (Greene, 1997) and the impact of this (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Smith, 1996). Members of the *evaluation as process* and *evaluation as capacity building* groups were particularly clear about the values that drove their practice. Māori evaluators were explicit in describing how cultural frameworks informed their approach and what they sought to achieve as evaluators. Members of the *evaluation as development* group intentionally used the evaluation process to influence the evaluand and considered this to be a core responsibility of the evaluator.

Such commitments and intent to achieve process use does not necessarily undermine evaluation, however, further examination of potential risks is appropriate. For example, if interactive effects are inevitable, at what point may these lead to confusion regarding the

independence of evaluation? Given interactive effects, what safeguards are required to ensure that the integrity of evaluative judgments is maintained? If local evaluators are required to adopt roles that inevitably inform program and organizational development, are there limits to these inputs beyond which their ability to judge merit and value is undeniably compromised?

The sub-group analysis reinforces that the local practice context supports a relational approach to evaluation that is particularly focused on learning and development outcomes. This orientation to use the evaluation process to enhance the likelihood of success need not undermine the core purpose of evaluation. Rather than question this propensity, it may be more useful to consider how development roles can coexist with the responsibility to determine merit and worth. Davidson (2005) believes that formative and summative evaluation should be equally evaluative and therefore seems to see no difficulty in reconciling a developmental and evaluative function. However, the question must be asked at what point does the evaluator's investment in development compromise their ability, willingness, or credibility to assess quality and success? (Scriven, 1996; Stufflebeam, 1994). What risks are there when Lorraine sees herself "...contributing to the success of the whole thing" or when Anna is adamant that evaluation must impact the evaluand "...for the better"?

While the questions above require further examination, this research suggests that local evaluators are identifying ways to reconcile a development focus with evaluative judgement. A common strategy is to ensure that the approach used to determine evaluation criteria and performance standards is collaborative and transparent. When stakeholders are involved in defining what quality and success looks like, and when there is shared understanding of how performance will be judged, the evaluation process is more likely to derive credible judgements that will be used by stakeholders. This doesn't mean that criteria and standards are acquiescent to stakeholder preferences or bias, but rather that the sources, assumptions, and beliefs underpinning judgements are critically and systematically determined.

Finally, the sub-groups findings indicate that evaluators can have different views about how credible evaluative judgements are reached and this may well lead to stakeholder confusion regarding the purpose of evaluation and the role of the evaluator. For many evaluators in this study, a participatory approach was considered fundamental to their ability to derive evaluative judgements of value and utility. For Māori evaluators working

under a tikanga framework, judgement was only possible through a relational approach based on collectivism. Others, such as Anita, believed that distance and externality was sometimes necessary when undertaking summative assessment. From Mary's account, university-based academics may hold similar views. The accounts of governmental evaluators also indicated particular views within government regarding what constitutes quality evaluation and credible data. Government evaluators place particular emphasis on end-user stakeholder participation to enhance findings use and may be less attentive to the needs and involvement of other stakeholders (Oliver et al., 2003). In comparison, evaluators outside of government sought a range of learning outcomes for stakeholders in addition to the client. The skills and confidence to derive such outcomes, while also maintaining the core purpose of evaluation, may be correlated with evaluator experience. All these factors raise the possibility that stakeholders' experience of 'evaluation' may vary considerably across different evaluators. Whether this is the case, and what impact it has on stakeholders' understanding and confidence in evaluation, could be usefully examined in future research.



## *Chapter 7:*

### CONCLUSIONS

This thesis developed in response to three assumptions regarding process use. First, process use is a form of evaluation utility that can enhance the value and utility of evaluation. Second, process use often occurs as an unintended side-product of evaluation, and third, it is more likely if evaluators are intentional in seeking it. It was therefore surmised that if process use is to be more readily used by evaluators to enhance the value and utility of evaluation, then they will need to be more intentional in achieving it. They will be required to shift from regarding process use as a largely unintentional side-product of evaluation to approaching it up-front as a planned and purposeful part of practice. This shift will necessitate heightened consciousness regarding opportunities for process use and greater intent to undertake practices and to shape conditions that will be supportive of it.

Following the assumptions above, this study was conducted to understand the reasons and to provide explanations for why evaluators intentionally seek process use and for the practices adopted to achieve it. Regarding process use as a constructed phenomenon and best understood as a sensitizing concept, the research questions were addressed through naturalistic inquiry. It was assumed that behaviour was likely to be explained by multiple factors and the interactions between these. It was accepted that there were likely to be any number of possible reasons for evaluators' intent and practice, and that determining whether they provided valid explanations would require an understanding of the context within which evaluators practiced evaluation.

Through examining the meaningful nature of process use for evaluators, this thesis showed that intent and practice is understandable as a consequence of interrelated and converging explanatory factors, past, present, and future. It was shown that process use is not necessarily explained as an outcome of conscious desire by the evaluator or as an additional form of utility achievable through extra effort or 'special' practice. Rather, process use, and evaluators' intent and practice to achieve it, are often part and parcel of contemporary evaluation practice. Reflecting this, for many evaluators in this study, the

nucleus of their intent regarding process use did not originate in concerns directly or consciously linked to traditional notions of evaluation utility. Rather, intent could be traced to a range of factors that underpinned their practice and which shaped their understanding of good evaluation. Within these contexts, intent and practice regarding process use was often inevitable. It made sense to evaluators and satisfied what was important to them. This was particularly obvious through the accounts of practice given by those evaluators who believed that they were essentially tasked with addressing relational, moral, socio-cultural, organizational, and historical concerns.

Reflecting on these findings, I am left questioning whether the concept of ‘intent’, as initially conceived in this study, provides an appropriate frame within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. The concept appears particularly problematic if it is interpreted to imply that process use is some ‘thing’ outside the practice and process of evaluation. Also difficult is any suggestion that process use may be more likely secured through concentrated effort, purpose, or design.

Such tensions give rise to the need to carefully examine any conclusions derived from this thesis in regard to the foundational assumptions that shaped it. While these assumptions were largely upheld through the findings, they were also considerably moderated and influenced by local context. As discussed, while the value and utility of process use was confirmed, it has been shown that the concept may be most appropriately understood as an inevitable part of practice, rather than as extra ‘useful’ utility. The potential for process use to be unintended was also upheld, however, in some contexts because it is fundamental to evaluators’ beliefs about good practice and is therefore largely unexamined. While evaluator intent was confirmed as an important factor explaining the achievement of process use, intent does not necessarily equate to the evaluator’s conscious decision to enhance the value and utility of their work through process-based utility.

Three explanatory sub-themes are apparent within the primary finding of this study that the intent and practice of local evaluators regarding process use can be explained as a result of a convergence of explanatory interacting factors. The first is that in many practice contexts, process use may be *largely inevitable* rather than necessarily intentional. The second is that intent and practice is *contextually determined* and that context can comprise temporal, cognitive, affective, aspirational, social, historical, cultural, and organizational dimensions. Third, *evaluator attributes and dimensions of role* are factors that help to explain intent and

practice. I discuss each of these sub-themes in the following section and consider how they moderate the assumptions underpinning this thesis.

## 7.1 The inevitability of process use

The findings suggest that at one level, intent and practice regarding process use can be simply understood as reflecting broad developments in evaluation practice. As indicated in the literature, practice has developed generally to be more participatory, utilization focused, user-centred, relational, and co-constructed. The potential for process use to occur is indicated through the intent and practice that underpins all of these developments. As has been noted, especially in Chapter Two, there is now widespread agreement amongst evaluators that stakeholders should participate in the evaluation process. As evaluation has become more collaborative, it is inevitable that evaluators have greater opportunity to facilitate learning and development outcomes through stakeholder engagement. If, as Abma & Widdershoven (2008) suggest, evaluation is a relational social practice, it is understandable that evaluators will seek to facilitate an interactive and dialogical process. When evaluation knowledge is understood to be constructed and therefore negotiable, it makes sense that evaluators will strive for the evaluation process to be transparent and responsive. It follows that they will consider process use to be part of the value and utility of evaluation. Evaluators' intent and practice regarding process use may also be regarded as evidence of their cognizance and desire to use, for positive effect, the non-instrumental and multi-directional nature of evaluation influence.

The evaluation practice of many evaluators participating in this study reflected the broad shifts in practice described in the literature. Given this, it is understandable that many participants had existing awareness and experience of process use. Some were clear that process use was integral to their understanding of good evaluation and what they sought to achieve as evaluators.

Baptiste (2010) appears to recognize the inevitability of process use when he suggests that Patton infers that process use will occur regardless of the evaluation approach employed. I presume this inference is drawn from the observation that all evaluation is at some level participatory and therefore potentially facilitative of process use. Demonstrating this, many participants across this study, including members of the *evaluation as findings use* group, recognized that process use was likely when they engaged stakeholders in the

evaluation process. The intentional adoption of participatory practices by participants to achieve finding use, a type of process use, was largely explicable as routine practice. The intent and practice of evaluators here is not surprising. As identified throughout this thesis, evaluators understand the human, context, and evaluator factors that influence utilization and that by acting on these, use can be enhanced. They understand the mechanisms which link participation to use, and have long sought to activate these connections through intentionally participatory practices.

Other developments in evaluation also indicate the routine nature of process use. Evaluators are increasingly responsive to the learning and development needs that stakeholders bring to the process (King, 2008; Preskill, 2008; Preskill & Torres, 1999). They commonly work in formative roles to guide program design, implementation, and improvement (Preskill & Caracelli, 1997). The boundaries between evaluation, program and organizational development are blurring (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). Evaluators are increasingly concerned with aligning methods and purpose to ensure that stakeholders are best served through the process (Mark, 2001). Evaluators understand that in order to design and conduct an evaluation, there are many processes and activities that must be undertaken before and after the collection, analysis, and reporting of data (Skolits et al., 2009). They understand the requirement to undertake any number of roles, depending on evaluation purpose, context, or circumstance (Patton, 2007). They recognize that identifying and selecting an appropriate combination of roles requires reflection and reflexivity (Morabito, 2002), a requirement that also indicates the evaluator's own learning through process use.

The accounts of practice given by many evaluators in this study reflect the developments above and further support the inevitability thesis. At the sub-group level, the inevitability of process use as explanation appeared most obvious for members of the *evaluation as process* and *evaluation as capacity building* groups. The inevitability of process use was understandable once the beliefs and aspirations held in common by members were revealed. The practices they used to achieve process use were also understandable once the importance of process use to them, and their beliefs about how process use would be achieved, were understood. Most of the participants in these two groups worked as independent evaluation consultants and there was evidence that this independence, as well as their experience and mana as evaluators, enabled them to practice evaluation in accordance with what was important to them. Consciousness of process use was

particularly high for those who intentionally worked as consultants in order to align their practice and values.

Cognizant of the “...anticipatory” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.142) nature of behaviour, I explored whether and how evaluators’ knowledge of the antecedents of process use might help to explain practices intentionally adopted to achieve it. It was shown through a number of examples that evaluators’ adoption of certain practices could be explained as a consequence of their understanding about why these practices were likely to lead to process use. The expectancies identified indicated that participants understood routine evaluation theory, a finding that further supports the inevitability thesis. For example, participants commonly adopted participatory practices on the basis that findings use would be more likely. This relationship denotes a common type of process use and this type derives from the extensively demonstrated relationship between participatory practices and utilization.

## **7.2 Contextually determined explanations**

Meanings and manifestations of process use are contextually determined (Patton, 2007) and this thesis confirms that evaluators’ intent and practice regarding process use are similarly shaped. Following the naturalistic approach adopted, I intentionally explored how the practice context of evaluators might help to provide explanations for intent and practice. Two distinct, yet interrelated dimensions of context, were established and examined; the *values, beliefs, aspirations and traditions* that underpinned evaluators’ practice and the *social, historical, cultural and organizational* factors that shaped the settings within which they worked.

Values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions underpinning practice were explored to understand what was important to the evaluators participating in this study. How these foundations manifested in their practice, and helped to explain their intent and practice, was examined. This analysis revealed common practice orientations towards *social justice, equality, and tikanga Māori* as well as a belief that evaluation can and should be used to facilitate *social change*. It was shown in Chapter Five how these orientations helped to explain awareness and experience of process use.

Through participants’ accounts of their approach to evaluation, four types of practice commonly adopted, and which also explained awareness and intent, were identified. These practices were *utilization focused, pragmatic and contextually responsive, relational, and orientated to*

*learning and development*. Each type was understandable given the orientations to practice identified and underlying values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions. The findings supported the assumption that process use is more likely when evaluators are intentional in adopting practices to achieve it. However, they also showed that intent and practice may be accounted for on bases beyond those that connect more directly to concerns of methodology, method, or utilization.

In Chapter Six, three types of practice were identified as intentionally used by members of different sub-groups to achieve distinct types of process use. These were *participatory*, *learning orientated*, and *capacity building* practices. The sub-group analysis demonstrated how the adoption of these practices could be explained by identifying how they linked to what was important to participants. The analysis also revealed the explanatory potential of three outcomes from process use that were commonly reported by sub-group members. These were *increased stakeholder engagement*, *learning related outcomes*, and *capacity building* outcomes. These outcomes either validated participants' intent and practice or satisfied what was important to them. These findings showed that outcomes from process use could reinforce or raise awareness of process use and could stimulate further intent and practice.

The sub-group analysis provided further support to the intentionality thesis in relation to specific types of process use. However, through tracing the nucleus of participants' intent, the analysis further confirmed the breadth and depth of drivers to 'intent'. For example, process use was clearly shown for members of the *evaluation as process* group to be fundamental to what they considered good evaluation. Their intent and practice did not fit any framing of process use as an additional form of utility that was achievable through extra effort or special practice. These participants simply believed that the evaluation process should provide stakeholders with learning and development opportunities. They were open in their advocacy for evaluation as a just and fair learning process, much in the way that Greene (1997) describes advocacy in evaluation as the appropriate absence of value neutrality.

The intent and practice of members of the *evaluation as capacity building* group could be similarly explained through reference to what was of common concern and importance to group members. Building capacity was integral to members' understanding of good evaluation, how stakeholders derived value and benefit from the process, and how the evaluator met professional, moral, and cultural obligations. The intent and practice of

Māori members of this group could also be explained through tikanga Māori as a framework for practice. Intent and practice were not necessarily thought about in terms of intentionality, but rather, what was right by and for Māori. It was shaped by past, present, and future concerns and through understanding evaluation not just as a means to some end, but as an on-going journey.

The intent and practice of members of the *evaluation as development* group was also shown to be an understandable and not necessarily conscious response to the concerns of common importance to them. Members strove to influence development and sought to do this by informing the evaluand in some way. They believed that through this process, programs, services, and policies were likely to be better and outcomes for beneficiaries enhanced.

The factors that shaped the practice settings of evaluators were closely examined and this inquiry revealed the explanatory nature of these factors, in particular a concern for addressing the *injustices and disadvantage experienced by Māori* and the importance of *interpersonal connection and stakeholder influence* within the local context of practice. The *relative infancy of evaluation as a professional practice* in Aotearoa New Zealand and the *limited evaluation capacity* of evaluation stakeholders, were also identified as important constitutive characteristics of the practice setting.

Explanations embedded within social, historical, and cultural contexts were particularly evident for the independent Māori evaluators involved in this study. While I was careful not to suggest to these participants what process use ‘looked like’, all responded to the concept by describing their intent to build capacity. It was concluded earlier in this thesis that this response is understandable when the evaluator follows tikanga Māori as a frame for practice. However, my discussion of these explanations is limited for two reasons. While Māori participants validated my interpretations of their data through various checking back procedures, there are limits to my mandate and ability as non-Māori to interpret Māori perspectives (Bishop 1999; Glover, 2002; Henry & Pene, 2001; Walker et al., 2006). As a non-Māori evaluator, I am conscious of the historical and political context within which Māori evaluators practice. My interviews with Māori were largely conducted on the basis of an assumed level of shared understanding which precluded the need for further examination. For example, I did not directly ask participants about their practice within the context of colonization or aspirations for tino-rangatiratanga. Practice was not

explicitly examined as a means of reclaiming the legitimacy and normalcy of Māori worldview, of ensuring responsiveness to Māori concerns, and enhancing Māori control. While such themes may not have been directly discussed, I believe that they were ‘present’ in all my interviews with the Māori evaluators. They formed a lens through which I viewed their accounts of practice and through which I derived explanations for intent and practice. My handling of this data is therefore largely interpretive, rather than defensible on the basis of the data, although my interpretations and conclusions were validated through the checking processes described.

Demographically, Aotearoa New Zealand is a small country characterized by high levels of interpersonal connectedness. The evaluator often has on-going relationships with stakeholders and the quality of these relationships is considered critical to credible and valid evaluation. In this context, criteria of evaluation quality are not necessarily traditional ones, in particular the need for some boundary between the evaluator and evaluated. Rather, it is the evaluators’ understanding of context, their relationships with stakeholders, and stakeholder input, that are important. These are kaupapa Māori criteria (Bishop, 1999; Walker et al., 2006) and are criteria that make further sense when the historical context of Māori experience of evaluation is understood. The position that threats of bias or subjectivity in evaluation are best controlled through transparency and shared understanding is also understandable in this context. Such criteria further infer the centrality of process use within local practice.

The question was raised earlier in this thesis whether there might be differences between the extent government commissioners ‘demand’ process use and the extent local evaluators might desire to ‘supply’ it. This question relates further to the settings within which evaluators work. There was some evidence that government stakeholders were less interested in evaluation approaches that might facilitate types of process use other than enhanced findings use. In addition, participants reported a narrowing of the types of evaluation questions being asked by government, an increasing focus on determining return-on-investment, and some reluctance by government agencies to engage in evaluation as a deliberative process. However, this study clearly shows that regardless of the client’s needs, evaluators often feel accountable for meeting the needs of other stakeholder groups, and that process use often fulfils this purpose. This was particularly obvious for evaluators working within Māori settings. Process use allowed evaluators to meet multiple accountabilities and to feel satisfied that their practice aligned to their values. They used it

to build stakeholder engagement, to return value and utility to stakeholders, and to help stakeholders develop positive regard for evaluation. In a small country, these forms of process use are vital for sustaining stakeholders' willingness to commit resources to evaluation and to ensure quality data. Understanding this, evaluators often sought process use even when clients did not recognise its importance. It is understandable that many evaluators had their eye on the future, in particular, the on-going willingness of stakeholders groups to commit time and resources to the evaluation process. Arguably, commissioners also have responsibilities in shaping this same future. This begins with the project parameters they establish through their purchasing of evaluation as these may support or undermine process use. For example, the timeframes made available to conduct an evaluation and the extent these support the evaluator's attention to necessary process. It is perhaps also incumbent upon evaluators to more directly communicate to commissioning agencies and clients the potential value and utility of process use. The raising of these issues at the end of this thesis suggests areas for further research, including how the local purchasing of evaluation impacts process use and how purchasing might impact the sustainability of evaluation.

Further to the above, the workplace context described by government evaluators in this study provided situational explanations for their evaluation approach and the type of process use they regarded as important and intentional. While these participants were unified in using a participatory approach to enhance the use of findings, they were also intentional in seeking other types of process use. The practice context findings showed that a lack of demand for process use by internal stakeholders did not necessarily stop these evaluators from pursuing it. In such a context, other drivers to intent and practice appeared to be at play. These included participants' beliefs about what constituted good evaluation practice, including a sense of duty to return value and utility to stakeholders beyond findings use.

When asked to identify types of process use, participants were instructed to exclude projects where the development of evaluation capacity could be considered the primary objective, such as with evaluation training. This criterion was established because process use is the learning and development that occurs as a result of conducting evaluation (Patton, 2007). I believe that participants generally adhered to this criterion when selecting examples and that there are various explanations for why capacity building was still often a focus in the projects discussed. Asked to identify types of process use that were important

and intentional, participants understandably selected evaluations that were focused on learning and development. In many cases, participants were working alongside stakeholders in capacity development roles. Factors explaining this included the small population context and partnership ethos arising from this, tikanga Māori as a frame for practice, and the Treaty framework. Locally, evaluation contracts are also often of limited scale and budget and formative or process evaluation is therefore common. Many participants described limited evaluative capacity within the settings and stakeholders with whom they worked. This added further to both the need and opportunity to use the evaluation process as a mechanism for learning and development.

### **7.3 Evaluator attributes and role**

The literature indicates that the likelihood of process use will be mediated by evaluator characteristics such as background, level of experience, credibility, and perceived authority (Preskill et al., 2003). While it was not the aim of this study to examine these relationships in-depth, the findings identify attributes of the evaluator as explanatory of intent and practice.

Evidence of a relationship between evaluator experience and process use informed my decision to recruit evaluators to this study on the basis that they had at least five years practice experience. The general level of awareness and intent regarding process use described by participants validated this decision as did the number who considered process use to be central to their practice. A range of evaluator characteristics identified as helping to explain intent and practice also appeared to correlate with evaluator experience. Participants understood that a range of factors could influence whether and how findings were used. Many were aware that findings use alone was often insufficient to deliver benefits to stakeholders from evaluation. They understood that value and utility could be undermined if stakeholders lacked evaluation capacity or capability.

The findings suggest that the skills and confidence required to actively pursue process use may also correlate with evaluator experience. Participants described advanced interpersonal and communication skills, the use of processes to build stakeholder capacity and capability, input into organizational and program development, responsiveness to need and context, and methodological eclecticism that ensured useful evaluation. Also described

was an ability to develop more equal relationships with stakeholders and a highly dialogical approach.

Reflecting the above, many of the most experienced evaluators in this study described their influence through a broad scope of practice. As consultants, they were having evaluative influence within and across other professional fields such as organizational development. Advisory and review type roles were often described, and while participants were employing evaluative practices, they were not necessarily conducting ‘evaluations.’ Senior evaluators working in government undertook a range of evaluative support activities in addition to undertaking evaluation. The contributions described by all the independent Māori evaluators extended well beyond determining merit and worth.

Related to the above, many participants worked in ways or in settings where traditional boundaries between the evaluator and the evaluated were increasingly blurred. Stakeholders were often being prepared to undertake roles in the collection, interpretation, and use of data. Self-evaluative capacity was often being developed, particularly through the use of rubric methodology. In many of these examples, capacity development was less easily or appropriately ‘teased-out’ as process use from the purpose and approach of the evaluation being conducted.

#### **7.4 Reflections on methodology and method**

The methodology and methods used in this thesis intentionally followed the epistemological and ontological assumptions that shaped it. This conceptual coherence inevitably shaped the key finding that intent and practice is understandable as a consequence of multiple, interrelated, and converging explanatory factors. Different reasons and explanations may have been provided if the research had been conducted under the objectivist tradition and if the findings had been viewed through an alternative analytical lens (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). Findings and conclusions may have also been different had time and resources permitted further data to be collected, had additional or different evaluators participated, or had further context and perspective been captured (Hughes & Sharrock, 1990).

The term ‘process use’ was used throughout Chapters Five and Six to encapsulate the learning and development outcomes that participants believed occurred as a result of their

practice. It was not assumed that participants understood these outcomes as ‘process use’. Meaning or relevance of the concept within Māori contexts of practice was also not assumed. However, as anticipated by Preskill et al. (2003), participants’ engagement in this research is likely to have raised their consciousness of process use within their practice. This impact is itself an example of process use and is consistent with the epistemological and ontological assumptions underpinning this study, in particular the inevitability of interactive effects (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Such influence adds further to the problematic nature of the concept of ‘intent’ in the context of this research. The interview was intentionally designed to help participants identify examples of process use that they considered important and intentional. In-depth interviews were deliberately used to facilitate their deep reflection on these examples. Eligibility criteria were established that enhanced the likelihood that participants would be able to describe process use within their practice. Participants’ understanding of the concept of process use was not ‘tested’ nor did I seek to distinguish their existing understanding of the concept from that facilitated through their participation in the study.

It may be argued that this study is limited by not triangulating participants’ accounts of process use with other data types or data sources (Yin, 2003). A more comprehensive understanding of process use may have been provided had other stakeholders to the examples of process use described been included (Amo & Cousins, 2007). Interviews could have been conducted with programme staff identified by participants as having experienced positive outcomes from the process use they described. Review of other outputs from the evaluation process, for example, the quality of evaluation reports and the extent that findings were used, may have also been useful. However, while triangulation may have added to the depth of understanding achieved (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Stake, 1995), any claim that it would have validated the truth of participants’ accounts would be inappropriate given the epistemological and ontological assumptions of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1982).

The idiographic nature of the knowledge provided by this research is not a limitation given the epistemological and ontological assumptions underpinning the study. The findings reflect the bounded and contextualized nature of behaviour (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Care must be taken not to draw wider and potentially misleading inferences about evaluators’ intent and practice solely from the interview data (Maxwell, 1992). Given the purposeful participant selection process used, and the limited number of participants, most

evaluators working within Aotearoa New Zealand were inevitably excluded from this study. This research only represents the voice and views of the evaluators who took part in it (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). Participants are not representative of all evaluators in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the level of intent and practice identified does not necessarily reflect the practice of all local evaluators.

Seeking primarily to understand intent and practice, this study was not focused on identifying examples of unintentional process use. Neither was it concerned with identifying situations where participants felt that intent to achieve process use was inappropriate. It is not claimed from this study that participants are intentional in seeking process use all the time or in all settings. Indeed, had the focus of the study been on unintentional process use, or on inappropriate contexts for seeking process use, it is conceivable that the same participants could have identified such examples.

Participants' attention was deliberately focused on intentionally sought process use and it is not claimed that the intent and practice subsequently identified is descriptive of their practice generally. Nor is it suggested that intent and practice may be transferred beyond the conditions of the evaluation examples discussed. The possibility of a unique confluence of factors shaping intent and practice in regard to specific occurrences of process use is consistent with Patton's (2007) assertion regarding the situated nature of the concept, and the importance of treating process use as a sensitizing concept.

There are two caveats to the limited transferability of the findings from this study suggested above. In Chapter Five, I detailed characteristics of the local evaluation practice context that were evident through participants' accounts of their practice. There was a consistency between these characteristics and those previously observed by theorists. Characteristics commonly identified in this study, and which match previous accounts, included a general attentiveness to process, connection, and personal relationships (Williams, 2003), a particularly participatory, inclusive, and democratic approach (Perrin, 2003), and a concern for well-being and social equity (Datta, 2003). All these characteristics suggest an approach to evaluation where a general level of awareness and intent regarding process use seems inevitable. Second, *evaluation as process* group members considered process use to be integral to their general understanding and approach to evaluation, while members of the *evaluation as capacity building* group described their intent to build capacity in similar terms.

## 7.5 Implications for theory and practice

This research confirms that process use has different meanings and manifestations for different evaluators working in different contexts. The identification of these differences supports the appropriateness of treating process use as a sensitizing concept. The importance of understanding the constitutive influence of context, in order to explain behaviour, is also reinforced. Naturalistic inquiry has also been confirmed as an appropriate research approach that facilitates the depth of inquiry necessary for understanding and explaining complex forms of behaviour, in this case, the intention and practice of evaluators to achieve process use.

This thesis shows that process use does not necessarily occur because evaluators set out intentionally to adopt specific practices to achieve it. Rather, for some types of evaluators working in some types of settings, process use occurs because it is fundamental to their beliefs about what it means to be a good, moral, and effective evaluator. It has been similarly shown that types of process use may also be expected when evaluation is practiced in ways aligned to utilization focused, ideologically orientated, and hermeneutic and constructivist practice traditions. Process use is also understandable when the evaluator intentionally adopts a learning orientated approach to evaluation and when their practice is informed by adult learning theory.

These findings suggest that a useful starting point for any intervention seeking to enhance the occurrence of process use would be to ensure that evaluators are cognizant of the relational, moral, socio-cultural, organizational, and historical contexts of practice. Consideration would follow of how practices, shaped in response, would inevitably facilitate process use. The evaluation literature could be drawn upon, as I have done in this thesis, to help explain this. The order of the process described is important. It follows indications from this study that practices facilitative of process use are more likely to be sustained when evaluators recognize that the drivers to these practices are often located beyond methodology concerns. This study suggests that evaluators may have limited and possibly fleeting regard for the value of process use if the concept is simply promulgated as an additional form of utility that is achievable through the adoption of a specific practice or tool.

This thesis reinforces that process use is often a mechanism that connects evaluation practice to processes and outcomes of social, political, and organizational change. Through

process use, we are reminded that the practice of evaluation inevitably intersects with other forms of social, organizational, and pedagogical practice such as community and cultural development, organizational development, adult learning, and organizational learning. Many evaluators in this study recognized and valued process use as a means through which they were able to contribute positively in these related areas of learning and development.

Not all evaluators will agree that process use enhances the value and utility of evaluation and intent to achieve it may pose risks to evaluation. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to address these potential tensions further here, other than to acknowledge again that they exist. As discussed at the start of this thesis, it is not my position that an intention to achieve process use is necessarily right or appropriate in all situations or settings. As reinforced throughout this study, context must be considered when making such determinations. However, this study also indicates the inevitability of process use regardless of the tradition of practice guiding the evaluator. It is not methodology or method that determines this potential, but rather the inescapable involvement of people in the evaluation process! I hope therefore that this thesis provides a cautionary note for any evaluator who may doubt the relevance of process use within their practice, or who may question the appropriateness of the evaluator having intent in relation to interactive effects. Acknowledging the inevitability of process use allows the evaluator to at least anticipate when and why it may occur, and to take steps to ensure that it does not lead to negative outcomes, either for stakeholders or for the practice of evaluation more generally. Being aware of the potential for process use more broadly reinforces the importance of all evaluators being cognizant of, and transparent about, the traditions of practice guiding their approach, and the extent to which stakeholders may expect additional process-based utility from the evaluation process.

While considered in previous chapters, key questions regarding evaluators' practice in relation to process use remain unanswered at the conclusion of this study. The findings identify contexts of practice within which evaluators believe it is appropriate to use the evaluation process for purposes in addition to determining merit and worth. In certain situations, the evaluator appears mandated to extend their practice in this way, such as when stakeholders expect that evaluation capacity will be strengthened through the conduct of an evaluation. It has been demonstrated that Māori evaluators are accountable to Māori for ensuring that the process supports Māori development. Locally, it is often necessary to use the process to affect learning and development outcomes so that

evaluation is possible. Given the responsibility of the evaluator to achieve utilization (Patton, 1997), and the reasonable expectation that the evaluator will bring some level of specialized knowledge to the evaluation setting, it seems acceptable that the evaluator should use their judgement to ascertain the need for such process use within the evaluation settings they encounter.

The question arises whether intent can be so easily defended in situations where such need, invitation, or expectation is less immediately obvious. It could be inferred here that the evaluator has determined for themselves that process use will in some way improve the evaluand or improve outcomes. Implicitly or explicitly, they have made judgements regarding the need for such development, their ability to contribute in this way, and the likely value and utility of their input. In effect, they have become arbiters of their own merit and worth, and even potentially of evaluation's own failings. Questions such as whether it is appropriate for the evaluator to think and act in this way remain largely unaddressed in this thesis. However, what this study does indicate is that mandate and appropriateness may only be determinable through reference to context, including the perennial question of what is evaluation in contemporary contexts? Judgments regarding appropriateness need to be made with reference to general developments in evaluation practice and the emergence of distinct traditions of practice. Mandate may also be determined by factors such as evaluator experience and the extent evaluators are accepted by stakeholders as being able to bring relevant understanding and expertise to the evaluation setting.

## **7.6 Future research**

This study identifies many opportunities for further research. While intent and practice has been explained in relation to what is important to evaluators, less attention has been paid to explaining underlying values, beliefs, aspirations, and traditions. The potential breadth of any future inquiry here is indicated through a recent study of why New Zealanders have high regard for values such as fairness, and egalitarianism (Fischer, 2012). Explanations are traced to a range of factors relating to the country's colonial history, race relations, geography, economy, industrial relations, social reforms, political system, and traditions of governance.

This study was intentionally designed to enable participants to identify and reflect on situations and settings within which they believed process use was important and

appropriately sought. Future research could focus on the inverse of this context, that is, situations and settings where process use is *not* considered by evaluators to be important, appropriate or intentional. This would enable further examination of how context shapes the meaning of process use and how this determines intent and practice. This study shows that evaluators' commitment to process use can hold even in contexts when stakeholders do not necessarily demand or understand the value and utility of process use. A further study that includes stakeholders could examine how evaluators manage intent and practice in settings where there are different levels of stakeholder awareness and demand for process use.

Further to the above, this thesis identified differences between types of process use considered important and intentional by government and non-government evaluators respectively. Future research could further examine how the workplace setting influences perceptions of process use, including the extent to which it is considered important. Replicating this study internationally would enable examination of whether differences between governmental and non-governmental evaluators hold within other practice contexts, particularly in settings where there is a greater diversity of organizations using evaluation.

Aotearoa New Zealand provides a unique context for advancing understanding of epistemological diversity in evaluation practice. While the responsibility of speaking to and about the implications of Māori world views rests with Māori practitioners, this study has enabled reflection on the practice of Māori evaluators in relation to the concept of process use. An internationally comparative cross-case study of indigenous evaluation practice within Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the USA could extend the initial findings of this study. In particular, it could further examine what has been indicated through this study: that the process-based influence of evaluation has distinct lineage, meanings, and manifestations within indigenous contexts. This study shows the importance of examining the concept of utilization through perspectives other than those shaped by a Eurocentric lens. It identifies the need to re-examine the nature and role of stakeholder relationships within evaluation practice in different cultural contexts.

Evaluator experience was identified as an explanatory factor in relation to intent and practice and this relationship could also be examined further. Repeating this study with less experienced evaluators would provide an opportunity to explore whether their intent and

practice was manifestly different to more experienced evaluators. Related to the issue of experience was the finding that evaluators' expectancy of a relationship between practice and process use could help explain practices intentionally adopted. Identified examples of this relationship indicated that evaluators understood aspects of evaluation theory, for example, the relationship between stakeholder participation and use. This knowledge and expectancy likely reflected that all participants in this study had at least five years practice experience. A further study exploring expectancy as an explanatory factor could include less experienced evaluators, and could examine whether and how experience is a mediating factor.

Given the methodology and methods used in this study, care is required when considering the transferability of findings to other settings. The intent and practice of participants in this study is not necessarily representative of local evaluators generally. However, a narrative exists that there is indeed a general propensity for process use amongst local evaluators and this thesis finds support for this. For example, none of the evaluators in this study appeared to practice under the objectivist tradition and therefore in a way less likely to facilitate process use (King & Stevahn, 2002; Schwandt, 2005). My selection criteria did not exclude the potential participation of evaluators practicing under this tradition as participants were not screened in relation to their approach to evaluation. A representative survey of the local evaluator population could now be undertaken to test the proposition that practice in Aotearoa New Zealand may be particularly orientated to process use. A qualitative study could also select participants on the basis of the traditions that guide their practice and could further examine the relationship between these traditions and intent and practice.

## **7.7 Final reflection**

This thesis sought to advance understanding of how and why process use occurs. It did so by showing that the intent and practice of evaluators in Aotearoa New Zealand to achieve process use can be explained as a consequence of multiple factors that converge and interact within their practice contexts. Rather than describe process use as an additional form of utility that may be achieved through extra effort and 'special' practice, this thesis indicates its inevitability within contemporary practice settings. This inevitability appears most likely when the evaluator understands that they are essentially tasked with addressing

relational, moral, socio-cultural, organizational, and historical concerns. In this context, process use tends to be regarded by evaluators as integral to good evaluation and to being a good practitioner. It is simply regarded as right. It makes sense to evaluators given the contexts within which they work, and their intent and practice becomes understandable when we locate the evaluator within these contexts. Any framing of process use as being that which happens in addition to the ‘real business’ of evaluation, is shown to provide an inappropriate conceptual basis for explaining the intent and practice of many evaluators participating in this study.

Whether the findings and conclusions from this study hold for other local evaluators and within settings beyond those examined, remains untested. My primary responsibility has been to interpret the perspectives and experiences of evaluators participating in this study so that they, and the readers of this work, trust that I have provided a credible and defensible account of their reality. Through these accounts, the reader may for themselves assess the transferability of the findings from this research. There will be many further reasons and many different explanations for evaluators’ intent and practice regarding process use. It is my hope that this study encourages other researchers to examine these. However, this thesis shows that any future research will be ideally initiated from a different set of assumptions and questions that guided my own journey of inquiry.



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## Appendix A: Research Information Sheet



### ***Research on Evaluation Process Use***

#### **EVALUATION PRACTITIONER IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW INFORMATION SHEET**

##### **Introduction**

Tena koe, greetings. My name is Michael Blewden and I am a researcher based at Social and Health Outcomes Research and Evaluation, SHORE and Whariki Research Centre, Massey University. I am currently undertaking a PhD which centres on the 'process use' of evaluation; that is, the way in which evaluation participants and stakeholders can learn from, develop, or be affected in other ways, through their participation in the evaluation process.

My research examines the reasons why evaluation practitioners are intentional in seeking this form of evaluation use through their evaluation practice and whether and how these reasons shape their practice. The research findings will provide direction for enhancing the potential for process use learning to occur through evaluation.

My research comprises up to twenty five in-depth interviews with evaluation practitioners currently working within Aotearoa New Zealand. I have identified you through my professional networks as someone who is likely to have conducted evaluation research within the last 12 months and who I hope may be willing to be interviewed as part of my research.

##### **Participation in an in-depth interview**

Your participation in an interview is voluntary. Your participation will provide you with an opportunity to reflect in-depth on your evaluation practice.

Your participation will require you to:

- Confirm with me your willingness to be interviewed. I will contact you soon about this and will address any questions you may have. If you agree to take part, you will be asked to read and sign a consent form confirming your participation.
- Participate in an in-depth interview which will require you to reflect on your evaluation practice. The interview will take approximately 90 minutes and will occur at a time and place of your convenience. With your permission, I will audiotape the interview and it will be transcribed for analysis purposes. The audiotapes will be stored in a locked cabinet in my office at SHORE, 90 Symonds St, Auckland, and will be destroyed after 5 years. If you wish, the tape can be returned to you.
- Review and comment on the written transcript from your interview.
- Review and comment on the analysis of your interview.

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### What will happen to the information you provide?

All information gathered in the interview will be confidential and will not be reported or used in any way that would identify you. The information will be analysed and collated with other interviews conducted and reported in my PhD thesis. Comparisons will be drawn from across all of the interviews conducted. Conference papers and journal articles will be written using the interview data. Neither the PhD thesis nor any other published papers that use the interview data will contain any information that identifies you or any other person or any evaluation discussed. A summary of the overall research findings will be made available to you.

### Participant's rights

As an interview participant, you will have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- ask any questions about the interview or wider research at any time;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- review and comment on the written transcript from your interview;
- review and comment on the analysis of your interview;
- be given access to a summary of the overall research findings when available.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to talking with you soon about your possible participation.

### Project contacts

If you have any questions about the research or this invitation to participate in an in-depth interview, please contact one of the following people:

<b>Michael Blewden (PhD Candidate)</b> SHORE Massey University P O Box 6137 Wellesley St Auckland Phone: (09) 3666 136 <a href="mailto:m.b.blewden@massey.ac.nz">m.b.blewden@massey.ac.nz</a>	<b>Dr Robin Peace (PhD Supervisor)</b> Associate Professor Politics Programme, School of People, Environment and Planning Massey University Private Bag 11 222 Palmerston North Phone: (04) 801 5799 ext 6513 <a href="mailto:r.peace@massey.ac.nz">r.peace@massey.ac.nz</a>	<b>Dr Helen Moewaka Barnes (PhD Supervisor)</b> Director - Whariki Massey University P O Box 6137 Wellesley St Auckland Phone: (09) 3666 136 <a href="mailto:h.moewakabarnes@massey.ac.nz">h.moewakabarnes@massey.ac.nz</a>
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### Committee approval statement

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 09/71. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Karl Pajo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 04 801 5799 x 6929, email [humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz).

## Appendix B: Interview Summary



### 'Process Use' Interview Summary

The following provides an overview of the interview I am conducting with evaluation practitioners as part of my research on evaluation *'process use'*. The interview is intended to be *semi-structured*, so please regard this as a broad outline only and that as appropriate, other issues will be discussed as they emerge throughout the interview.

I am interested in initially discussing your background and *evaluation journey* – when, how and why you become an evaluator, the types of environments you work in, the types of processes and outcomes that are important to you in your evaluation work.

I am then interested in discussing your understanding and approach to evaluation, including any values, principles, and beliefs you bring to your practice and any evaluation philosophies, methodologies, and methods you favour and why.

I would then like to focus on an example or examples from your practice where you understand stakeholders to have learnt, developed, or benefited in other ways through their participation in the evaluation process. Through this discussion, I will be interested in exploring the following types of issues with you:

- *Your experience and understanding of the stakeholder outcomes you understand to have occurred*
- *The extent you were intentional in seeking the stakeholder outcomes you understand to have occurred and why*
- *The evaluation practices and processes you employed within the example/s discussed and why*
- *Required roles, skills and knowledge*
- *Needs, goals, expectations, or obligations fulfilled for you as an evaluation practitioner through the stakeholder outcomes you understand to have occurred.*

In closing, I will invite you to reflect on the interview, particularly regarding any impacts on your thinking about evaluation and your practice.

Thank you.

Michael Blewden

## Appendix C: Participant Consent Form



### *Research on Evaluation Process Use*

#### EVALUATION PRACTITIONER CONSENT FORM

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study and my involvement in it explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

- I agree to participate in this study as an evaluation practitioner in-depth interview participant under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.
- I agree/do not agree to my interview being audio taped.
- I wish/do not wish to have my interview tapes returned to me.

Signature:

Date:

Full Name - printed

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## Appendix D: Non-Māori Interview Schedule

### **Eligibility**

Have conducted evaluation study/s in last 12 months in Aotearoa New Zealand/have involved evaluation stakeholders and participants in evaluations conducted

Exclude any projects with primary objective to develop evaluation capacity or provide evaluation training

### **Evaluation ‘story’**

When/how became an evaluator?

Working context (employment, clients, sectors)

Why this context? What needs/expectations are met?

### **View/understanding of evaluation**

What is evaluation?

On what basis would you determine ‘good’ and ‘bad’ evaluation?

Why these criteria? Why are these important?

### **View of self as evaluator**

Why do this work?

What outcomes are important to you? Why?

### **Evaluation practice**

*An evaluation approach can be thought of an overall way of conceptualising evaluation; often based on an underlying philosophy and/or set of values (e.g. utilization focused, kaupapa Maori, empowerment)*

Do you see your practice based on any particular evaluation approach?

Why this approach? What outcomes are you seeking? Why are these important to you?

*Evaluation methods are procedures used to collect and analyse data. Evaluation methodology provides a framework or strategy to bring selected methods together and link them back to evaluation purpose (e.g. case study, quasi-experimental).*

Do you have a preference for any particular methodologies and/or methods? Why these?  
What outcomes are you seeking? Why are these important to you?

## **Participation**

How 'participatory' is your practice?

What outcomes are you seeking here? Why are these important?

## **Process use**

*Let's focus on this idea that evaluation participants and stakeholders can learn from and/or can be affected by their participation in the evaluation process.*

Is this something you have been aware of or thought about in your practice in the past?

## Sorting exercise

*Here are some examples of different ways that stakeholders/participants might be affected by or learn from their participation in the evaluation process. Can you review these and identify any that you recognize as having occurred from or through your evaluation practice in last 12 months, whether intentionally or unintentionally.*

*Can you sort these outcomes into those where you consider you had some level of intention in achieving them through your evaluation practice (intentional process use - IPU) and those you would consider as less intentional (unintentional process use - UPU)?*

## If excessive examples of IPU identified

Can you sort these outcomes (IPU) again by those you consider to be important from your practice and those you consider to be less important?

*Invite brief explanation of why chosen examples are considered more important*

If still too many IPU identified

Which of these important outcomes would you consider to be most important?

*Invite brief explanation of why chosen examples are considered most important*

*If only examples of UPU are identified, also sort by importance if required*

If no given examples of process use are recognized

Can you think of any other examples from your practice in the last 12 months where participants or stakeholders have learnt from or have been affected in some other way through their participation in the evaluation process? *(Participant to write examples down)*

**Exploration**

*For each important or most important (IPU) (UPU) or (personally identified example)*

Explore:

- a) *Situation/context:* Tell me more about this outcome....when, where, for whom
- b) *Experience/meaning:* At the time, what did you understand to be happening? ...what did this mean to you? ...was this 'use' ...or something else?
- c) *Management/planning:* What extent did you plan or manage for (IPU/UPU) to occur? What did you do? Why? What impact – for you, stakeholders/participants, the evaluation?
- c) *Processes/practices (PP):* What did you 'do' to lead to (IPU/UPU)? How intentional were these practices/actions? What understanding of how these would lead to (IPU/UPU)? How did you know this?
- d) *Required roles:* What roles did you undertake to achieve (IPU/UPU)? Why these? How these negotiated? What implications - for you, for stakeholders/participants, the evaluation?
- g) *What 'desire' was fulfilled:* Why was (IPU/UPU) important to you? What impacts or outcomes were you seeking? Why are these important to you?

If no examples of PU recognized/recalled

What thoughts or feelings do you have in response to the examples of process use I have shown you?

Why these? - Examine underlying beliefs/philosophies about evaluation, evaluation purpose, role of evaluator. How did you come to know/believe this about evaluation? Why is this important in your evaluation practice?

**Reflection on interview**

Has this interview developed or changed in any way your understanding or thinking about PU? How? Why?

Will this change impact your future evaluation practice in any way? How? Why?

How do you feel about such change?

Any further thoughts/comments

**Thank and close**

## **Appendix E: Māori Interview Schedule**

### **Evaluation 'story'**

When/how became an evaluator?

Working context (employment, clients, sectors).

Why this context?

What needs/expectations are met? Why are these important to you?

### **View/understanding of evaluation**

What is evaluation?

On what basis would you determine 'good' evaluation?

Why these criteria? Why are these important to you?

### **View of self as evaluator:**

Why do this work?

What outcomes are important to you?

Why are these outcomes important to you?

### **Evaluation practice**

An evaluation approach can be thought of an overall way of conceptualising evaluation; often based on an underlying philosophy and/or set of values

Do you see your practice based on any particular evaluation approach?

Why this approach?

What outcomes are you seeking?

Why are these outcomes important to you?

*Evaluation methods are procedures used to collect and analyse data. Evaluation methodology provides a framework or strategy to bring selected methods together and link them back to evaluation purpose (e.g. case study, quasi-experimental).*

Do you have a preference for any particular methodologies and/or methods? Why these?

What outcomes are you seeking?

Why are these outcomes important to you?

## **Participation**

How 'participatory' is your practice?

What outcomes are you seeking here?

Why are these outcomes important to you?

## **Process use**

*Let's focus now on this idea that evaluation participants and stakeholders can learn from, develop, or can be positively affected in some other way through their participation or engagement in the evaluation process. Michael Quinn Patton, the American evaluator, has called this 'process use'*

If appropriate to discussion so far, acknowledge that 'process use' has already been identified – discuss as appropriate

### Examine:

Is this type of evaluation use something you have been aware of within your practice?

What words, concepts, values or principles would you use to describe it?

What frameworks inform this understanding?

Is Patton's concept of 'process use' drawn upon at all?

How important do you consider this type of use within your practice? Why is this?

How intentional do you consider this type of use within your practice? Why is this?

## Example

*Are you able to think of an example from your evaluation practice within the last 12 months where you felt that stakeholders or participants learnt from, developed, or were positively affected in some other way through their participation in the evaluation process...and where you see yourself as having been particularly intentional in seeking these outcomes? Are you comfortable if we examine this example in some depth in order to explore this type of evaluation use in more detail?*

## Explore:

a) *Situation/context:* Tell me more about the evaluation example you are thinking about (e.g. the evaluation, when it occurred, who was involved).

How were participants or stakeholders involved in the evaluation?

b) *Experience/meaning:* And in what way did stakeholders learn or develop, or how were they positively affected through their participation in the evaluation process?

At the time, what understanding did you have of these outcomes? Did you consider this as 'process use' – or something else?

What did these outcomes mean to you – for example, did you consider them to be aspects of evaluation use, or something else?

How important were these outcomes for you? Why were they important?

c) *Management/planning:* What extent did you plan or manage for [identified 'process use' outcomes?]

What did you do? Why was it important for you to do this?

What impact did this planning or management have for you? For stakeholders/participants? For the evaluation overall?

c) *Processes/practices:* In your view, what did you specifically do to lead to [identified 'process use' outcomes?]

How intentional were you in doing these [identified practices/actions]? Why?

In what ways did you understand that [identified practices/actions] would lead to [identified 'process use' outcomes?] - How did you know this?

d) *Required roles*: What roles did you undertake to achieve [identified 'process use' outcomes?]

Why these roles?

How were these roles negotiated?

What implications did these roles have? For you as the evaluator? For stakeholders or participants? For the evaluation overall?

g) *What 'desire' was fulfilled*: Why were [identified 'process use' outcomes] important to you?

What impacts or outcomes were you seeking or anticipating?

Why were these important to you?

### **Reflection on interview**

Has this interview impacted in any way your understanding or thinking about the form of evaluation use we have been talking about today? How? Why?

Do you imagine any future impacts or changes within your evaluation practice? How? Why?

How do you feel about such impacts or change?

Any further thoughts/comments

### **Thank and close**

## Appendix F: Descriptions of Process Use Types

The evaluation planning process has impacted or informed implementation of the evaluand (i.e. program, project, policy, service).

The evaluation process has enhanced communication within and/or between evaluation participants and/or stakeholders.

The evaluation process has supported shared understanding within and/or between evaluation participants and/or stakeholders.

The evaluation process has helped programs, organizations, or services remain focused, or to re-focus, on core goals and/or objective.

Data collection has contributed towards the objectives or intended outcomes of the evaluand (e.g. through being interviewed, an evaluation participant has gained insight into how to develop some aspect of the evaluand).

The evaluation process has positively impacted the morale of evaluation participants and/or stakeholders (e.g. through indicating that the evaluand is important).

Participation in the evaluation process has helped evaluation participants and/or stakeholders develop new relationships or networks of benefit to them.

The participation of evaluation participants and/or stakeholders in the evaluation process has helped program and/or organizational development.

Evaluation participants and/or stakeholders have been empowered through their participation in the evaluation process.

The participation of evaluation participants and/or stakeholders in the evaluation process has enhanced their willingness to receive and/or act on evaluation findings

The participation of evaluation participants and/or stakeholders in the evaluation. process has developed their ability to think and act ‘evaluatively’ (e.g. use evaluation logic and questioning).

## Appendix G: Thematic Analysis Framework

### 1. Personal details

#### 1.1. Pathway to evaluation

1.1.1 Previously undertook work that was essentially evaluation

1.1.2 From research background began to undertake evaluation

1.1.3 Evaluation was fitted work/interests

1.1.4 Market research

#### 1.2. Experience

1.2.1 Research consultancy

1.2.2 Policy/planning

1.2.3 Academic/university role

1.2.4 Government position

1.2.5 NGO position

#### 1.3. Training/Education

1.3.1 Sociology

1.3.2 No formal evaluation training

1.3.3 PHD in evaluation

1.3.4 Law

1.3.5 Psychology

1.3.6 Masters degree

1.3.7 Evaluation professional development (conferences, ANZEA, AES)

## **2. Values, beliefs, aspirations, traditions ('personal context')**

### 2.1. Social justice

2.1.1 Reciprocity

2.1.2 Change/make difference

2.1.3. Transformation

2.1.4. Equality

2.1.5 Diversity/multiplicity

2.1.6 Social betterment/improvement

2.1.7 Feminist values

2.1.8 Democracy

2.1.9 Do 'good'/help people

2.1.10 Fairness

### 2.2. Maori worldview

2.2.1 Kaupapa Maori

2.2.2 Indigeneity

2.2.3 Rangatiratanga

2.2.4 Empowerment

2.2.5 Contra western ideologies

### 2.3. Politic of knowledge

2.3.1 Constructed and interpreted knowledge

2.3.2 Multiple realities

2.3.3 Critical reflection

2.3.4 Investigative orientation

2.3.5 Post-positivist- 'good' can be defined

2.3.6 Acknowledges located expertise

2.3.7 There is a 'truth'

## 2.4. Politic of identity

2.4.1 Disempowered

2.4.2 Bi-cultural

2.4.3 Giving up power

2.4.4 Position as 'outsider'

## 2.5. Democracy

2.5.1 Participation

2.5.2 Equality of representation

2.5.3 Diversity

2.5.4 Voice

2.5.5 Critical analysis

2.5.6 Reflexivity

## 2.6. Behaviour/practice

2.6.1 Efficiency

2.6.2 Innovation/experimentation

2.6.3 Creativity/independence

## 2.7. Community

2.7.1 Participation

2.7.2 Connection/involvement

## **3. What is evaluation? ('practice context')**

### 3.1. Definition of evaluation

3.1.1 Determination of merit (quality), worth (value), importance (priority)

3.1.2 Political action

3.1.3 Inquiry to provide understanding and inform improvement

3.1.4 Is an intervention

3.1.5 Assessment of performance against stated objectives

### 3.2. Good evaluation

3.2.1 Is 'evaluative'

3.2.2 Is credible

3.2.3 Is used/has utilization

3.2.4 Deals with real world complexity

3.2.5 Transparent about values/assumptions

3.2.6. Transparent about evaluative reasoning

- 3.2.7 Addresses/identifies inequality
- 3.2.8 Accounts for evaluation as an intervention
- 3.2.9. Enables critical reflection
- 3.2.10 Is transformative
- 3.2.11 Methods appropriate to the inquiry
- 3.2.12 Meaningful feedback
- 3.2.13 Is participatory/collaborative
- 3.2.14 Addresses human dynamics
- 3.2.15 Builds evaluation capability/capacity
- 3.2.16 Identifies and addresses important/the right evaluation questions
- 3.2.17 Is accessible
- 3.2.18 Focused/clear/concise
- 3.2.19 Reciprocated obligation/learning
- 3.2.20 Is 'auditable'

### 3.3. Philosophical/methodological orientation

- 3.3.1 Methods focused
- 3.3.2 Pragmatic eclecticism
- 3.3.3 Utilization focused (participatory,
- 3.3.4 Values focused
- 3.3.5 Is 'evaluative'
- 3.3.6 Constructivist/interpretivist
- 3.3.7 Empowerment/enabling/transformational

- 3.3.8 Qualitative
- 3.3.9 Community/people centred
- 3.3.10 Democratic
- 3.3.11 Capability/capacity building
- 3.3.12 Post-positivist
- 3.3.13 Mixed method
- 3.3.14 Collaborative/team based
- 3.3.15 Process driven
- 3.3.16 Knowledge management
- 3.3.17 Learning orientated
- 3.3.18 Kaupapa Maori

#### 3.4. Purpose of evaluation

- 3.4.1 Affect change
- 3.4.2 Build knowledge
- 3.4.3 Build evaluation capacity/capability
- 3.4.4 Make a difference
- 3.4.5 Enhance effectiveness
- 3.4.6 Facilitate learning
- 3.4.7 Facilitate critical thinking/reflection
- 3.4.8 Social transformation
- 3.4.9 Facilitate improvement/development
- 3.4.10 Facilitate reflection

3.4.11 Inform future implementation

3.6. Context for evaluation practice ('work context')

3.6.1 Grass roots/real world

3.6.2 Critique of traditional evaluation practice

3.6.3 Status quo in public practice

3.6.4 Strive to demystify evaluation

3.6.5 Clients lack evaluation skills/thinking

3.6.6 Collaborative evaluation design

3.6.7 Program evaluation only wanted

3.6.8 Poor program planning

3.6.9 Positioning as consultant

3.6.10 Freedom/independence as consultant

3.6.11 Lack shared understanding – evaluative criteria/performance standards

3.6.12 Lack of control over utilization

3.6.13 Evaluation practice lacking explicit/transparent evaluative reasoning

3.6.14 Evaluation appeals as intellectual and applied

3.6.15 Previous awareness of process use

3.6.16 Evaluation traditions grounded in social justice issues

3.6.17 Bi-cultural development/context

3.6.18 Shift away from expert model

## **4. Process use examples selected**

### 4.1. Process use type

4.1.1 Evaluation planning process has impacted/informed implementation of evaluand

4.1.2 Refocus/focus on core objectives

4.1.3 Think evaluatively

4.1.4 Shared understanding

### 4.2. Context of selected process use examples

4.2.1 Int 1

4.2.2 Int 1 (2nd example)

4.2.3 Int 2

4.2.4 Int 2 (2nd example)

4.2.5 Int 4

4.2.6 Int 5

## **5. Importance of process use (why type considered important/intentional)**

### 5.1. Informs positive development

5.1.1 Communication/clarification of intent/outcomes/vision/accountability

5.1.2 Shared understanding

5.1.3 What gets measured gets done

5.1.4 Organization development

### 5.2. Supports credible process

5.2.1 Support of evaluation

5.2.2 Consistent with evaluand philosophy

### 5.3. Supports credible findings

5.3.1 Supports communication of findings

5.3.2 Supports valid evaluation conclusions

5.3.3 Supports openness/disclosure

5.3.4 More informed findings

### 5.4. Supports use/utilization

5.4.1 Findings use

5.4.2 Use of evaluation tools/processes

## 5.5. Stakeholder participation

5.5.1 Engagement in evaluation

5.5.2 Acceptance of evaluation

5.5.3 Builds ownership of evaluation

## 5.6. Supports learning

5.6.1 Supports critical reflection

5.6.2 Learn through evaluation reasoning process

5.6.3 Transparency of valuing process

## 5.7. Supports evaluative capacity development

## 5.8. Supports evaluation happening

## 5.9. Supports 'deep' level inquiry

## 5.10. Is enabling

# **6. Intentionally adopted practices and roles**

## 6.1. Evaluative practices

6.1.1 Facilitate setting evaluative criteria/standards

6.1.2 Deriving evaluative judgements

## 6.2. Participatory practices

6.2.1 Collaborative evaluation planning/development

6.2.2 Acknowledging expertise

6.2.3 Participatory analysis

6.2.4 Participatory conduct of evaluation

### 6.3. Learning orientated practices

6.3.1 Critical reflection process

6.3.2 Co-learner

6.3.3 Facilitator of learning

6.3.4 Shared understanding of valuing/judgements

### 6.4 Skill enhancing practices

6.4.1 Build evaluation capability/capacity

### 6.5 Commitment to relationship

6.5.1 Collaborative approach

6.5.2 Deep inquiry/understanding

6.5.4 Respect/valuing/caring

6.5.5 Transparency

### 6.8 Facilitative role

6.8.1 People facilitation

6.8.2 Facilitate openness/transparency

6.8.3 Group facilitation/dynamics

- 6.8.4 Constructive challenge
- 6.8.5 Organizational process/context
- 6.8.6 Program planning
- 6.8.7 Conduit role
- 6.8.8 Build evaluative framework

6.9 Educative role

6.10 Enabling role

6.11 Co-learner

6.12 Broker Role

**7. Role negotiation/enablers**

- 7.1. Evaluation positioned as learning process
- 7.2 Issues within evaluand identified/addressed
- 7.3 Develop organizational willingness/readiness

**8. Enablers and barriers to process use**

8.1. Enablers

- 8.1.1 Evaluation champions
- 8.1.2 Insider positioning
- 8.1.3 Client support for collaboration
- 8.1.4 Organizational capability
- 8.1.5 Trust/confidence/relationship

8.1.6 Management level support

8.1.7 Responsive/flexible process

## 8.2. Barriers

8.2.1 Program evaluation only wanted

8.2.2 Organizational resistance to evaluation

8.2.3 Lack of budget

8.2.4 Organizational capability

## **9. Evaluation practice**

9.1 Evaluation is process of critical reflection

9.2 Evaluation requires personal reflexivity

9.3 Process use is integral to the evaluation process

9.4 Shared understanding of evaluative reasoning integral to valid evaluation conclusions

9.5 Evaluation must be evaluative

9.6 Evaluation is an intervention

9.7 Evaluation is concerned with building evaluative capability

## **10. Responses to process use examples**

10.1 Contribute/lead to other process use outcomes

10.2 Existing objective questioned (new PU type)

10.3 Likelihood of process use outcomes impacted by other factors

10.4 Process use intentional but not primary intent

## **11. Response to process use interview**

11.1 Legitimised current practice

11.2 Confirmation that process use is integral to practice

11.3 Confirm that a lot of practice is process use

## Appendix H: Individual Case Stories

### 'Anita'

#### Background

Anita's pathway to evaluation followed training in the health sciences, tertiary study in the social sciences, and employment within market research. This work morphed into social research and evaluation and eventually led her to establish a social research and evaluation consultancy. Her move into social research and evaluation was underpinned by a desire to undertake "...interesting" and "...meaningful" work. Such work provided an "...element of social good, where you feel you are contributing something back" and delivering some "...benefit at some level..." It typically informed "change" of some kind, whether through contributing to making "...people's lives better" or supporting organizations to have "...better outcomes". Anita derived satisfaction from undertaking work that made a difference, that in some way contributed to "...social change in New Zealand..." It was work that contributed "...to the country that we are living in, in the Pacific..."

Anita described being drawn to evaluation as it was typically concerned with people, understanding behaviour, and "...how people fit within systems and processes". Evaluation met her "...curiosity around people and processes" and allowed her opportunities to work across a wide cross-section of people. Her increasing involvement in evaluation was also a result of clients increasingly asking her to conduct evaluation. She believed that clients recognized her as having a "...broad base of quantitative and qualitative skills" and the ability to combine these with required analytical and evaluative skills.

Anita's research and evaluation consultancy worked across a broad spectrum of public and NGO sectors areas, including health, justice, social development, and international development. It was a constant challenge operating a commercially viable business while remaining true to her commitment to do "...interesting work" and to not undertake work that would damage "...the brand" of her organization.

## Evaluation practice

Anita described evaluation as essentially the process of determining merit and worth. Evaluation differed from research on the basis it required value judgments to be made. It was a process that informed social change, in part through drawing attention to the complexities and difficulties of affecting such change. Evaluation typically affected social change through small steps. She derived great satisfaction when evaluation gave “direction” or provided “...end answers and insights”. However, she also recognized that evaluations sometimes sat “...on the shelf” or “...disappeared” and that evaluators could not fully control findings use.

Evaluators essentially advocated for change through the conclusions and recommendations they drew from evaluation findings. However, there were often limitations in the extent to which evaluation lead to change. A multitude of factors, in addition to evaluation evidence, shaped political decision making. Anita recognized that the way findings were reported could also influence findings use. There was a skill to presenting findings, particularly negative findings, in a way that kept stakeholders engaged and willing to respond. The process was like a “...dance.” It required the communication of issues and findings in a way that kept “...the report” and the “...issues...on the table”, even if stakeholders were “...hearing things they don't want to hear”.

Anita was clear that evaluators needed to be transparent about the personal values they brought to the evaluation process. Judgements should be clearly grounded in the available evidence and there should be clarity on how judgments were derived from the evidence. In addition, “...potential bias and risks” within data should be clearly identified.

‘Good’ evaluation was transparent and clear regarding purpose and scope. It addressed “...what the client is setting out to address”. It used sound data sources and provided conclusions and recommendations grounded in “...an actual evidence base”. ‘Good’ evaluation was understandable and clearly communicated to clients and other stakeholders. It presented information in a “...meaningful way” and avoided jargon and ambiguous meaning.

‘Good’ evaluation was carried out through an ethical, respectful, and appropriate process that did no harm, while still providing “...good deliverables”.

Evaluators were required to be reflexive, for example, about their limitations when working cross-culturally.

Anita considered her evaluation approach to be pragmatic. Methodologies and data collection methods were chosen on the basis that they were the best tools to “...get the job done,” not because of ideology or a limited ‘toolbox.’ She accepted there would always be the “...perfect methodology you would like to do and then there's the reality of what you can do”. Methodologies needed to be acceptable and appropriate to participants, shaped practically with regard to “...what you can and can't get from them.” Tools and processes were required to complete evaluations within budget while still being able to “...deliver a report the client's really happy about”.

Anita’s pragmatism was further reflected in her description of herself as a methodological “...magpie.” She drew from and across different theories and approaches as appropriate. Recognizing her fundamental concern for utilization, she described her practice particularly aligned to Patton’s utilization approach. While having some emphasis on qualitative methods in her practice, mixed methods were often used to utilize existing data sources and to avoid replication or duplication of effort. The triangulation of data sources and data collection methods provided “...robustness”, “...assurance” and “...sense of certainty” that comes from achieving both “...breadth and the depth” of understanding.

Anita considered her practice participatory in that she worked collaboratively with clients throughout the evaluation process. The extent she involved other stakeholders was influenced by factors such as the aims and objectives of the evaluation, whether a participatory approach was specifically sought, the extent a participatory approach was practical and feasible given issues such as location and access to participants, budget, and extent to which stakeholders themselves sought or were supportive of a participatory approach.

### **Process use**

Anita chose and discussed from her recent work, an example of the following type of process use that she felt had occurred through her practice - ‘The participation of evaluation participants and/or stakeholders in the evaluation process has helped program and/or organizational development’.

The project Anita drew her example from was a process and outcome evaluation of a policy/practice initiative implemented by a frontline government agency. The evaluation examined how the initiative was being implemented, how it was working, what impacts it was having, and its potential for achieving desired longer term outcomes.

Anita framed process use in her example as something that occurred largely as a consequence of the way she conducted the evaluation. She did not necessarily consider process use as intentional and important within her practice, but rather something that was facilitated through her practice. In her example, she largely focused on how stakeholder participation in the evaluation had enhanced the likelihood of the evaluation process leading to program or organizational development. This primarily happened through the dialogue and critical reflection enabled by the evaluation process. Through this process, stakeholders re-examined their underlying assumptions and beliefs about the evaluand. This reflection supported them to move towards the shared understanding necessary for program and/or organizational development to occur.

Anita described how conversations undertaken with stakeholders during the course of the evaluation engaged them in critical reflection. The process afforded them opportunities to learn more about the intent, performance, and potential of the program being evaluated. This reflection and learning occurred through formal and informal conversations. When it occurred as part of formal data collection, for example, within an interview, Anita recognized the potential for data collection to be a facilitated change process. The evaluator assumed the role of “...change agent” and the data collection process became an intervention. It was important that through the process of reflective exchange, confidentiality and anonymity assurances were maintained. Insights offered by the evaluator also needed to be based in evidence and appropriately framed as preliminary observations.

The reflective process could also occur during informal conversations, for example, during chance encounters with stakeholders in the field. Anita described these as “...little mini debriefs.” They had the potential to stimulate new thinking and ideas. She recalled this happening for one stakeholder she had worked for,

Oh, oh [he said], I haven't thought of that. I need to think about it in this context ...” So his brain’s ticking over...feeding in thoughts and ideas. And I saw him the next day...“I was thinking about what you were saying and I was

thinking...blah...blah...blah”. And then that starts [further reflection]...so you are sort of spinning off informal conversations...

Exit meetings, held with stakeholders at the conclusion of fieldwork stages, were additional opportunities for “...further dialogue and conversation” about emerging findings, meaning, and implications. Reflection workshops with clients were an opportunity to reflect on emergent findings “...from an internal perspective”.

The variety of reflective exchanges described by Anita may be considered intentional in that she considered them to be part of doing evaluation. Reflective analysis began from the “...first interview”. Reflective exchanges added value to the evaluation process. They constituted a process of giving back. They were a natural consequence of an open and transparent evaluation process, rather than evaluation conducted as a ‘closed box’ and only ‘opened’ once findings were delivered.

Anita believed that the reflective processes she described had enhanced stakeholders’ understanding across many areas of the evaluand, for example, aims and objectives, tensions between intent and actual performance, strengths, potential, and limitations in regard to intended outcomes. She anticipated that such understanding would potentially shape any organizational and/or program development occurring in the future.

The reflective process also helped her, as the evaluator, to develop further understanding of the influence of context on the evaluand. This provided,

...more clarity around issues...meaning in the data...[a richer] understanding of the meaning behind [what people said]...

## **Reflections**

Anita’s evaluation practice was pragmatic and utilization focused. She was engaged in balancing her desire to undertake interesting and meaningful work with business imperatives. Her pragmatic approach was reflected in an evaluation approach underpinned by understanding client need and the use of methods that could ethically, appropriately, and efficiently deliver evaluation to the client’s satisfaction.

Anita’s pragmatism was reflected in her understanding of process use as a phenomenon that may or may not occur depending upon the extent to which a range of enabling factors

converged or not within any particular project. Reflecting this, Anita was reluctant to claim process use as something she always intentionally set out to achieve or that she always considered important. She observed,

...I don't know about actually even claiming added value through...process use. To me it's opportunistic and it's contract specific, so some contracts are driven, we want this very participatory, great, we are in that mode.

However, she clearly recognized that participants,

...do get stuff out of participating...We do focus groups...usually at the end you've got people going "That's really interesting. I hadn't thought of some of those things. That was really good." So they are being informed, they've got a little bit more knowledge. Has it been a radical change to their lives? I don't know.

Anita's primary goal as an evaluator was to conduct evaluation that contributed to social good outcomes. She sought to do so through processes that were ethical and had integrity, that as far as possible were positive and "enhancing" for participants, and as a bottom line did no harm. Opportunities for process use naturally occurred as a "by-product" of such practice and as evidenced in the example of process use she discussed, through evaluation as an open and dialogical process. Whether further process use value and benefits were delivered from this approach was influenced by factors such as available resources and whether a participatory approach was specifically contracted or possible.

She reflected,

...we do what we are contracted to do. Because the contracts can be quite different in terms of their focus and their intent and [intended]...outcomes.

...There is only so much we can do within our contracts and in the timeframes you are there; you can set up expectations that you can't deliver against.

Further to the above, Anita questioned whether the more intentional pursuit of process use could in fact conflict with other objectives of evaluation, particularly those of summative evaluation. Types of participatory practices likely to enable process use may be difficult to achieve given the more external and removed positioning sometimes required

during summative evaluation. If required, the evaluator had to be able to make “...the hard call” on performance and outcomes,

...our job is not always to tell good news, our job [can involve reporting]...quite unpleasant things that will have consequences for people and organizations...

Anita’s caution around process use also stemmed from her appreciation that clients could exercise control within evaluations and over factors that could influence whether process use occurred. Evaluators were vulnerable in this situation to raising and then not being able to meet stakeholder expectations about process use outcomes. This presented an ethical issue for evaluators, particularly the need to ensure that evaluation did no harm.

## **‘Anna’**

### **Background**

Anna’s pathway to becoming an evaluator followed university degrees in the social and environmental sciences, employment as a social researcher, policy and planning positions in local government, and then establishment as an independent research and evaluation consultant.

Anna didn’t consciously set out to be an evaluator. She grew into the role through initially undertaking public sector research that often constituted ‘review’ type activities. Over time, more of her work started to be called ‘evaluation’ and she gradually came to see herself as an ‘evaluator’. Her understanding and practice of evaluation had largely developed through her practical experience and through involvement in organizations such as anzea and various professional development activities.

During her interview, Anna discussed her commitment to environmental and developmental sustainability. She viewed the world holistically and through a “...grass-roots....real world” lens. She was interested in finding out why things are as they are. She was willing to examine and if necessary challenge the status quo in order to open up more efficient and effective ways of doing things.

### **Evaluation practice**

Anna had undertaken evaluation within local government settings as well as with community groups, health provider, and NGOs. She delivered community level evaluation training. She was committed to developing grass-root evaluation capability through “...simplifying [and] demystifying evaluation for people to do it for themselves.” She recognized that the language of evaluation could be a barrier to laypeople and in this respect, questioned whether the label of ‘process use’ was appropriate and useful in the New Zealand context.

Anna described evaluation as inquiry based questioning to inform understanding, new understanding, and new ways of operating. She was adamant that to be useful, evaluation needed to engage in deep, rather than just “...surface” or ‘tick-the-box’ level inquiry. She was of the view that evaluation should be grounded in “...grass roots” and “...real world”

realities and should understand and deal with the complexities of the human condition. Evaluation had the potential to get “...to the heart of the matter” if it provided understanding at the human level. She preferred qualitative methods on the basis these were able to provide understanding of the underlying determinants of behaviour, for example, values and beliefs.

Anna believed evaluation should support critical thinking and reflection in order to facilitate learning and change. Evaluation should be used to critically examine the status quo and to build evaluative capability. It could be transformative through enabling learning, change, and capability development.

‘Good’ evaluation was practiced and communicated in ways that were accessible and meaningful for laypeople. Evaluation should not just lie in “...the realm of experts and theorists.” It should be “...real and practical.” It should also be participatory when this was required to enhance the value and utility it delivered to stakeholders. ‘Good’ evaluation occurred when the evaluator was transparent about the values and value assumptions they brought to its practice and how these influenced evaluative interpretations and conclusions.

Reflecting her belief that evaluation should facilitate deep level inquiry and authentic understanding of the evaluand, Anna was primarily interested in working with people who had a genuine commitment to inquiry and change.

### **Process use**

Anna chose and discussed from her recent work, an example of the following type of process use that she felt was particularly important and intentional in her practice - ‘The evaluation planning process has impacted or informed implementation of the evaluand’.

Anna’s selected example came from an evaluation of an environmental enhancement program that had a community development focus and was positioned within a local government context. The evaluation described the model and approach of the program and examined its activities, outcomes, strengths, and areas for improvement. A core objective was to provide direction on how the program and program implementation could be strengthened. The evaluation aimed to build evaluation capability and culture within stakeholder organizations and was therefore intentionally designed and undertaken by Anna as a participatory and collaborative process.

The evaluation discussed sought to guide future implementation of the program. Anna considered the “...point” of any evaluation was “...to uncover or have an impact on the thing that you are evaluating, for the better.” Her selected example of process use therefore reflected her understanding of a core purpose of evaluation; to inform program implementation, including change and development, to improve program outcomes.

Anna described an evaluation planning process that was intentionally participatory and inclusive of a wide range of stakeholders. She intentionally modelled this approach so stakeholders would experience and recognize its value and would potentially adopt similar practices within the programme and the evaluation. Anna also believed that her participatory and transparent approach was important should the process build evaluative skills and culture within stakeholder organizations. She observed that program staff were starting to use logic models in their work and were adopting an open and collaborative approach to this.

In addition to building evaluation capability, she also believed that her approach would build stakeholders’ engagement and commitment to the evaluation. Through these outcomes, the ability of stakeholders to engage meaningfully in evaluation was enhanced. Such engagement was necessary should the evaluation go beyond a “...surface kind of level” of understanding and utilization.

Anna carefully and strategically facilitated stakeholder engagement in the evaluation process. She operated at a “...high level”, needed to be “...people orientated”, “...politically savvy”, and diplomatic. She needed to be sensitive to stakeholders’ perception of the evaluation and their role and place in it. She ensured that she had sufficient understanding of the evaluand and sufficient awareness of the “...sensitivities” and the “...psychological dynamics of the project, the personalities involved...the group dynamics.”

As an evaluator, Anna positioned herself as a facilitator of learning and development. She was upfront with stakeholders that she was “...interested in supporting them to improve what they are doing.” She intentionally framed evaluation as a,

...discernment process, an assessment process rather than a judgment, in that blame kind of way...a genuine exercise in learning and reflection for mutual benefit, for everyone's benefit.

Anna believed that this positioning built stakeholders' trust in the evaluation process. It led to "...a relaxing...a loosening and an opening up." The evaluation was able to get,

...to the heart of what the [evaluand] was, what it is, its approach and its model...", so that ultimately the evaluation would tell "...an honest story about what the [evaluand] was and what it was doing.

## **Reflections**

In the example of process use discussed, Anna described intentionally modelling a participatory and collaborative approach to evaluation planning. She believed this approach would enhance the commitment and engagement of stakeholders within the evaluation process as well as their evaluative capability. She described both outcomes as supporting stakeholders to engage meaningfully and deeply within the evaluation. This engagement was important should the evaluation provide in-depth, authentic understanding about the program. This understanding was required should the evaluation usefully and effectively inform future implementation.

Anna believed that the practice style and process of the evaluator, including their "...people skills", could influence whether and how authentically stakeholders engaged in the evaluation process as well as the value and use they derived from it. She was intentional in using and modelling working processes that built engagement and ultimately stakeholder value and utility from evaluation.

From her account of her practice, it was apparent that Anna understood evaluation planning as an intervention that occurred within organizational, human, and political contexts. Her approach to evaluation planning intentionally accounted for and navigated this context. In doing so, she built stakeholder engagement, support, and trust in the evaluation. Anna considered these outcomes as necessary foundations should the evaluation process facilitate open and critical reflection, deep-level inquiry, authentic, real-world understanding, and should it ultimately inform positive development of the evaluand.

## **‘Aroha’**

### **Background**

Aroha began the interview by introducing her whanau and Māori, European, and Pacific whakapapa, “...because everything that I do is about that in the first place”. Prior to becoming an evaluator, she described employment throughout Aotearoa and overseas, followed by the study of psychology as an adult student. Her studies, which included sociology, philosophy, law, criminology, and forensic psychology, followed her desire to address issues facing Māori, particularly as a colonized group.

A number of factors prompted Aroha to move “...more into the research space and the R&D, developmental, cultural development, and evaluation [space].” Reflecting later on this summary, Aroha commented that she had made a conscious decision to move into these areas of work. She was better able to effect change at program, structural, and system levels, rather than just at an individual or whanau level. This decision involved consideration of issues such as how she could use her skills and time most cost-effectively and beneficially. She was drawn to the potential of evaluation to effect wider change, while also recognizing that it required the types of skills and insights that she had developed through her clinical training.

Aroha’s study of psychology had provided her with some initial research experience. She later began to work collaboratively with an experienced evaluator and it was through this association and relationship “...that I actually moved into the evaluation space.” Over time, she continued to work with this evaluator as well as other evaluation teams. She worked across different cultural contexts, however, with a particular focus on working with Māori and Pacific.

Aroha described her increasing involvement in evaluation as a process where she,

...kind of more like fell into it by association of doing research and then some evaluation projects and then getting more into evaluation and then learning more about what evaluation actually was in the field, and on the job...

Aroha described her values and identity as establishing the context within and through which any understanding of her evaluation practice needed to be located. Her values established a,

...stake in the ground...this is who I am and this is what I bring, this is my tikanga that I bring to the process.

She was upfront and explicit in acknowledging the values that underpinned her evaluation practice,

...everyone has got their own values in play which is why when I write stuff I put down what mine are anyway, like up front and centre, so they know that; it is kind of like a take it or leave it situation. And if you don't like it that is fine, I'll go off and do something else.

Aroha's practice was underpinned by values such as "...wairuatanga, kotahitanga, tinorangatiratanga, aroha, manaakitanga." She considered these not only Māori values, but fundamentally "...human" values. They stemmed from and embraced values, principles, and intent that transcended ethnicity and which could have meaning and applications across different contexts, perspectives, language, and so on. For example, koha, literally meaning to share the breath of life, could be expressed in different forms of exchange, for example, a hug, a reciprocated task, or in a research or evaluation context, the return of a voucher in acknowledgement of someone's contribution.

Aroha emphasised that it would be incorrect to view or understand her values through an evaluation lens. Rather they were "...something that you kind of are..." Therefore,

...it doesn't kind of work backwards. It is not like I am going to give you a koha because that is what it says [in an ethics application or evaluation plan].

Therefore, taking the example of aroha, "...it actually starts [in the centre] and it informs or spreads out everywhere." Aroha, which incorporates values such as tinorangatiratanga, "...sovereignty of the self", sits at the centre of the self and in relation to evaluation, influences from the centre out, for example, how evaluation goals and objectives are framed. Every decision made regarding data collection, analysis, and reporting seeks to respect and maintain each person's sovereignty.

Reflecting later on this summary, Aroha observed that her value base provided her with a constant framework and guide, regardless of the form of practice, endeavour, or activity engaged in,

...it could be research, it could be work that I am doing in development, it could be the creation of an art piece...it actually doesn't matter what I am doing, whether I am doing a whanau plan, or a sculpture, or a painting, or research or action research, or a process evaluation of a randomised control trial, it actually doesn't even matter, so it is not actually the specific activity per se, because they are all informed by a particular value base if you like, a value foundation.

### **Evaluation practice**

Aroha described her understanding of evaluation as having evolved over time and through her experience of practice. From initially regarding evaluation as "...something that other people did to other people," she now recognized it as something that was intuitive and fundamental to human survival, adaption, and sustainability,

...Māori, Pacific, indigenous [peoples] have been evaluators for 1000's of years, hence we can survive for 1000's of years because if we weren't good evaluators we wouldn't have survived.

...Tongans are great journeyers, they travelled all around the Pacific but you didn't leave the islands without a thorough evaluation of what you were doing, where you were going, what resources you needed, the whole thing. It is a whole evaluation process to get from A to B, the journey, the creation of it.

It was evident through Aroha's accounts that her understanding and approach to evaluation connected to her commitment to decolonization. She was concerned with re-establishing indigenous people's control over evaluation and their understanding and use of it as an enabling process,

...hey, it is not a bad thing, evaluation is actually a good thing for people...for information, growth, and development, and so on...But it has just had a really bad rap, especially for Maori, with the whole process of colonization and the imposition of a different value system, you just have to look around and see the outcomes in terms of education, health, justice...

Aroha described evaluation as an essential and integral part of learning. An evaluation process simply brought more of a consciousness and structure to "...the values that we bring to the learning." Evaluation was a continuous and mutual learning process. It was a

“...creative”, “...responsive”, and “...transformative” process. The evaluator was engaged with stakeholders in a process of “...co-creation.” As an example of this, Aroha recognized that the interview process was a one-to-one interaction that created,

...a sort of learning space, like I am learning from them and they are learning from me, and we are learning and creating from each other, so it should be kind of transformative in some way, it is not just me digging and getting answers from them and writing stuff.

Aroha linked this view of evaluation back to her understanding of life as a constant process of change. Evaluation was a process that enabled stakeholders to “...reflect on where it is that they want to go.” Learning through evaluation was undertaken,

...for some kind of improvement or reaching some value that you want to get to; which is that space of transformation.

If evaluation was not about transformation and improvement, she questioned, “...what is the point?”

Aroha described tikanga, rather than ethics as setting “...my interaction with the people” in the context of research and evaluation processes. Tikanga led to requirements and accountabilities (e.g. relationship building, transparency, honesty, aroha) beyond that typically established by ethics committees. Tikanga meant her focus and primary concern within any evaluation was firstly to the kaupapa of the evaluand, how is it “...going to benefit these Māori, Pacific women, children, families, whanau...”

With tikanga guiding and informing the evaluation process, Aroha described methods and approaches of evaluation as extra tools” drawn on and used within the process to enhance process and outcomes,

...I see other skills that I do, like data collection, synthesis and analysis, whether I am using anything quantitative or qualitative, is just a skill. Like you know I could go and learn stuff to do, I can do things but it is a tool I use to integrate into who I am.

However, she acknowledged the importance of ensuring that tools or processes in any form of practice were the correct ones to use within context. For example, it was important that evaluation tools fitted the methodology and method used.

Aroha described past experiences where external events or factors outside her control had undermined her attempts to practise evaluation in accordance with tikanga. Relationships and trust established with stakeholder had been compromised through external, often political events, that impacted programs “...so suddenly there is an instant where there is something else that affects the relationship of trust.” She observed,

...so much about evaluation is political which puts my integrity at risk, gives me a sense of dissonance and all this kind of stuff going on. I have tried to say I was honest to my participants, tried to at an individual level, [it] just turned to crap, you know, whatever the case was.

She had worked in situations where evaluation was largely approached as a contracted deliverable and was primarily focused on delivering findings to the commissioning agency,

...delivering a product back to them, because you have been given x amount of dollars and then you have got to do some stuff, do some activities, and then you have got to give them something.

While accepting the need for accountability, aspects of this approach were also “...quite tyrannical...” Being new to evaluation at this time, Aroha recalled “...a naivety” about her involvement in evaluations that were framed and conducted primarily to address economic or politically driven questions (e.g. does this program provide value for money?).

Her early experiences of evaluation had led her to a crisis of ethics and principle. She described a state of,

...personal tension because my whole values system...it’s like a dissonance, there is a personal dissonance between that and what is going on politically and economically.

While acknowledging that she had accountabilities to the evaluation commissioner, she also recognized that she was being placed in a vulnerable and conflicted situation, both as Māori and as an evaluator,

...so it might be interviewing some vulnerable groups of people, and saying that I believe as an evaluator that this is going to happen when in fact something else is going on and something else happens so a program is closed down because some project down the line, some government official didn't like, and some MP started stirring crap in the house and God knows what happened.

...I remember being on one marae once and a woman said 'oh what's the score, what are you going to do, what are you going to do, we are sick of people coming around and asking us questions, what are you doing this for?' and then I said, 'uhm we really hope that' – I can't remember what the spiel was but it was something like, 'we really hope that we might be able to improve things for Māori', but as I was saying it, it actually sounded like hollow, you know, because I didn't actually really know what the final outcomes might be...

Such experiences had heightened Aroha's awareness of the political nature of evaluation and that outcomes from the process could be determined by factors beyond her control. For example, even demonstrably successful programs for Māori could be closed down because of political or other external factors. This realization had been instrumental in her developing, over time, an approach to evaluation more intentionally focused on developing organizational capacity and sustainability. This development had required a change in how she understood evaluation influence. That is, away from understanding that organizational sustainability depended upon external evaluation and external factors (that may or may not be supportive), to regarding evaluation as a process more intentionally focused on building the sustainability of provider organizations and their kaupapa. This approach assumed change and uncertainty in the external environment. Evaluation became a more "... creative, co-creative transformative" process that leveraged existing support and resources. Learning and evaluative capacity were developed to support more sustainable and sovereign organizations. Through this approach, the possibility of external factors undermining the value of evaluation and the sovereignty and sustainability of organizations was reduced.

Aroha recognised that most organizations remained vulnerable, to some extent, to external factors such as funding. Reflecting on these tensions, she observed,

...I think what I have done...is try to be a bit more strategic and say to [providers]  
...think about the whole issue of sustainability...let's think about smart ways of

sustainability...it's almost like going beyond evaluation and starting to look at what comes out of evaluation in terms of future direction, innovation, and so forth, so they are actually ahead of the game, so they are actually starting to implement some of the stuff themselves...that's the whole point...let's see where you are now and leverage as much as we can from past and present and what you know about the short-term future at least...so that we can work smarter for the long term...

...everything about Māori stuff and what goes on has to be post politics in a way...How to survive beyond National, Act, Labour, Māori Party, and all that kind of stuff.

...I think Māori have started to think a lot more [about] this whole longer term.

She reported a recent shift where government departments were more prepared to fund at a community level and to support efforts to build the autonomy and capacity of community providers. These shifts, towards more of a kaupapa Māori model, had been influenced by the work and input of senior Māori evaluators,

...because as a collective voice, we are putting our foot down, then the government and other agencies have little choice I guess but to listen...

Aroha recognized that her shift in approach and practice was informed by her own learning and development as an evaluator, while her fundamental values remained essentially the same,

...I have just figured out a way of making them more connected, being able to put them into practice, or being more certain about like saying that is what it is and all that kind of stuff.

Aroha described particular regard for formative and developmental evaluation approaches that, from the outset, intentionally sought to build evaluative capacity and success,

...if people want to start an endeavour, some kind of journey, some kind of project, program or whatever they want to call it...service, it is much better for them to apply that evaluative thinking at the outset of that journey.

Referring back to the analogy of the role of evaluation in planning and executing successful sea voyaging,

...They are pretty successful because they have been evaluating from the beginning so I am a big fan of the whole formative, developmental, the whole thing as you go along the process evaluation and constantly looking at outcomes along the way, you know, so you are always like learning. But basically I think evaluation should be about success, you know we don't want to evaluate for failure. That is why we don't want to come in at the end and the boats have all sunk in the middle of some latitude and longitude.

Aroha's concern for supporting stakeholders to become more evaluative and reflective in their thinking and practice, linked to her understanding of evaluation as an intuitive human activity. She understood that this capacity and capability had been undermined within indigenous communities through colonization,

...and all that other kind of crap that is going on around the world...we have become so reactive that we haven't been able to sit down and think and that is just reflected everywhere anyway, that whole...we are not thinking really evaluatively anymore, we are just sort of like doing stuff because we are tyrannised by so many other aspects of life.

Building evaluative capacity was understood as a means of re-positioning evaluation back into day-to-day activity and through this, helping to build organizational sustainability and autonomy.

Aroha recognized that some evaluations provided fewer opportunities for a formative, developmental, or capacity development focus. Summative evaluation following experimental designs was mentioned. However, even within such projects, she still sought to use the process to facilitate learning and development, for example, by raising questions that challenged thinking regarding methodology or how programs were thought to 'work', particularly within a cultural context,

...So that type of questioning can sort of like push back into their own thinking, so they could think 'oh maybe we didn't do that quite right.

In the case where evaluation input may come later in a program's implementation, for example, through summative evaluation, learning and development opportunities could still be identified through considering such potential within the context of longer term program goals.

### **Learning and development through the evaluation process**

Aroha discussed a current evaluation to illustrate her intentional focus on building evaluative capability. In the evaluation she was working with Māori Primary Health Organizations (PHOs) and Māori health service providers to develop their evaluative capacity in relation to their delivery of whanau-centred health programs. Whanau values sat at the heart of the program. A key objective of the evaluation was to assist providers to identify, within the context of their specific programs, how these values were informing their practice and approach to evaluation.

Aroha was intentional in positioning the evaluation as a learning and capacity development process,

...I say, it's of no use for me to do everything because what is the purpose, how will you learn to think about it, or how will this person know if they are going to be doing well.

The development of evaluation plans and conduct of the evaluation was being undertaken in partnership with stakeholders. There was a focus on learning through doing, building capacity, and strengthening organizational sustainability. Stakeholders were involved in developing plans, resources and tools, collecting and analysing data. Aroha described herself ideally working,

...more intensively at the beginning and then less and less because then I haven't done my job if I still have to be there in five years...

As the evaluator, Aroha was undertaking roles in training, support, and the development of strategic thinking. She was providing a level of independent critical overview, "...an aerial perspective kind of view" that was enabled through her being removed from the delivery of program activities. Through such a role, Aroha ensured that rigour, objectivity, and critical analysis within the evaluation were maintained. Evaluative questioning was being

used to ensure that the evaluation process focused on determining impact and effectiveness for intended programs recipients,

...well who is your population, well we don't really know...well it might not be a bad idea to find out who your population is...because then you actually see who you are hitting or who you are missing, who your targets are and so it is kind of like us challenging them in a way to go, this is what you said you want to do but you know what are you actually doing?

## **Reflections**

The evaluation literature labels the process through which stakeholder participation in the evaluation process can build their evaluative capacity as a form of process use. However, Aroha did not frame or understand the capacity she sought to develop through her practice through this label. Her practice was understandable as an expression of the cultural and human values that comprised her 'self'. Rather than starting with her practice and explaining this backwards through reference to underlying values, her values lay 'in the centre' and influenced her practice from the 'inside out'. In this way, her practice was guided and informed by tikanga and humanist values and principles. Evaluation skills, methodologies, and methods were 'tools', integrated into the evaluation process to enhance process and outcomes.

Aroha understood and positioned her evaluation practice within past and future contexts. Her understanding and approach to evaluation, and her aspirations as an evaluator, had developed over time. This development was informed by her academic training, practical experience, and resolve to align her practice more satisfactorily with her values. This past context helped to explain her concern that evaluation be focused on learning, development, transformation, capacity development, and the building of sustainable and sovereign organizations. This focus linked to her sense of obligation and accountability, both personally and professionally "...to other people and to the planet." She believed that her practice should have positive impact and influence on current and future generations.

Aroha's practice was underpinned by an understanding of evaluation as an intuitive human activity. Evaluation was essential for developing effective, sustainable, learning orientated, and autonomous organizations. She was therefore intentional in using the

evaluation process to build capacity and in ensuring that the process was enabling and returned value and utility to stakeholders.

## ‘Atawhai’

### Background

Atawhai suspected her pathway to evaluation was similar to many others who found their way into evaluation practice. She observed,

...no one in my family grew up wanting to be a researcher or an evaluator. Does anybody in anyone's family grow up wanting to?

She was the second or third in her whanau to attend university where she studied humanities and commerce. Following university studies, she worked for a number of private and public sector organizations, and raised a family. She worked for a number of years as a social researcher within a research company, a position that provided many learning opportunities. While she was employed to work with Māori, she described the organization as lacking the capability, and at times, willingness to work with Māori knowledge more appropriately and effectively,

...they said they wanted Māori understanding and Māori sense making, but when you gave it to them they didn't know what to do with it and they didn't always understand it.

At this time, Atawhai was herself developing the skills and language required to explain Māori meaning and experience to non-Māori within policy and program contexts. Seeking a more supportive environment for working with and as Māori, Atawhai moved to an evaluation unit within a government agency. Here she gained experience within a policy setting, undertook secondary analysis using large datasets, worked collaboratively across agencies, and conducted and managed research/evaluation with Māori.

Through her experience of working within government, Atawhai developed considerable understanding of “...the machinery of government.” She developed the skills required to communicate Māori information, knowledge, and meaning within policy and strategy settings. She was working here as a “...translator,” someone able to provide understanding, “...both ways, so that Māori understand government policy and government people understand Māori.”

While working within government enabled “...the whanaungatanga stuff”, Atawhai was again frustrated by the limited extent Māori knowledge was able to be effectively communicated, understood, and translated into policy and program responses, “...when it really came down to the nub of sense making, it didn't really happen...” Her desire to see evaluation used more effectively to improve outcomes for Māori led her to establish herself as an independent evaluation consultant. It was only through working independently that she could practice evaluation in a way more aligned with her values and responsibilities as Māori,

...ultimately I needed to be the person deciding what was done. Then I didn't always have to explain to somebody else why I did what I did.

...when you are in control you can be much more upfront and you have more room to negotiate around what you will do or won't do and you are able to secure that.

Atawhai was now less involved in undertaking evaluation “...on the ground.” She was often engaged in strategic, advisory, and review roles for government and non-government. However, this work was still evaluative. It typically involved the use and translation of evaluative thinking, evidence, and meaning. She continued to apply the skills and the tools of evaluation in ways and in contexts where she felt she could “...make a difference.”

Atawhai described her sense of mission, both personally and professionally, as having been hugely influenced by the values she was raised with, “...I think we grew up kind of wanting to be the things we saw around us”. Influential values included an ethic of “responsibility”, “care”, “manaakitanga”, of contributing back, of making “...a difference for others, or [to] support others...” As Māori, and particularly someone with skills, she described carrying the responsibility to contribute “...wherever you go. It's just kind of part of who you are and what you are.” Reflecting later in her follow-up interview on the accountabilities of Maori evaluators, she commented,

...for Māori, and possibly non-Māori, I don't know, there is just a sense, a greater sense of accountability, I sometimes think, and it is not that others don't have a sense of accountability, both personally, professionally, and ethically, but it is a little different when you go somewhere and they start talking about your mother or your father, or the contribution of an aunt or uncle and the value of that...we definitely are, and I don't think the rest of the world understands it, we definitely are a half a

step removed...from just about everybody we come into contact with...and that can very much shape the New Zealand culture...[regarding] engagement...

Atawhai saw evaluation as an opportunity to make a difference for Māori in two key ways; by informing more effective policy and program responses and by developing capability and capacity. Such development enhanced the ability of organizations and communities to "...advocate and argue for what it is that they want." While Atawhai described the label 'process use' as having limited relevance or meaning within her practice, she acknowledged that her intentionality in building evaluative capability could be considered "...the process use end" of her practice.

Reflecting further on her aspiration that evaluation make a difference, Atawhai described herself ultimately working towards,

...a society in which Māori are fully participating citizens, where we don't have the social, economic, and educational disparity that we currently enjoy, where we are highly contributing alongside all other New Zealanders as Māori.

### **Evaluation practice**

Atawhai saw evaluation as essentially an everyday activity that was integral to decision-making and action. From a tikanga perspective, evaluation was about survival. Daily living was informed and ordered through decisions built from existing knowledge and observed processes and outcomes. Decision making was concerned with ongoing wellbeing, the effective use of scarce resources, and choices regarding how and by whom notions of 'value' and 'valuable' were determined. She observed,

...The difference between being 'an evaluator' as a profession is it's a conscious choice. We have a set of tools; we have a set of frameworks that we knowingly apply to a situation or a context.

The evaluator used skills and tools to draw out the knowledge and experience stakeholders brought to evaluation, "...no one comes as an empty vessel." Evaluation was a mutual learning process. The evaluator was positioned not as 'expert', but rather, as bringing evaluative skills and tools to a partnership with stakeholders.

Atawhai believed that traditional quality criteria, that equated independence with rigor and non-bias, were problematic within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. She observed,

...If you go into a Māori community and you don't know anybody, you don't know how communities work, you don't understand what makes this community tick, then you have no credibility. So your ability to engage, to draw out what is important, to make sense of that, is not enhanced in any way by this notion of independence.

The issue of 'insider/outsider' was therefore better understood as an issue concerning data quality, credibility, and validity. The potential for bias was best addressed through ensuring transparency in the process and basis upon which evaluative judgments were derived. She felt that the increasing use of rubrics by local evaluators reflected this principle,

...you can put right up front, absolutely up front, agree the framework, the criteria, the methods for decision making, for your rendering of decisions and judgment.

'Good' evaluation enabled appropriate decisions and action. It balanced utility and usefulness with technical robustness and rigor. It had meaning and provided value for clients and for community and organizational stakeholders. However, Atawhai recognized that it was often difficult to meet Māori community expectations regarding evaluation when the government was usually the commissioner. Government agencies typically commissioned evaluation "...with key specific aims". While the importance of meeting communities' needs within evaluation was often articulated by government, this was often framed as "...a secondary objective."

Atawhai acknowledged that she was accountable to both Māori stakeholders and the client when undertaking evaluation. However, her first responsibility was to address Maori needs and expectations, regardless of the commissioners needs or expectations. She was deliberate in ensuring Maori stakeholders had realistic expectations regarding the difference or benefit evaluation was likely to deliver Māori. However, acknowledging accountability to Māori helped to ensure,

...some level of activity or engagement which is going to contribute to more directly articulating community aspirations or needs or perspective, over and above what the funder wants.

It was necessary to articulate the meaning, value, and outcome of this activity to the client even if “...they don't want it.” Otherwise,

...if you don't, that will disappear...it happened in my earlier years, [Māori would] say things like “I can't see us in there. You have spent a whole week in our communities and with our people, and we are nowhere. We have been rendered to a paragraph. We have been rendered invisible. And yet the only thing we wanted you to say was about blah and it's nowhere there...

Atawhai described her evaluation practice as coming first and foremost from herself as Māori. Her practice was guided by what was right by and for Māori, “...I am Māori. Evaluation or research is what I do. It is not what I am.” She did not define or understand her practice through academic or evaluation labels, rather,

...I do what I do because I believe in them. I do what I do because I think they make a difference. Or I do what I do because over time my experience has told me, or shown me, or someone's told me, that this is the bit that's important; that this is the bit that makes a difference.

Therefore, while ‘kaupapa Māori’ was recognized as a useful term for encapsulating and theorising Māori evaluation practice, Atawhai described the term as having less relevance within her practice,

...my orientation to seeding Māori values and practices didn't come through...[a theoretical label]...I asked my mother, or whatever, I came from a tikanga base, so I understand tikanga and matauranga Māori and whakaaro Māori.

...I don't really think about kaupapa Māori when I do evaluation or when I do anything really, I think about tikanga, what is appropriate, what is correct, appropriate and that correctness and appropriateness is informed by...because that is what tikanga means, ‘many correct things’...that is what I think about...

...what does kaupapa Māori look like on the ground? It doesn't look like anything I know. But I can tell you what tikanga looks like. And I can tell you what an aspect of manaakitanga looks like, and what are our responsibilities around kaitiaki when we are working with non-Māori...

While tikanga may manifest in specific processes or practices undertaken as an evaluator, Atawhia stressed that the meaning, intent or practice of these was not understandable in evaluation concepts or terms. That is, they flowed from and were underpinned by tikanga and it was through this lens that meaning and intent was established. Taking the example of whanaungatanga, she reflected,

...yes it is about good relationships but it is more than that...so the tikanga is about the way you engage in relationship, but it's what sits underneath that is...you know...relationships are for ever and they span the continuum of time, which is why you have got to get them right time, not for the evaluation, for life...

Atawhai described her client relationships as not defined or bounded by specific projects or timeframes, but rather existing within a broader and on-going context. Her activities and roles as an evaluator were not necessarily determined by definitions of evaluation or the evaluator's role but rather through the context and needs presented within the relationship. She reflected,

...people say to me, you work for your clients for ever and I do...I'm counting up the years, the many years...and it is because it is not just about the job and the product...I just had a policy request which is going to have implications on the program...we just happen to have some experience in being able to write a policy, is it in my job descriptions, of course not...it will be balanced up against what I call my e hours or my research hours but that is what the nature of the beast is, we just enter through a door called evaluation.

In another example, Atawhai reflected on the tikanga of reciprocity and koha. While there may be initial acknowledgement of what was given or shared, reciprocation may occur later, "...it might occur for my grandchildren, for their grandchildren..." Therefore, while in an evaluation context, the concept of reciprocity may be expressed in more immediate terms (e.g. the given of monetary koha, feeding back findings), from a tikanga

perspective, the obligation or responsibility to reciprocate was not necessarily bound or understood in such a way.

In another example, Atawhai reflected on the sharing and giving of knowledge. Through this reflection, she suggested further reasons for why Māori evaluators were particularly attentive to process and reciprocity,

...I think we are possibly a little bit blasé these days...or more blasé because that is how we earn our living, but really, there was a sense...there used to be some sense of sacredness, not the right word, around knowledge, and the sharing of knowledge, giving of knowledge, and we mostly think about and really use that these days mostly for kuia and kaumatua and acknowledged experts really...people were sharing something with you, they were sharing something that was prized and valued, they weren't just sharing what they had for breakfast. It is some sense of kaitiakitanga of that knowledge...I can't think of what the equivalent process is in English...there is little bits of it in an ethics process, in a feedback process...but it's not quite the same.

### **Learning and development through the evaluation process**

Atawhai described the concept of 'process use' as having little relevance within her evaluation practice. She was familiar with the term, "...the influence, maybe the impact, of evaluation through people's participation in evaluation activities or processes." She recognized that external factors, for example, level of funding or client support for a participatory process, could influence whether process use occurred and the extent it was intentionally sought by an evaluator. She acknowledged that her intentional use of evaluation to support evaluative capability development could potentially be understood as process use. However,

...If we talked about learning by doing and evaluation that supports whoever you are working with to do things better when you leave...it's always intentional. The label 'process use' does nothing for me.

Atawhai described process being important and intentional within her practice because she understood that process was important to Māori and that it ensured that evaluation was ultimately of benefit and value for Māori. Process was the mechanism through which the values and intent of the evaluator, and the extent evaluation would give effect to values and

principles of importance to Māori, were signalled to Māori. Process therefore helped to secure and facilitate Māori engagement in evaluation and potentially better understanding of Māori. This understanding could inform better policy and program responses and better outcomes for Māori. Process could be “...a means to an end” and evaluators may pursue it out of some degree of “...self-interest.” However, process was also likely to be “...an end in itself,” often determined by what felt “...right” or “...what is tika, what is correct.” Therefore, rather than being thought of in terms of intentional or unintentional or conscious or unconscious, evaluation process and practice often simply ‘was’.

It is through this frame that Atawhai discussed an example from her recent practice where she considered herself intentional in using the evaluation process to build the evaluative capability of stakeholders. The evaluation example discussed was a developmental evaluation of a funding program that was transitioning to fund services that enabled ‘as Māori’ participation within the area of activity funded by the program. A developmental evaluation approach was adopted because the program and evaluation required clarity around what ‘as Māori’ programming and participation meant and why it would be different to mainstream programming, and what appropriate outcomes would look like. Organizational stakeholders required understanding of how ‘as Māori’ programming would align and add value to the stated goals and objectives of the wider organization. Program management required understanding so service providers could be contracted to deliver against identified outcomes. The evaluation team required understanding so that providers and the program overall could be evaluated using relevant criteria,

...we can't evaluate the contribution of the [program] 'as Māori' unless all of the activities we do knowingly, legitimately align to 'as Māori'. So what we first need to do is find out what 'as Māori' is and then make sure all of the activities [fit] 'as Māori'.

There was limited funding for the evaluation and a decision was therefore made to also use the evaluation to develop the capability of contracted service providers to self-assess their performance using an evaluation framework/rubric developed through the evaluation. This focus was also consistent with the intent of the funding program to build the capacity and capability of providers.

In the first year of the program, potential providers were funded to participate in a series of hui that led to the development of the evaluation framework/rubric. The framework/rubric was then used to inform the contracting and evaluation of services delivered under the program from year two. The framework/rubric identified five core criteria defining ‘as Māori’ participation and established performance levels for each criteria. Providers were numerically rated against the framework and the ratings were used to determine eligibility for funding under the program from year two.

Atawhai described the developmental hui as intentionally focused on building providers’ understanding and acceptance of evaluation as well as their ownership over the evaluation process and framework/rubric. The hui developed the capability of providers to understand, collect, and interpret appropriate performance data using the framework/rubric. The first hui focused on whakawhanaungatanga and responded to participants’ experiences, understanding, and attitudes regarding evaluation. The values/valuing approach that was to be used within the evaluation was introduced. Further hui focused on building the ability of stakeholders to develop evaluative criteria and to collect and interpret performance data using the criteria. Understanding and capability was developed through examples and exercises that drew on events and experiences that Māori could relate to, with learning supported by theory as appropriate.

There was intent throughout the hui to re-position evaluation away from models of evaluation ‘done to’ stakeholders and as a process that returned limited value or benefits to stakeholders. Evaluation was intentionally positioned as a process and tool that enabled performance and outcomes to be demonstrated against criteria determined important by stakeholders,

...Why it matters to have a Māori receptionist, not just because they're Māori  
...what do they do...that's how we tend to talk about evaluation.

Considerable time was spent working with providers to adapt current data collection processes so that they also derived data required within the evaluation. While this process sought to reduce the demands of the evaluation on providers, Atawhai reported that it also enhanced their understanding of why various data was required within the evaluation. This understanding supported a high level of reporting compliance within the evaluation as well as enhanced data quality,

...The only other [government agency] program that can provide any decent ... program information is [name of program] and they get millions. This one gets [significantly less] a year—nothing...[other programs] can't even do a basic description...And they don't provide national reports and they can't provide regional reports.

The participation of stakeholders in developing the evaluation methodology and framework/rubric also built their understanding of the meaning and importance of cultural practices within the program. Stakeholders came to understand what was different and important in terms of 'as Māori' participation and why data should be collected to evidence this. The process affirmed the importance and uniqueness of cultural practices to stakeholders and enhanced their capability to articulate this to others, “...they begin to be able to see in an explicit way what are the unique set of skills.” This was the development of evaluative capacity. Providers were subsequently able to,

...push back, because sometimes they don't know how to do that; how to hold their space in a way that allows them to hold that space without kind of getting into a big fight.

Atawhai illustrated this development through the example of how the meaning of the concept of volunteering within a cultural context had been conceptualized within the evaluation,

...you had to have the conversation around...how are you going to deal with volunteers when actually it's not really something we always collect. What does that mean in a whanau space, because actually everybody's a volunteer; you don't necessarily have a label called 'volunteer' because you do something.

The dialogue and critical reflection enabled through the evaluation led to clarity and shared understanding regarding cultural meaning. Stakeholders came to understand “...that volunteering is different in a Māori space” and that the concept needed to be addressed appropriately within the evaluation,

...we don't just run a report on the number of volunteers because actually the label we give to volunteers is different from the label and the understanding that this group gave to volunteers was different from traditional [government department]

volunteering. And unless we articulate and describe the difference, we were always going to be found wanting.

Atawhai discussed further examples where the evaluation process informed organizational and program development within the funding program. The framework/rubric became a live tool that guided the program development necessary to meet performance levels established under specific criteria,

...you could then say things like...if you included a greater level of te reo Māori, you could move from a one or from a two. If you had some of your activities, instead of them all being at the local sports field, if you had put some of them on a marae, you would move from a one to two.

In a similar way, the framework/rubric provided a basis or rationale for staff within providers not funded under the program to undertake necessary program or organizational development,

...what they liked about it is that it actually provided a strong program rationale for them to be working in the spaces that they wanted to be working in...kohanga ...kura...schools with a high proportion of Māori ...Many of them had been wanting to do some of that stuff but they had to do all of this other stuff as well.

Atawhai discussed a second example from her recent practice where building the evaluative capability of community service providers was stated as an objective within an evaluation of a capacity building fund. Available resources did not enable evaluative capability building in a meaningful and sustainable way, however, the evaluation was successful in reframing how capacity building was framed and resourced through the fund. Through this re-framing, evaluative capability development was appropriately positioned as part of capacity development. The evaluators argued that the claim that organizational capacity had been built could only truly be made when an organization themselves had the capacity to determine their own capacity development needs. Organizational self-assessment training was therefore implemented through the fund with the aim that organizations would self-assess their capacity needs, and as appropriate, apply for funding to address these. The re-framed process thus recognized and built responsibility, accountability, sustainability, and importantly, critical/evaluative thinking as integral to capacity building. Later evaluation of the fund found evidence of process use from the

capacity building process. Organizations were applying the evaluative skills and tools developed within other areas of their work, for example, in strategic and program planning, self-evaluation, and workforce development.

## **Reflections**

Atawhai's evaluation practice was shaped by tikanga, her understanding of what was right by and for Māori, and what made a difference for Māori. While she might later rationalize or articulate the reasons for certain decisions or processes within her practice, her practice often simply 'was'. It was understood and conceptualized through tikanga rather than through evaluation terms or whether practice was intentional or unintentional, conscious or unconscious.

Atawhai regarded her evaluation practice as having the potential to make a difference for Māori through informing appropriate policy and program development as well as through building evaluative capability. The manner in which evaluative capability development can occur through stakeholders' participation in evaluation has been described in the literature as a form of process use. However, Atawhai did not view her intention to build capability through this frame. Rather, she understood that evaluative capability was central to building more sustainable and effective organizations and communities. Her intentional use of evaluation to build evaluative capability was more obviously linked to tikanga as well as her commitment that evaluation supported Māori development and sovereignty.

As an experienced evaluation practitioner, Atawhai was undertaking fewer 'evaluations' and was increasingly involved in strategic, advisory, and capability building activities. Reflecting on this in her follow-up interview, she commented,

...I think what we are getting in the field...you learn your craft essentially by doing and then over time, your experience, you realise your ability to run surveys and analyse large data sets is a means to an end and when you stop thinking about yourself having a set of technical skills and those technical skills really are just a means to an end, to inform thinking, make judgements etc, then you start to position yourself in a different space and I think that is what we are seeing at the moment with a group of fairly senior evaluation practitioners...we are doing some, but we are not doing a lot of what I call 'e', but we are certainly contributing to a lot

of evaluation, might be design, might be analysis, might be analytic frameworks, but it's not so much our technical ability to use SAS...but it's our ability to manage to complex relationships, to make sense, to navigate complexity, and again, that doesn't feel terribly aligned to process use either...

Many of the practices and processes she described within the evaluation example she discussed were intentionally aimed at building stakeholder understanding, acceptance, engagement, and ownership over evaluation. They were also aimed at building stakeholders' use of evaluation findings as well as their use of evaluation tools and processes. Capability development was also a specific aim of the program being evaluated and the evaluation. This context further enhanced her intent to use the evaluation process to build capability. Reflecting during her follow-up interview, she described this focus on learning and development as very much part of the local socio-cultural practice of evaluation and of working within a community context.

The wider context of the evaluand discussed by Atawhai was also important in understanding the learning and development focus of the evaluation. A key challenge facing the program was to clarify and evidence the need for transition to an 'as Maori' funding model. The wider organization didn't "...really understand it at all". For this reason, the evaluation conducted was considered a 'developmental evaluation'. The evaluation had operated in "...a kind of Māori supporting Māori development" space. The program vision and intent supported the developmental intent of the evaluation. The evaluation in turn supported the vision and intent of the program, "...everything is focused towards that. We just happen to be doing what I call the evaluation bit."

The evaluation example discussed by Atawhai and her role within it was different to evaluations within which process use has often been discussed in the literature. That is, 'evaluations' more in the mode of external program evaluation. Here, the notion of process use as a separate, independent form of use, clearly distinguishable from findings use, and a form of use that may be intentional or unintentional, seems more understandable. However, in the project described by Atawhai, and within the wider context of her practice, such conceptualization has less relevance or appropriateness. Process use (if the term is to be used at all) is largely indistinguishable here from what is regarded as appropriate evaluation practice, what is right, and what makes sense when working within a cultural context. Atawhai reflected

...I'm over the pop-in, drop-in evaluator, you know, pop in, pop out. It doesn't leave anything for the organization at all. Just as a way of working, whether that's a pragmatic way of working, whether it's a tikanga, whether it's a Māori affirmation or Māori development way of working, it's a better way...It better suits the aspirations that I have for Māori development and enables me to do my little bit. That's one. And I think because you do get the learning...when I see the providers emailing us about a little framework or tool that they are now using you know, I've helped them do something...you just feel good that you've actually contributed that little bit.

## ‘Ben’

### Background

Ben’s pathway to evaluation included social and political activism, voluntary work, and positions as a counsellor, psychotherapist, social worker, and community development worker. It was while working in community development that he recognized the potential of evaluation to be a form of “...social mediation,” where the evaluator could work collaboratively with program recipients to negotiate desired outcomes. Evaluation was a form of social practice that could shape the structures/systems that influenced individual behaviour as well as the way social problems were understood and addressed. He compared this potential to working individually with clients, where the social practitioner was often “...in the clinch” and had limited ability to influence the “...curriculum” that shaped practice.

Ben moved closer to the applied practice of evaluation through a later role in youth development. Here he became involved in evaluative activities such as community appraisals, community assessment, and action/empowerment research projects,

...I was effectively doing evaluation by default...without being schooled in it, other than critical community development work [which] is evaluative by its very nature and critical of power structures.

A later role in group facilitation led to his involvement in program design and then an opportunity to complete Masters level tertiary study with an evaluation specialization. Following this, he took up a research and evaluation position within a government agency. At the time of his interview, he was continuing to work as an evaluator and researcher within government.

Reflecting on his pathway to evaluation, Ben described his route as “...circuitous” yet “...always grounded in relation to social practice” and always “...underpinned by critical analysis.” He identified with the marginalized/disadvantaged, was interested in distributive justice, and was concerned with addressing the systematic factors that maintained disadvantage and marginalization.

Working as a public servant provided a regular income, enabled Ben to “...live in accord with my conscience”, and provided the opportunity to undertake research and evaluation

that had the potential to influence government policy. Despite the constraints of working within government, Ben described himself having “...a deep seated notion of public service.” His work within government was an expression of his long term commitment “...to be in the game, rather than profiting from the game...” He commented, “...I am doing battle with the culture in an ongoing way.”

### **Evaluation practice**

Ben recognized that evaluation was concerned with values and valuing and was therefore a process that should examine the values and valuing that underpinned assumptions and beliefs about ‘what works.’ Evaluation was “...disruptive thinking.” It should examine and test the ways that social issues were framed and responded to. Evaluation was “...reflection on action.” It had the potential to create “...cognitive dissonance” within decision makers who may otherwise not consider alternative meanings, explanations, or possibilities.

Evaluation could clarify ownership and interests regarding how social problems were framed and addressed. Decision makers may have “...oblique or apparent disinterest”, “...histrionic interest.” Potentially,

...they don't want to hear any counter narrative...Or alternately, they've been told to do something so it's a compliance exercise. They're not really interested in the outcome; they're not going to be acting on it. So I am interested in that space because if it's like Henry and Mark suggest, if this exercise has moral compass, if it has social purpose, if it's about social betterment, then you need to understand really what the options are.

Reflecting the above, Ben saw evaluation as a learning process. Learning essentially required a “...state of shock.” He observed, “...in its profoundest sense [learning] shifts the ground under your feet.” Reflecting on this regarding the role and function of evaluation,

...I think there is an evaluation thinker that said if you are not able to decentre or disrupt the primary assumptions in a particular area of policy work, then arguably you are not really evaluative at all.

Evaluation could open up new ways of framing and understanding social issues through challenging “...truth claims” underpinning policy/programming. It could contribute to more sophisticated debate and discourse related to social issues and their antecedents. In

doing so, evaluation could potentially expand “...the repertoire” of possible responses to social issues. The way evaluation was designed could have similar effect, for example, in the area of crime and punishment,

...by designing a survey with more nuanced questions you get very different responses from people indicating a more kindly, rehabilitative value set than if you front questions in a particular way which panders to people's fear.

Following the above, Ben described good evaluation leading to more “...sophisticated talk about what something is and what's possible.” Reflecting on his position working within government, and recognizing that external factors shaped the extent evaluation may lead to new thinking and ideas, he described good evaluation being the search “...for opportunities...to influence social programming in a good direction for marginalized people.” Therefore, good evaluation was “...as much about luck as anything else” – where external factors acted in support of evaluation to “...sow the seeds for things to occur.” Within his organization, he sought to align his work organizationally “...such that asking particular kinds of questions sows the right kinds of seeds and promulgates change in a more ethical direction.”

Ben understood that the evaluation process could itself have positive or negative impacts on stakeholders depending on the consciousness and intention of the evaluator, “...I think that you change things as soon as you talk to people in a good way.” Recognizing the evaluator often engaged stakeholders in evaluation through holding some degree of “...agency covenant” over them, he considered the evaluator having a “...duty of care” in respect to the impact and outcomes of such engagement. Conducting evaluation in a respectful and enabling way could have affective or attitudinal impacts such as improved stakeholder attitudes or perceptions regarding services or willingness to access services. Consciousness by the evaluator of such process impacts meant that “...everything you say and do, every moment is a moment of service.”

Ben believed any form of interviewing should respect, honour, and dignify participants, including their culture, “...enhancing not eroding their sense of self.” He considered such engagement foundational to creating an environment where interviews could themselves be affirming, learning, empowering, enabling, or transformative. Participants were also more likely to engage openly, honestly, and confidently in evaluation when they understood and accepted there was potential value from the process. While the telling of their “...story” or

“...counter story” through an interview could ultimately benefit the evaluation, for example, through enhanced data quality, interviews could also be transformative for the participant through the insights, options, or confidence gained through the telling,

...If people think there's more that they can do than they are, and they are excited by that, and what they can do is about shifting the status of the prospect or marginalized groups, then that produces a societal gain.

Ben described himself as primarily a qualitative researcher who also drew on mixed methods. He sought to be transparent regarding the values, principles, traditions, and ethics underpinning his practice. This included how his moral and ethical code shaped his understanding of “...good society” and how his conduct as an evaluator was shaped in pursuit of this. While his practice followed a constructivist and interpretivist position, he believed that the relativism of constructivism was problematic within evaluation as evaluation should follow an ethical direction and should lead to an evaluative judgment.

### **Process use**

Ben identified with and recognized most of the examples of process use shown to him in his interview. He considered such outcomes to be intentional and important throughout his practice and chose to discuss a recent project which he felt evidenced this. He regarded the concept of process use as a useful heuristic for thinking about or retrospectively reflecting on the influence of evaluation. However, it wasn't a term or frame through which he understood his intention or motivation to practice evaluation in a way that lead to process based learning and development outcomes for stakeholders (see later on this).

The project Ben drew from was an evaluation study of local community responses to a national wide social marketing campaign. The study was particularly focused on examining the impact of the campaign within the context of how local communities had historically experienced and responded to the campaign issue, and how broader cultural mores and norms were acting locally either in support or against the campaign. The study also sought to build community consciousness, thought, and action regarding the campaign issue.

The study was designed and conducted following community development and action research principles. It was intentionally focused on building skills and capacity within each of the community sites involved, “...so there was a legacy from this work that remained in

the community.” The study was co-governed by key stakeholders groups and stakeholders who were involved in decision making throughout the study, including considering the ethical implications of proposed methods.

While the study utilized multiple methods, primary, and secondary data, Ben focused his discussion on the intercept interviews conducted. These interviews were conducted with community members literally ‘on the street’ in order to explore their experiences, understanding, needs, and responses to the program, “...we wanted to know about the state of consciousness of people on the street.”

Ben designed the interview method and offered it as an option within the community sites involved in the study. Whether and how the method was used was determined by stakeholders within each site. The extent it was picked up and implemented across the sites therefore varied.

The interviews were conducted by contract interviewers, employed by the government agency and working in tandem with community researchers. The contract researchers had oversight regarding research standards and fidelity to design. The community researchers facilitated access within each community and ensured that local implementation supported and protected the interests of the local community.

Ben designed and offered the intercept interview method understanding that the process could itself have learning and development impacts for the community stakeholders involved in planning, managing, and conducting interviews as well as for community members interviewed.

While a number of unanticipated changes within the project meant that it was not implemented as fully as initially planned, Ben believed the interview process had led to learning and development outcomes for stakeholders. The interviews raised the consciousness of participants regarding their knowledge, skills, and options relating to the campaign issue, “...there was an immediate consciousness [raising] effect...people having information that they may not otherwise have.” While not well documented, the interviews had enabled some participants to tell their “...change stories.” This provided the opportunity for self-reflection and insight regarding potential action or change and examples for others regarding how change may occur. Recognizing that consciousness-raising could itself be “...discomforting or revealing”, all interviews were conducted

ensuring there was appropriate support or referral to services available to participants if required.

Ben also saw the interviews having reinforced the primary messages of the campaign. The effect built the saliency of the message and supported “...movement towards a different social norm...”

Ben considered the role of community stakeholders and researchers in determining the ethical and safe conduct of interviews in each community site as capacity building. Their involvement developed research skills, new regard for the value of community research, and enhanced ability to utilize developed skills within other contexts.

## **Reflections**

Ben described an evaluation practice that followed and was shaped by his considerable experience as a social practitioner. He saw evaluation as a form of social practice that offered additional opportunities to effect change at structural and policy levels. His evaluation practice was shaped by a commitment to social justice. He believed that evaluation should address issues of marginalization and disadvantage. Following theorists such as Greene and Henry and Mark, he agreed that evaluation should be concerned with social betterment.

Ben understood evaluation as a relational encounter between people. All engagements with stakeholders were considered a moment of service. He was intentional in ensuring that all engagements were respectful, honouring, and enabling. Engagements in themselves offered the potential for beneficial learning and development outcomes for stakeholders. His practice was guided by a paradigm of respect, interest, empathy, and understanding of the evaluation partner.

An intention to achieve process use did not provide an explanation for Ben’s focus on process-based learning and development. His approach was more clearly explained by the social justice values and practice traditions that underpinned his evaluation practice, and by his understanding of evaluation as a relational process.

He considered the term ‘process use’, and other forms of evaluation use described in the literature, a useful heuristic for reflecting on the influence or use of one’s work. However, the way the term tended to imply this form of use as a side-product, additional outcome, or

‘nice-to-have’ from practice, was at odds with his understanding and approach to evaluation. Reflecting on his background and experience in narrative therapy, where the first encounter the practitioner has with the client is considered a “...critical change encounter”, he observed,

...you want to humanise the encounter and the individual by really indicating a motivating interest in their well-being ...so the parallel is, when you talk about process use, it sounds for me like an intellectualisation of something where, it’s a bit like evaluation comes from a disinterested tradition...and therefore we have to reinject or intellectualise a personalising component in it which is called ‘process use’. We try and demonstrate interest and show an investment in what is going on in the moment for the people you are engaged with, whereas where I come from every moment is a moment of service and the first encounter is foundational.

While Ben understood evaluation as a process of critical analysis, he suggested that the context within which he practiced evaluation was not particularly supportive of this approach. At a societal level, New Zealanders were practical and action orientated people who liked “...to be seen to be acting on something.” However, there could be less attentive to “...reflection,” examining the cause, reason, or necessity to act,

...we feel better doing something, than doing nothing, even though the doing something obscures...the issue that we are really acting on and closes off more justifiable or potentially useful actions.

He described general aversion within government to the level of accountability and transparency that follows critical reflection through evaluation. Policy making was often reactive,

...we don't really understand the antecedents...that's where I think evaluation can be fundamentally disruptive, which is asking what kind of society we do want and therefore what are the pathways towards it as opposed to the things that we don't want to see...

He described some resistance within his workplace to evaluation as a critical reflective process, or evaluation as a driver of “...reflection on action” learning cycles. He had few opportunities to be involved in policy/program planning and design stages. Research and evaluation was “...marginalized”, a “...sort of an after-thought...” His pursuit of evaluation

as critical analysis was “...guerrilla work.” While evaluation may be used by operational groups to understand policy/programs intentions,

...they are not really that interested in the critical facts. So I would say there's an institutional culture that's hostile to self-examination and it has good reason to be because it's really likely to be punished for revealing what could be connoted as a performance problem.

Reflecting further,

...they don't want to have a critical friend, they don't believe in it and they are disconcerted by it, to the extent that evaluation is supposed to be disruptive.

He believed there was limited understanding and appreciation within his organization for more collaborative, community-based evaluation approaches,

...there is still a call for RCTs or thinking programmatically both about an issue and therefore about evaluation. So the idea of working in that realist evaluation space, in the constructivist evaluation space, or in developmental evaluation space is hard argued when there is scepticism or wariness of evidence or conclusions derived using these approaches and because we have little direct communication and influence with [operations]. It's more based on personal professional relationships than on the structure of the organization and having a facilitated role. And it's anyone's guess as to the uptake of the information provided.

He observed further,

...there are institutional structures and interests and habits of thinking which mitigate against evaluation influence and evaluation is marginalized in the structure ...any influence you have [within] the structure in terms of things like policy change and diffusion is accidental and it's personal, it's about persevering.

## **‘Bridget’**

### **Background**

Bridget’s pathway to becoming an evaluator following early work as a social research assistant, a graduate degree in social science research methods, work as an independent researcher, and then employment as a social researcher and evaluator within government. She was drawn to evaluation as it demanded rigor and attention to ensuring that evaluative judgements were supported by appropriate evidence. Her practice was underpinned by feminist, egalitarian, and kaupapa Māori values. She believed evaluation should be participatory and inclusive. It should give voice to “...a broad spectrum of people,” particularly those who may otherwise be excluded from policy and program considerations.

Her evaluation approach was underpinned by a fundamental principle to do no harm. This meant,

...being very careful about what you are asking people and whether they are the right people to ask, or to interview, or to seek information from. To make sure that people have had the opportunity to discuss or reflect or go back...[to] revisit the intervention they have had.

Bridget’s current role involved both the ‘doing’ of evaluation as well as the management of evaluation contracted to external providers. She valued the extent her role afforded her a level of “...independence” from government. She described her role as “...internal, looking in” and that enabling some “...independence to actually critique things.” She observed,

...whilst that critique often gets couched differently in the end product, I do get the opportunity to stand back...to do the required detective work.

Bridget discussed a number of frustrations working as an evaluator within her organization. Evaluation was often undertaken with little organizational commitment to utilization. It might be undertaken “...just [for] accountability” or to meet a Ministerial directive to do an evaluation. She had limited control over findings use and difficulty ascertaining what influence evaluation was having within her organization. Change was influenced by a range of factors, “...no one would certainly say that it was the evaluation

that brought ...about [change]”. Her organization was reluctant to publish or more openly share evaluation knowledge or findings; it rarely entered the “...public domain.”

### **Evaluation practice**

Bridget described evaluation as a process of determining and judging merit and worth. She understood that these attributes may be defined differently by different stakeholders and believed the evaluation process should account for these differences and the contextualised basis of evaluative judgements.

Drawing on her feminist perspective, Bridget described evaluation as never value free,

...I can't be objective. I can be as objective as I can within my training and my cultural framework, perspective, but I am not neutral.

Bridget was aware of process use within her practice. She understood that the evaluation process could constitute “...an intervention.” She described the “...cathartic expression” that participants in interviews could experience. She observed “...the interaction...[is] sometimes where the change occurs or...where we are actually having the most impact...” She commented, “...that actually the utility and the merit [from evaluation] is in the process of doing the evaluation...” and “...I certainly get more satisfaction out of doing the evaluation than what happens afterwards.” She believed that evaluators needed to act with care and consciousness that the evaluation process could provide opportunities for participants “...to say things that they wouldn't have otherwise said...”

Bridget hoped her evaluation practice would generate “...dialogue”, that it would add to the “...conversation” about “...differences and about why things aren't working”. She hoped that evaluation reports would stimulate dialogue and consideration of necessary change or action, “...to make things different, or change things, or improve things.” She hoped such outcomes would eventually lead to “...a better experience for the user, a better outcome from the funding, the money that's been spent.” Following her concern that evaluation be democratic, inclusive and enabling, Bridget saw evaluation having to potential to open up dialogue to a much broader group than may otherwise happen in the absence of evaluation.

‘Good’ evaluation was participatory. The “...right people” were involved in evaluation planning and the evaluator was consciously engaged in developing and maintaining relationships with the client and end user. Such involvement built stakeholders’ confidence in evaluation and enhanced their willingness to accept and use findings. She observed,

...To deliver someone a product at the end, without really being involved, even if they don't want to, means that they find sometimes the findings even less palatable than they would have otherwise had they been told every two weeks “This is what we are finding” and those sorts of things.

‘Good evaluation’ asked “...the right questions” to the “...right people” in order to understand how and why programs operate as they do and outcomes achieved. ‘Good’ evaluation was responsive, flexible, and adaptive. It evolved in response to emergent issues, findings, or concerns.

Bridget’s evaluation approach was underpinned by the participatory and partnership values of kaupapa Māori research. However, she acknowledged limitations on the extent a true partnership approach could be achieved working inside government. Rather, she described herself seeking to practice evaluation in a way that reflected kaupapa Māori values and practices. For example, involving and keeping stakeholders informed throughout, involving stakeholders when possible in the conduct of evaluation (e.g. through conducting interviews), providing access to findings, and using evaluation to develop capability and capacity.

Bridget typically undertook mixed method evaluation in order to draw upon a range of evidence, perspectives, and meanings. Triangulation was considered important for verifying and validating findings, for cross-checking accuracy and validity, as well as a means to advance and deepen understanding.

### **Process use**

Bridget chose and discussed from her recent work, an example of the following type of process use that she felt had occurred through her practice - ‘The participation of evaluation participants and/or stakeholders in the evaluation process has enhanced their willingness to receive and/or act on evaluation findings’.

The project that Bridget drew her example from was an outcome evaluation of a program that had provided grant funding to projects operating across different sector areas throughout New Zealand. Government and independent experts, with appropriate content/subject area expertise, were contracted to undertake the analysis of available outcome data. The evaluation was facilitated using an on-line methodology.

As the program had funded different projects in specialist fields, Bridget believed that involving experts would support utilization. Through their participation, experts would become more engaged and committed to the evaluation and therefore more likely to disseminate and use the findings.

Bridget anticipated that the expert's involvement would result in the evaluation findings having a level of rigor, credibility, and authority that would be difficult for her stakeholders to ignore. Given her lack of expertise within the specialist areas funded, if she had drawn the conclusions, "...people could have just dismissed them right out of hand." She observed,

...that was the idea, to get a group of people who had the rigor and experience who could have a good debate and come up with some conclusions which could not be really challenged.

The experts' involvement was also intended to bridge,

...that gap of credibility that we often get...there's doubt whether as government evaluators we have the integrity and credibility to be up-front...in terms of our willingness to present stuff. I often feel that as government evaluators, people often look at us, they say, you never want to present stuff anyway...so it was like giving a bit more credibility to our profession, that in actual fact, we do, do this job, even though we know we may be up against obstacles in some areas, we do make attempts to make those evaluations useful and open and honest.

A high level of rigor and credibility was important within the findings as there were significant issues within the evaluand and it was important that the findings "...would be taken note of."

The on-line methodology used to conduct the evaluation required substantial project management. Bridget developed the methodology and on-line tools, as well as the

instructions the experts required to participate in the evaluation. This work was evaluative capability building. She worked in the role of evaluation ‘coach’ as she mentored the experts and developed their ability to engage in the methodology,

...To some extent I was coaching some of the expert panel...some of them sent me a summary of what they had wanted to say about a project and said to me “Is this the sort of thing you are looking for?” And I would say “Yes, entirely valid that you put all this down...

Bridget recognized that the methodology and deliberate involvement of experts required her to ‘give away’ some power and control over the evaluation process. It was her hope and intention that the evaluation would be an exemplar of how evaluation could be conducted openly and transparently within her organization. The strength of the methodology would in part come from the experts themselves having the autonomy to debate between themselves the significance and meaning of findings, “...I wasn't part of the expert panel who had a dialogue with one another...”

As intended, the participation and autonomy afforded the experts within the evaluation built their commitment to engage in the dissemination and utilization of findings. Bridget observed,

...the independent people really enjoyed the opportunity of being able to have a debate with government....about whether this was good practice or not...

...I certainly think it allowed a collective voice of independence to say “This is tardy...the independent people made no bones about [saying this]...

Bridget indicated that the involvement of experts brought the desired authority and credibility to the findings,

...It was a way to make the comments but to have them removed from me.

...[the experts] could directly challenge the representative from [government department] and say “No. no. no. This is not good science here.”

Bridget described evaluative capability building outcomes from the evaluation process. At one level she saw this happening through the guidance she provided in the use of

evidence to derive evaluative judgements of merit and worth. She reported that some experts, who themselves had roles in evaluation, had valued the process for enhancing their own understanding of what was needed “...at the very outset” when establishing monitoring and outcomes frameworks.

The evaluative judgements derived by the experts were “...validating” as Bridget felt that she would have herself reached similar conclusions to the experts. She had gained from the dialogical nature of the process as well as through the manner in which it opened up her practice,

...to other people's expectations and scrutiny...I liked that, because I actually don't work with other evaluators so I don't have other people peer evaluating my [practice]...

## **Reflections**

Bridget discussed an evaluation where she had intentionally involved expert stakeholders in conducting the evaluation to enhance the likelihood of findings use. She had anticipated that through their participation, stakeholders would develop ownership and commitment within the evaluation and therefore a greater willingness to disseminate and use the findings. She anticipated that the involvement of experts would bring an authority and credibility to the findings and that this would enhance the likelihood of findings use. Bridget saw the evaluation as an important opportunity for organizational learning regarding issues identified through the evaluation, and therefore considered her efforts to enhance findings use both important and intentional.

Her intentionality in using experts to enhance findings use is explainable through the literature that links utilization to participation and which shows that the authority and credibility of the evaluator supports use. Her intention linked to her general concern that evaluation be used to open up dialogue and debate in order to effect change and to enhance program outcomes.

Bridget’s intentionality may be further understood through consideration of the context within which she practiced evaluation. She had limited ability to influence findings use within her organization. She recognized there were wider factors that influenced stakeholders’ willingness use of findings. For example, the funding program evaluated had

been a policy enacted by a previous government and the evaluation findings may be of less interest to the current administration. She recognized this context enhanced her intent to achieve process use as a means of ensuring that stakeholders received value and utility from the evaluation process.

## **‘Chris’**

### **Background**

Chris’s pathway to becoming an evaluator followed a long career in public sector social research and during which time he became increasingly involved in evaluation. There was demand within government for evaluation that was able to “...express value and merit” and from managers seeking “...guidance as to whether what is being spent and what is being operated on, is a useful thing to do.”

Chris was drawn to evaluation as something that could directly influence decision making. It could do “...more people good...” and provide considerable “...utility if it is done right...” He drew satisfaction when evaluation was used directly to inform decision making and when it was possible to directly demonstrate the “...benefit” and “...positive effect” of evaluation.

Chris described his long career within government and commitment to public service to be underpinned by a belief that his work afforded the “...opportunity to lead to improvements...to help people...”

Chris’s current role was as a manager within a “...multi-disciplinary research team” within a government department. Evaluation was one of the core functions of the team, undertaken either in-house or through contracting external providers. He had responsibilities in coaching, mentoring, and managerial support roles.

The evaluation team was positioned within an operationally focused environment within which evaluation played a key role in informing decision making. The evaluation function ranged from determining the “...operational fit”, implementation, and initial impacts of new initiatives, to determining outcomes, merit, and worth and the future direction of more established programs. The work essentially focused on determining “...is this a good thing for [government department] to be doing?”

Chris described the evaluation program having a strong focus on utility and utilization, “...at the end of the day I would question why you would do evaluation in this type of environment if it wasn't.” However, he acknowledged that evaluation was also sometimes conducted for political reasons, for example, to comply with Cabinet directives or to justify decisions already made.

## Evaluation practice

Chris described evaluation as the process of determining merit and value. While asserting that judgements should be based on “...solid evidence”, he recognized that the evaluation process was also “...tempered with practical realities”. He accepted that in the “...real world”, there will always be “...some uncertainty” in evaluative judgements that the evaluator may never completely “...nail...down.”

Evaluation had a role in informing “...better outcomes”. However, desired outcomes could be defined and understood differently for different stakeholder groups. There needed to be clarity regarding whose outcomes were being examined in any particular evaluation.

Chris had long been aware of ‘process use’ and that evaluation could itself be an intervention. An interview could trigger “...off a whole lot of thought stuff. Often things have been put together that they might not have thought about before...” He observed,

...you participate as a practitioner in a group discussion and people will say at the end of it “That was really interesting. It raised things I didn't think about.”...someone in a group discussion will say something and others will say “Wow. Okay. I didn't think you could use it like that.”...so it sort of seeps into your consciousness that the whole research process can actually be having other effects.

Chris talked about ‘process use’ when he identified evaluation as a mutual learning process. It was a process through which “...evaluators learn all the time.” Evaluators were able to “...use that learning to add value.” He observed that an appropriately designed and methodology sound evaluation may have little utilization if there was a failure to “...socialize” the evaluation “...all the way down the line.” This meant involving end-users through the evaluation process, providing them continuous opportunities to learn,

...it gives them time to socialize the results in their own minds. They don't get surprises and so you don't get defensive behaviour and it allows everyone space to work through issues as they are emerging.

Chris described ‘process use’ through observing how evaluation could assist to ‘socialize’ new initiatives with program staff and other internal stakeholders. Through participating in evaluative activity such as a surveys and interviews, stakeholders had to

think about what there were or were not doing. Such reflection helped to progress new initiatives along.

Reflecting his personal concern for utilization and the utilization focused environment within which he worked, Chris described ‘good’ evaluation as having utility. It provided clear understanding of merit and value and provided direction and informed decisions. There was “...little point expending resources and time and all of those other things if there is no utility for this work...”

Chris identified timeliness and relevance as two factors supporting utilization. Evaluation should be able to “...tell people the things they need to know when they need it...” ‘Good’ evaluation provided utilizable recommendations, meaning they were practical, feasible, reasonable, and achievable. They were inevitably grounded in an understanding of context. Internal evaluators were able to bring such understanding to the evaluation process as well as to the support and guidance they provided to external evaluators.

Chris described his evaluation approach as necessarily pragmatic, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods. He was primarily concerned with “...getting the right information to our business owners in a timely, useful way...”

Internal clients were typically involved in the evaluation process “...all the way down the line.” This meant from design, through on-going receipt of emerging findings, to participation in interpreting the meaning of findings, implications, and conclusions. Other government stakeholders were involved or kept informed of projects as appropriate. User-groups and other stakeholders were typically informed or consulted through a “...consumer feedback approach” which utilised mechanisms such as reference groups.

### **Process use**

Chris chose and discussed from his recent work, an example of the following type of process use that he felt was particularly important and intentional in his practice - “The participation of evaluation participants and/or stakeholders in the evaluation process has helped program and/or organizational development?”

Chris drew from an evaluation of a pilot program that sought to change the workplace practice of a group of health professionals. Behaviour change was a key outcome sought and required organizational development to occur. These outcomes required the

participation of the stakeholder group in the pilot and the evaluation. Participation was a means through which stakeholders could build understanding of the pilot and the evaluation and the potential benefits of the intended behaviour change. Such understanding would enhance the likelihood of stakeholders accepting and adopting intended change.

The participation of stakeholders in the evaluation was central to achieving desired organizational development and was therefore both important and intentionally sought through the evaluation process. Chris observed,

...To get behaviour change you just don't just wave a magic stick. You have to have people understanding and committed to actually doing it and then doing it over time.

Chris's motivation and intention to involve stakeholders in the evaluation followed his concern that evaluation be useful and used by his organization. The evaluation,

...had to be able to give some insights into the usefulness or otherwise in terms of outcomes of a pilot program...therefore we had to ensure utility...[otherwise]...on one level Program Managers don't have the information they need. On another level it's never a good look for evaluation if we come back and say we actually don't know or we don't deliver it. Or we are delivering information that they just can't use.

A range of practices and roles were intentionally undertaken within the evaluation to build stakeholder participation and to effect organizational development. Without their participation, it would have been difficult to get necessary commitment and buy-in from stakeholders in both the pilot and the evaluation. Without commitment and buy-in, the ability of the evaluation to deliver clear understanding of merit and worth would be compromised, therefore undermining utility for the commissioning agency.

An evaluation steering group comprising selected members of the professional stakeholder group was established. Members undertook roles in reviewing and advising on the pilot and evaluation design, as well as in reviewing, interpreting, and commenting on findings. Internal stakeholders were involved through advising on design, reviewing findings, and participating in information exchange workshops. Interim and emerging findings were regularly disseminated to other stakeholders.

Chris reported a range of outcomes from the participatory practices intentionally employed within the evaluation. The participation of stakeholders enhanced their understanding, confidence, and acceptance of the evaluation and its findings. The evaluation was “...less frightening” and more credible. Ownership was enhanced, “...they have contributed to the questions...So they feel they own them. And then they feel that this isn't being done to them.” Further,

...it wasn't seen to be the man from Head Office appearing. This was people that they knew, because the evaluators were present early on, so these were not strange faces...turning up [to their place of work] asking them questions.

Participation enabled stakeholders to “...actually see and have hands on around the benefits...” Stakeholders’ attention and interest in the pilot was maintained through their participation in evaluative activities. Their participation provided them on-going opportunities to re-engage with the aims of the pilot, the required change, and intended outcomes. Participation provided opportunities for stakeholders to reflect on the changes and development achieved through the pilot and reinforced the behaviour and organizational change sought.

The participatory process also maintained the level of commitment and interest required from stakeholders in the evaluation,

...they participated well. They didn't make themselves unavailable...they sort of kept coming back...[they didn't] “switch off” or anything like that.

## **Reflections**

Chris’s intentionally used stakeholder participation to support organizational development. He believed that participation was central to achieving desired outcomes from the pilot program and evaluation he discussed. His participatory approach reflected his core concern that evaluation is used and provides organizational utility. His evaluation practice generally was focused on ensuring that evaluation linked to and informed policy and program development. He firmly believed that for “...evaluation to survive...[it must] keep producing things. It actually has to have a use.”

Reflecting later on his concern for utility, Chris observed,

Absolutely there is a need to demonstrate utility because if you can't demonstrate utility in the modern government environment you've got senior...and quite rightly, senior managers saying why are we expending these resources, what actually is the purpose...unless you have utility, you are calling into question the whole area of evaluation, because unless there is utility...well why should we do this because it doesn't actually produce anything useful, is often something that you will hear.

Chris understood that stakeholder participation was key to the pilot initiative and evaluation eventually providing value and utility for his organization. The evaluation process was not understood here as a discrete event, delivering a one-off 'product' through findings. Rather, evaluation was understood as a process that should be continuously 'socialised' through internal and external stakeholders. Issues of timing, relevance, and decision-making requirements needed to be addressed. The process needed to build stakeholder understanding of the evaluation process and ownership,

...let's just say you have a client or stakeholder who is only interested in the survey, what I would argue with my colleagues is that you actually haven't engaged them properly...you haven't really got a client on board who can really see the vision of what you are trying to do and I always hark back to the old adage, that the journey of evaluation is just as important as the end destination, so when you have a client that is only interested in the end destination, to me they are going to miss out on a lot and they are either afraid of the research process or they are going through it as a matter of compliance or something else, and when you have someone who is actually involved in the intervention or program and wants to understand more about it, it is our role as evaluators to ensure that we wrap them into it.

Further,

...the risk here...you could describe it as the 'moses' syndrome...almost the worse and risky thing for evaluation, the evaluators go away, come back sometime later with the tablets of stone, everyone goes, that's all very interesting, we have moved on now...that doesn't do evaluation any good at all, it's a risk to the whole profession.

In the evaluation example discussed, evaluation was understood as a process that enabled stakeholders to reflect upon desired behaviour change and the organizational

development necessary for this change to occur. Such reflection was considered important in building stakeholders' understanding and future commitment to intended change.

Chris believed that behaviour change was best achieved through participatory and enabling processes, rather than being forced or imposed upon stakeholders. Evaluation was seen as an integral part of the change process he described and therefore that also needing to be participatory and enabling. The value of a participatory approach was reinforced to Chris as delivering appropriate organizational utility and value,

...You know that you are doing well or it's useful when business owners keep coming back and wanting more...

...business owners who are anxiously waiting for the next set of results, all of that sort of stuff, then you know that you're getting utility and you know you are getting some traction.

## **‘Claire’**

### **Background**

Claire’s pathway to becoming an evaluator followed employment where she had undertaken ‘evaluation type’ activities and then doctoral level study of evaluation. Her doctoral studies provided a ‘light bulb’ moment when she came to appreciate the value, utility, and “...absolute sense” of evaluation as a means and process for determining merit and worth.

Claire hoped her work would contribute to “...[changing] the world in some way.” Infusing “...the world with the value of evaluative thought” was considered one way she could contribute to change, particularly through developing the evaluative capability of organizations. Such development enhanced organizational effectiveness and capacity for change. It was also a means of achieving sustained and longer term use of evaluation.

Following her PhD studies, Claire held academic positions in evaluation. She then established herself as an independent evaluation consultant. Working as a consultant enabled Claire to work across different public sector areas and provided her a degree of independence, flexibility, and variety within her practice.

Claire described more recently focusing on assisting organizations to integrate evaluative thinking and processes within their work and organizational systems. This work was more strategic rather than operational. It was concerned with supporting organizations to incorporate evaluative thinking into strategic thinking and the implementation and refinement of strategy. Claire stressed that this work was not about teaching people or organizations to ‘do evaluation’, but rather was focused on building evaluative thinking and capability more generally into organizational activity, management, and leadership.

### **Evaluation practice**

Claire described evaluation as the process of identifying, asking, and answering evaluative questions about merit and worth. ‘Good’ evaluation was explicit and transparent about the evaluative reasoning and logic that lead descriptive findings to evaluative judgements. Such transparency required stakeholders to share understanding about the criteria and performance standards underpinning evaluative judgements. Such understanding enabled

the more effective use of evaluation for accountability purposes and greater consistency across stakeholders in the interpretation of evaluation data to determine merit and worth.

‘Good’ evaluation provided credible, valid, useful, and justifiable findings. These attributes linked to the quality of the evaluative reasoning and logic underpinning the evaluation.

Claire described her evaluation approach as explicitly “...evaluative”. This meant that her practice was intentionally shaped by the requirement for evaluation to provide clear and defensible evaluative determinations of merit and worth. She designed data collection tools so they derived data that readily supported evaluative interpretation rather than using “off the shelf” tools (e.g. validated scales) that were harder to interpret evaluatively.

Claire did not consider herself to be a “...dyed in wool” participatory evaluator. However, her more recent practice was “...quite participatory,” partly because she was typically working in areas outside her own content expertise, and partly because participation and relationship were important determinants of evaluation quality within the New Zealand context. There was an emphasis on “...the who rather than the what.” It was important that stakeholder perspectives and values informed evaluation design as well as the interpretation of findings. She observed,

It’s about credibility, validity and utility in the end...if those three things are compromised, if we skip the participation aspect, particularly in this country...just because of the way we think about these things...compared to the states, for example, where people have much more respect for credentials and power, we don’t give a \*\*\*\* about that, we just want to see the content of what people can do, we want to see them in action and hear them thinking on their feet, so it is that interaction that helps us believe this is something worth listening to, not a resume full of fancy letters.

Claire understood that stakeholder participation built stakeholder acceptance and ownership within the evaluation process and that these outcomes ultimately supported findings use. Claire recognized that stakeholder participation helped to develop shared understanding across stakeholders about underlying evaluative reasoning and logic. Participation was also a means of enhancing the capability of stakeholders to engage meaningfully in the evaluation process, to utilize evaluative tools, interpret and use

evaluative findings appropriately, and ultimately to derive value and utility from evaluation. She noted,

...I'm not necessarily always looking for process use, but I'm thinking, how am I going to get them to buy into the findings and one way to do that is to make sure that their voices are heard when we are defining what quality and value mean, and that they are involved in interpretations of the stuff that they might consider contentious and that they might resist when I trot out at the end of the story...it's partly about what is going to make them believe the findings and actually use them and actually do something about them rather than just building evaluative capability.

### **Process use**

Claire chose and discussed from her recent work, an example of the following type of process use that she felt was particularly important and intentional in her practice – ‘The participation of evaluation participants and/or stakeholders in the evaluation process has developed their ability to think and act ‘evaluatively (e.g. use evaluation logic and questioning)’.

The evaluation project from which Claire drew her example sat within the education sector. It was concerned with building a user friendly evaluation framework and methodology that would eventually be used independently by sector stakeholders to collect and interpret evaluation data. Stakeholders involved in building the framework and methodology were also to train others in its use. The capability of stakeholders to both use and train others in the use of the framework and methodology was therefore central to the overall success of the project.

Claire recognized that a participatory approach was required in order that the expertise and values of key stakeholders would inform the development of the framework and methodology. This input was critical for building the credibility and validity of the framework/methodology in the eyes of stakeholders and their acceptance and future use of it. She recognized that the capability of stakeholders to use and train others in the use of the framework/methodology required their shared understanding of the evaluative reasoning and logic underpinning it and how it would ‘work’. She therefore adopted a participatory approach that intentionally involved and ‘exposed’ stakeholders to the

reasoning and logic underpinning the framework/methodology. She saw this experiential learning key to building the skills and understanding that stakeholders would need to use and train others in the framework/methodology.

Claire's intentional development of the evaluative capability of stakeholders was therefore mandated as a core objective of the evaluation she discussed. However, her intention also linked to her concern that evaluation be 'evaluative', credible, valid, and ultimately used in an on-going and sustainable way. She understood that the extent stakeholders had shared understanding about the reasoning and logic underpinning the framework/methodology would be crucial to the framework eventually providing credible and reliable findings that would be used. Building the evaluative capability and understanding of stakeholders would enhance their ability to use the framework/methodology and resultant findings appropriately. This would help stakeholders to engage in and use evaluation to make a difference in a way not previously available to them. It would also help to ensure that evaluation had sustained and longer term utilization.

Claire intentionally undertook a range of practices and roles within her example to build the evaluative capability of stakeholders. She initially facilitated the collaborative development of a program logic model. Stakeholders were also involved in identifying the evaluative criteria, performance standards, and rubrics used to judge the merit and worth of prioritised processes and outcomes. Claire understood and described this participation as an intentional process of evaluative capability building. The process equipped stakeholders with the skills and understanding required to use the evaluation methodology/framework and to critically interpret resultant data. As a result, stakeholders were better able to communicate and explain the evaluation findings to others and to use the evaluation methodology independently in other contexts.

Throughout the capability building process, Claire described herself undertaking roles as facilitator, coach, synthesiser, critical friend, and co-learner. Her use of evaluative questions appeared central to the stakeholder learning and capability development that occurred. Such questioning forced stakeholders to re-examine and as necessary, revise existing knowledge, beliefs, and meanings they held about the evaluand. This process delivered both learning and evaluative capability development.

Claire also positioned herself as a co-learner throughout the evaluation process. Acknowledging she lacked content knowledge, she described her use of ‘naive’ questions a way of drawing out and positioning the content expert knowledge of stakeholders within the evaluation framework/methodology. Claire facilitated this process in a way that built stakeholder ownership and further enhanced their willingness to engage in the evaluation process.

## **Reflections**

Claire’s example of process use occurred within an evaluation that was concerned with building an evaluation framework and methodology that was to be used by stakeholders to collect and use evaluation data. The project sought to develop a framework/methodology that would become an integral part of day-to-day business and would deliver on-going value and utility for stakeholders.

Building the evaluative capability of stakeholders to use the framework/methodology was an explicit objective. Capability development therefore did not occur alongside or as part of an evaluation in the manner of how process use is typically described in the literature. Rather, it “...was the whole point” of the project and the project was itself more reflective of a “...train the trainer” model.

Given the above, the example discussed may not be ‘process use’ if we consider how the concept has been described in the predominantly North American literature. Claire reflected that how process use is framed and understood in the US context may be less relevant and appropriate to the New Zealand context. She observed that evaluation in the US tends to be focused on the external evaluation of an discrete evaluand. This may help to explain why process use is predominantly framed in the literature as something that occurs alongside evaluation as an additional outcome. In comparison, she saw evaluation in Australasia as something that often occurred alongside programs and was more infused into everyday organizational operation and management. In this context, evaluation may be referred to as an activity or process rather than a discrete, finite project.

Claire reflected on how connectivity/relationship was important in determining evaluation quality in New Zealand. She observed,

...we live in a small country that values connections and we actually have to be connected in order to be critical...it's kind of like, only your best friend can criticize you and expect to be heard.

Reflecting on this context, Claire described herself "...mentally pushing back" against the concept of process use as currently defined in the literature. Evaluation practice in New Zealand was more about,

...rolling in and identifying the needs of the client and meeting them whatever they happen to be...so whether you call it 'process use' or whether you call it evaluative capability or evaluative thinking or building an evaluative culture...any number of a range of things...I think a lot of it is about building evaluative capability...we have done our fair share of 'evaluations' and both sides, client sides and evaluator side, have seen and experienced some frustration with how that hasn't really gone great...if you ask most clients, of all the money they have spent on evaluation over the last five years, what percentage of that would they consider money well spent, not much of it I would imagine, 5-10% maybe if we are lucky. That's brought us to a rethink as to what's actually needed.

Claire believed her evaluation example was indicative of growing realization by commissioners in New Zealand that in order to maximise value and utility from evaluation they needed to themselves become more informed commissioners of evaluation. Simply being skilled in contracting technically competent evaluation did not assure that evaluation would deliver what organizations required. It may not be 'evaluations' per se that were required to improve program and policy outcomes but rather an enhancement of the evaluative logic and thinking within policy and program development. This explains Claire's interest and involvement in building evaluative capability within stakeholder organizations.

Claire believed that evaluation should use explicit evaluative reasoning and logic. Through her experience, she had come to see that in order for stakeholders to "...get" evaluation and to use it, they needed to understand how the evaluation process derived evaluative judgements. This understanding was best developed by involving stakeholders in the process of developing evaluative logic and frameworks. The evaluation she discussed was participatory and based on experiential learning principles. Such a process is likely to support process use outcomes such as communication and shared understanding, shared

focus on common objectives, the development of evaluative capability, organizational development, and so on.

In the evaluation described by Claire, the process of developing the evaluation framework/methodology was itself an intervention that shaped and re-shaped stakeholders' understanding of how the merit and worth of educational interventions could be assessed. This learning constitutes a form of evaluative capability building. The evaluation process was highly dialogical, with evaluative questioning intentionally used to facilitate the critical reflection upon action required to develop shared understanding about the intervention and how judgments of merit and worth could be determined. Claire's approach was facilitative and enabling. The expertise and knowledge of stakeholders was drawn out, integrated, and reflected in the framework/methodology. This process built stakeholder engagement and ownership within the process and reportedly new regard for the value and utility of evaluation.

## **‘Dianne’**

### **Background**

Dianne’s pathway to becoming an evaluator followed tertiary study in law and social sciences and then policy, research, and evaluation roles within government. She was drawn to evaluation as it combined her interests in conceptual and intellectual thinking, policy, and practice. It used concepts and theory to progress understanding of performance and outcomes from public policy and programs. She was drawn to evaluation as a means of determining whether the public service was performing fairly, justly, and effectively.

Dianne was committed to using evaluation in support of public service. Her long career within government had been underpinned by “...values to do with looking after each other” as well as a belief in “...good government.” She described herself “...doing research and evaluation for New Zealand.” This meant research and evaluation that supported public sector performance that met desired economic and social outcomes. She enjoyed working within government because it provided interesting and varied work as well as the opportunity to build content specific knowledge.

Dianne managed the evaluation program within a large government organization. The evaluation function within the organization had shifted from an initial focus on internal self-review and auditing to a greater focus on outcomes and using evaluation for strategic purposes.

### **Evaluation practice**

Dianne described evaluation as the assessment of achievement against intent, “...you want to do something, are you managing to do it or not and with what impacts?” She also discussed the formative use of evaluation, where evaluation was used to support policy and program development, evaluative thinking, and the building of evaluative capability.

Dianne saw her evaluation practice very much focused on supporting her organization to meet its roles and responsibilities. Utilization was a key goal. She emphasized the importance of asking “...important questions” and getting answers “...taken notice of...” and “...used if there are things to be changed.”

Dianne recognized that evaluation was used and had influence over thinking and practice within her organization in a number of ways. Utilization often occurred “...over time” and through evaluation feeding “...into thinking around where things should go in the future...” She recognized that process use often occurred through her work,

...I think the immediate utility and satisfaction [from evaluation]...actually comes at the front end of an evaluation when it is being designed...there's a lot of discussion. We are feeding ideas to them, feeding information to them...it's just a conversation basically and they are learning and we are learning and they are adapting what they are doing at the time.

She recognized that logic modelling often generated process use learning and development. Stakeholders,

...would suddenly work [it] out “Oh yes, that's what we're doing and why we are doing it. Actually that might not work but something else will work if we [did it this way].”

With longer evaluations,

...a lot of the knowledge and learning...[happens] along the way.

Dianne’s description of ‘good’ evaluation reflected her concern for utilization. ‘Good evaluation’ focused on “...something that's worthwhile...there's some point doing it...there are some important questions involved...” ‘Good’ evaluation was based on solid understanding of relevant context, theory, history, concepts, policy, and interactions between contributing factors. Dianne described the importance of evaluation advancing understanding of her organization’s work and performance within a wider context. ‘Good’ evaluation provided value and utility at this higher level. It was based on appropriate understanding of the issues, had appropriate focus, engaged critical thinking, and provided credible evidence.

Dianne described the evaluation she conducted as very much shaped and focused by organizational needs, issues, and questions. The approach was pragmatic as there was a focus on getting evaluation undertaken and on working collaboratively with internal stakeholders. Evaluations were informed by knowledge of subject, content, and context and as far as possible drew on existing data. For example, her organization was increasingly

using administrative data as advances in databases and computing enhanced the capability and capacity of the organization to use this data for evaluation purposes.

As internal evaluators, the evaluation team was sensitive to organizational readiness and support for evaluation and was able to use this to develop organizational engagement in the process. She observed,

...because we are in the strategic area we can...see what's coming...what's going to be important...we hear the conversations and the discussions...at some point, this is something that's worthwhile evaluating. So we start...positioning ourselves and we are kind of ready to do it and get the support from people...

However, as internal evaluators, the evaluation team also worked hard to ensure the independence and objectivity of their work and that conclusions and recommendations were grounded in evidence.

Dianne described the evaluation approach within her organization as naturally participatory, particularly during planning stages when there was a high level of consultation with internal stakeholders, "...to find out what the issues are and how to frame them." Findings were typically shared with stakeholders, meanings and implications discussed, dissemination and communication strategies collectively developed.

Dianne understood that stakeholder participation supported evaluation use through building evaluation quality, relevance, credibility, and validity. Stakeholder participation was key to ensuring there was shared understanding of relevant issues and context, evaluability, need, aims, questions, and potential value, "...so at the end...there are people who are interested in it, will add value to our interpretation, and ....[will] use it."

### **Process use**

Dianne chose and discussed from her recent work, an example of the following type of process use that she felt was particularly important and intentional in her practice - "The participation of evaluation participants and/or stakeholders in the evaluation process has enhanced their willingness to receive and/or act on evaluation findings'.

The project from which Diane drew her example was an outcome evaluation of a key policy/program area within her organization. The evaluation had been developed and

conducted over a number of years. Its findings were of particular importance and interest to a wide range of external stakeholders.

Dianne's selection of this example of process use – how stakeholder participation supports findings use – reflected her views on 'good' evaluation, her interest in using evaluation for accountability purposes, and her concern for utilization.

The policy area focused on within the evaluation was core to the direction and activity of her organization. It was also "...important to New Zealand, the New Zealand economy." The evaluation was therefore important and an appropriate use of evaluation resources. It was contributing to government accountability and 'good' government.

There was "...a very definite external constituency" impacted by the policy. Support and acceptance of the evaluation by these stakeholders was essential should they use it. Ensuring their participation was key to achieving this. It was also important in meeting the government's obligations to develop and maintain positive relationships with key stakeholders.

Stakeholder participation in the evaluation was enabled through the establishment of an evaluation steering committee. Members were formally invited to participate by the "...Deputy Commissioner", a high level process described by Dianne as a deliberate signifier that the evaluation and stakeholder relationships were "...significant" and "...important". Dianne anticipated this signal would in turn generate "...senior management buy-in to the topic" and that this would build internal support and use.

Dianne understood that stakeholder participation, enabled through the committee, would work to support utilization in a number of ways. Stakeholders had a "...point of view" that needed to be taken into account to ensure that the evaluation addressed important and useful questions. This was a "...quality assurance kind of process." It would be "...kind of foolish..." to conduct the evaluation without such input.

The evaluation addressed a highly technical issue and employed a complex methodology. Building stakeholders' understanding of the purpose, focus, and eventual value of the evaluation was therefore also likely to support use, "...so that they could appreciate what they were getting eventually." Stakeholder participation was also understood as enabling the evaluation to remain informed of relevant developments within

the policy area evaluated as well as informing decisions about key channels for disseminating findings.

Dianne understood that stakeholder participation would reduce the likelihood that stakeholders would later critique the evaluation and its findings. Providing opportunities for stakeholders to shape the evaluation and how findings were interpreted and used, would build their support and use. Inviting stakeholders to consider whether the data made “...sense” from their perspective would reduce the likelihood of the findings being later criticized or rejected by them.

In addition to the enhanced willingness of stakeholders to receive and/or act on the evaluation findings, Dianne described other outcomes from stakeholder participation in the evaluation example she discussed. Their participation and support had reinforced her confidence that the evaluation was “...doing the right thing...” and “...was worth doing...” External stakeholders had been able to have some influence over methodological decisions and this had enhanced the extent they considered the findings credible and useful. Their influence further increased her confidence in the evaluation design, the judgments derived from the findings, and subsequently the dissemination of the findings.

The level of external support for the evaluation achieved through the steering committee had also supported the extent internal stakeholders saw the evaluation as important and significant. Without such support, some internal stakeholders may have considered the work more “...tangential to their work” and of less interest or value to them.

The evaluation was conducted within an organizational context where “...people change jobs a lot...” and where there was frequent “...changing of personnel...” Internal stakeholder representation on the committee therefore provided a consistent level of internal involvement and interest that also supported eventual utilization. Through their participation, the internal stakeholder was able to identify further areas where the findings had value and utility within the organisation. Reflecting on this, Dianne observed that unlike evaluation commissioned to an external evaluator, the value, need, or client for internal evaluation was not always clear. Internal evaluators often had to work hard at demonstrating the value and benefits of evaluation.

## Reflections

Dianne's evaluation practice was shaped by concerns for findings use and for using evaluation to inform and demonstrate 'good government'. She was drawn to evaluation as a means of determining whether the government was achieving intended outcomes fairly, justly, and effectively. Evaluation also helped to ensure that the government was acting in accordance with core roles, responsibilities, aims, and objectives.

In seeking for her work to be used, Dianne was committed to focusing evaluation resources on important and worthwhile questions. She understood that the participation of stakeholders in the evaluation process supported and enhanced utilization. Her intentional establishment of a steering committee to support stakeholder participation is a commonly used strategy within the public sector when undertaking evaluation projects of significance. Dianne described how the participatory processes enabled by the committee built stakeholder confidence, acceptance, and ownership within the evaluation and supported the eventual use of findings.

The example of process use discussed by Dianne focused on the use of a formal steering committee. However, her team used a range of mechanisms to facilitate stakeholder participation in the evaluation process. Team member worked closely with internal stakeholders. Through such collaboration, it was often difficult to distinguish the process use generated. Subsequent learning and development often became integrated and part of day-to-day operations and understanding.

## **'Jack'**

### **Background**

Jack's pathway to evaluation followed an arts degree and post-graduate diploma that led to employment in social services, education, and development. He first become involved in evaluative activities when as a manager he was,

...often having to put forward the case for why, or you felt that what you were doing was good, or how to get funding applications, so you started to have to think at another level of what's taking place here.

His work led to his involvement in further research activities such as needs assessments. He acknowledged at this time having limited understanding of evaluation. He was working, "...by the seat of my pants." He later established himself as a contract researcher and continued to undertake evaluative activities such as organizational reviews. Drawn to evaluation as a tool that could support development, he undertook post-graduate studies in evaluation. This training was "...another way in which to become more effective and honed as a practitioner to bring about change".

Reflecting on his decision to work as an independent contractor, Jack recognized that this was partly a lifestyle decision as well as one that enabled him to work in accordance with his values. He described his practice as an extension of his values. His independence enabled him some control over who he worked with, "...Do they seem to have similar values ...". He recalled situations where his values had been in conflict with those of his employer. In one case, this had led him to leave the company concerned,

...We weighted things differently, the way in which I worked and my philosophy...ended up with this awful conflict and I just thought...oh, I don't want to do that.

...if you don't do something your heart's in then you sort of die at some level and that rolls into the way you work and the way you relate and therefore you will be less likely to bring about change...

Decisions about whether to get involved in projects were considered at a "...gut level" and in response to questions such as "...would my heart be in it." He accepted not all work

opportunities would align perfectly with his values. However, being clear about his values meant that any decision to take work was an informed and conscious one,

...Sometimes there's the financial pressure where you take something... but even then it's conscious. You might go, that's a bread and butter job...I don't know if I would do it if I had other choices financially and I felt less pressure, then I might decline that...

Having a 'bottom line' meant rejecting some work possibilities. He had ruled out working for one government department because of "...their way, their philosophy." Working for them would be "...a line too far."

Jack communicated the values he brought to his practice to stakeholders at the start of any working relationship, "...when I put in a proposal I now include 'these are my professional principles.' And I feel accountable to these". He reviewed the values, as stated, generally after completing projects,

...are they still relevant? Do they need to be modified as a result of this experience I've just had? Have there been some ethical issues? Do I need to revise some...?

Integrity was a fundamental principle. This meant that Jack always sought to practice "...from a sense of my core identity...I'm not compromising something that's fundamental in myself." He was committed to ensuring that his practice supported development and change, both within himself as well as within the evaluand and stakeholders,

...that what I do is developmental of myself, I include myself in that, but it's developing of people and of systems...

...That what I do makes a difference and that in my judgment something better results from what I do, and equally therefore the opposite would be valid; [that] it doesn't cause harm or diminish, but that it's meaningful.

Change and development had been a strong commitment and motivation throughout Jack's personal and professional life, "...change is kind of like an underlying focus of my career." Reflecting on previous roles in education he observed, "...the thing that used to excite me was seeing development in a child, in an adult..." Such change could also change him,

...There's something that gets really deeply touched about that and that includes myself. That I am changed in a better way and I feel bigger and better.

Jack's "...core identity" and "...core spirit" were grounded in a belief that change was essential to growth and well-being,

...People who don't grow seem to...organizations that don't grow, they sort of become dead. And I don't think that's what we are supposed to be here for at some sort of spiritual level. I think that we are supposed to develop.

A relationship value or ethic also underpinned his practice,

...relationships that are not superficial but they have meaning and have a level of honesty in them, a willingness to be honest, but caring for relationships, sustaining relationships over time, see the real importance of that.

Respectful relationships and processes were identified as core values,

...respect for the reality, the choices, the way of seeing the world that someone else has. Included in that is again that cross cultural thing, is being really conscious of my own world view, reality, so that I can minimise the impact of that on the person.

Jack also emphasised the importance of his practice being "...systematic", "...well-founded", robust, that "...I'm not just rolling something out that's an idea...I've thought it through."

### **Evaluation practice**

Jack considered a number of activities, not traditionally associated with evaluation, to be evaluative. For example, when writing poetry,

...You are sort of making some judgment on reality and expressing it...something about that expression is something good. There's a sort of quality or merit in that.

His work providing professional supervision was also regarded as being evaluative,

...making some judgment and sharing that co-judging with the person in terms of what is taking place and then out of that some action like...looking at how sound is

the process, will it stand up...what am I bringing to it, my own values...am I imposing it?

Evaluation was therefore considered only one of many activities that could support individual, organizational, or system development,

...that's why I have resisted sometimes being labelled an evaluator because I see it as a way and only a way...

...[evaluation is] a tool, it's one of the tools and it's not always the best tool.

Evaluation judged "...the merit of something." Value was "...based on some rationale." Evaluation contributed to development. It,

...develops the system, the person, or the organization through that activity. So that's my values, that's why I got into it.

While having few opportunities to undertake developmental evaluation, core principles of the approach underpinned his practice. He understood and used evaluation as a tool and process to enable critical reflection and evaluative judgment. Evaluation had a "...change focus." However, development and change was not necessarily always about continuation,

...sometimes systems need to collapse, that's part of development as well...that collapse of systems may be exactly what needs to happen and organizations and individuals. Their time may have come.

Utilization was fundamental to 'good' evaluation. Good evaluation supported accountability through affecting transparency and openness. The scrutiny of evaluation meant that systems were "...open and there is some judgment being made..." Through these processes and outcomes, evaluation supported a,

...participatory society...evaluation opens systems up, people up, organizations up to scrutiny, and therefore that's good in terms of power and in terms of efficiency...

...It actually makes for a more effective system if you are more basing judgments on reality, rather than just notions and theories or ideologies...

Good evaluation was also transparent and participatory,

...I think transparency is like a principle all the way through, that it needs to be transparent to the people involved, the stakeholders.

The use of evaluation rubrics followed this principle when evaluative criteria were collectively determined and transparent. Such openness addressed any claim of bias or capture through participatory approaches,

...someone else would come to the same judgment, or a similar judgment at least, with the same data, because we've agreed at the beginning before the process started what excellent looked like. If I have followed good process, rigorous process, that would counter that capture sort of stuff.

Transparency was reflected in other areas of Jack's understanding and approach to evaluation. He was open about the values and beliefs that underpinned his practice. Evaluation was a process that opened up systems for scrutiny. He agreed that the basis for determining merit and value should be collectively determined through transparent processes.

Jack's concern for openness inevitably led him to an evaluation approach that was participatory and inclusive. This approach was also ethical as it built valid and credible evaluation. A minimum participatory standard was that significant stakeholders had the opportunity to shape or at least respond to the design, purpose, and use of evaluation.

Jack fundamentally sought a participatory approach because he believed that the "...way in which something is done" had the potential to affect development outcomes,

...If we focus on the ethical and put that to the fore and say that's a primary reason, then it takes away from my other fundamental belief that that's actually the best way, it's the most efficient way, the most effective way to operate because you are creating the right conditions for that person, that system...

...if you can create a group of people where there is respect, where there is conversation, where there is honesty and openness...that system...I believe, is more likely to develop.

Process was “...kind of like the ground from which change takes place.” Process was good not only because it was ethical but “...good as in better outcomes, good as in the pot grows, that the system improves...” Therefore, “...the process is as important as the outcome and if you have strong process, the outcomes can change.” In this regard, Jack understood the evaluation process could itself be transformative. It could draw out what already exists. Evaluation,

...may produce those unintentional and quite positive outcomes that are creative and that the knowledge is often residing in the system if you put the right conditions.

Jack described his evaluation approach as critical, reflexive, and based on evaluation logic. He sought to address power and powerlessness. He was reflexive about his own influence or bias within the process. Evaluation knowledge was constructed and could potentially favour certain perspectives and interpretive lenses over others. Evaluation should represent multiple perspectives and realities. This helped explain his participatory and inclusive practice. At times, he was compelled to act as an advocate.

Jack emphasised the importance of an open and inclusive approach when working with disempowered groups, for example, refugees,

...these are people who have experienced massive consequences of not being involved and having their rights majorly destroyed or affected and harmed through that.

He personally empathized with those who had lost rights “...I think I have a particular kind of emotional or passionate commitment around that.” In such context, stakeholder participation was important through “...all significant stages.” Capacity building was important “...so that's that developmental stream, always looking for opportunities to develop and that's process use too...”

Jack was drawn to and more comfortable with qualitative evaluation methods, although he recognized the value and utility of mixed methods. Qualitative methods were appropriate for understanding constructed realities and multiple perspectives and when working cross-culturally. Quantitative methods could provide robustness and strengthen perceived credibility. Following these considerations, Jack recognized his approach was

pragmatic. Methods were chosen on the basis of what was most likely to support utilization given the evaluation context,

...what's the stakeholders looking towards the end of this evaluation, what's going to bring about that the decision makers will say yeah, this is valid and we need to take some action around it.

Jack recognized that process use was integral to his understanding and practice of evaluation. His intention to use the evaluation process to build stakeholder capability was itself a concern for process use. The evaluation process was an “...interaction” that could have positive or negative impacts on stakeholders. If the evaluator was not conscious of this, “...then you can get a whole lot of unintentional, probably negative [outcomes].” Reflecting values previously described, Jack described the evaluator having an obligation to ensure that the evaluation process was respectful, responsive, and reflexive, “... it's an environment of respect...respect for the reality, the choices, the way of seeing the world that someone else has.”

### **Process use**

Jack chose and discussed from his recent work an example of the following types of process use that he felt were particularly important and intentional within his practice – ‘The participation of evaluation participants and/or stakeholders in the evaluation process has helped program and/or organizational development’, and ‘...has developed their ability to think and act ‘evaluatively (e.g. use evaluation logic and questioning)’.

Jack drew his example from a developmental and formative evaluation process undertaken with a community non-governmental organization (NGO). The organization had been operating for three years and sought an evaluative process that would help them review their activities. They sought a tool that would enable them to communicate to stakeholders, “...what they are doing, why they are doing what they are doing.” As the organization undertook “...lots of little programs” and “...no large program,” a decision was made to focus the evaluation on the organization as a whole.

The project initially focused on developing a logic model and theory of change,

...Who do you think you are? What are your values...how do you think you are going to bring about this goal, this objective that you have? How do you think you are bringing about that?

The model or framework developed from this process was planned to later inform a more summative evaluation focusing on performance and outcomes.

The organization "...had a strategic plan that wasn't very alive." Jack was therefore clear that the evaluation would initially have a formative and developmental focus. The process would help to determine readiness for summative evaluation and would help to move the organization closer to this point. In this regard, Jack intentionally used the evaluation to inform program and organizational development and to build the evaluative capability of stakeholders. Following this and reflecting his general approach, Jack used a participatory method for building a logic model and theory of change. Using posit notes, the process was visual, dialogical, and interactive,

...you had this interactive process of them trying to describe what it was they were trying to do and what were the outcomes, what were the main activities which were taking place and what were they trying to achieve ultimately. Their vision was up for grabs as well. They were happy to look at everything really.

While aware that logic modelling could suggest linear processes and relationships, Jack reported that the process had helped to "...simplify what is a whole lot of information and you can see it in front of you and you can see a whole context..." He observed,

...it was like, arh for the first time to have a unified conception of what they were doing and why they were doing what they were doing and their (that's why I call it theory of change), their perception of reality and how they thought they were intervening and what was behind it all and what was their intent and to see the linkages between them.

Development of the models constituted a "...real active learning opportunity" and critically reflexive process. The finished product "...was always secondary." Commenting on his facilitation of the process, Jack noted,

...you're in a role of supporting an organization, or a group of people, or an individual to reflect and evaluate their reality and see it in a more conscious way...

His approach was intentionally focused on building stakeholder capability, particularly the ability to think evaluatively. There was particular satisfaction when,

...the lights come on as someone gets a new insight, or more importantly...or not more importantly, but certainly when two people start conversing and getting a sense of excitement, that it's cross awareness of some new way of...hadn't thought about that we're actually doing that...

The intentional and deliberative use of evaluative questioning was central to the development process and the building of evaluative capability,

...What's the point of all this activity over here? What's that contributing to? What's our idea behind it? I'm asking those sorts of questions. Why do you do that, what's the point of that?

Following the value they were getting from developing the program theory, participants agreed that the processes should be primary activity undertaken in the evaluation. The process became a much larger part of the evaluation than initially anticipated and the main agent of change. Rather than inform later summative evaluation, the evaluation primarily helped stakeholders to "...conceptualize", "...articulate" and "...communicate" "...why they were doing what they were doing..."

Jack described a number of outcomes from the process. There was a significant level of stakeholder engagement, understanding, and ownership over the process,

...[participants] were on their own but going to try to explain and sit down and try and bring [non-participants] up to speed for the next session. I wasn't initiating any of that. Because they thought this is good...

Despite a number of staff leaving the organization, there was an on-going commitment to get the framework "...on the wall as a tool to help them reflect and continue to assess going forward evaluatively..." He recalled,

...they wanted to put it up on the wall so that they could come back to it to help them make judgments in the future. Where does it fit what we are proposing today? So they were looking forward and going, that would help us think in a meeting when we are making decisions as to where we should be putting our resources, and how we should be making judgments for future actions.

Staff began to consider their own evaluative questions about their activities. This was an important shift in the way that the process and framework had been used. Questions had progressed from, “...how well are we doing” to “...are we doing the right thing?” Staff were questioning, “...what's most important”, “...what should be driving [our] activity.” Jack recalled,

...when this tool became so engaging and they were getting so much from it, they started to make judgments [about the focus of their activities]. They were using their organizational values [as criteria for this]...

Therefore not only did the process assist participants to communicate, both internally and externally, “...what they were doing and why they were doing it...”, it also assisted them to determine, “...what they should be doing.”

The process also had affective and attitudinal impacts within the organization. It improved morale and unity, as well as confidence and assurance regarding the organization's role and activity,

...this is who we are, this is what we do. This is why we are doing what we're doing...yeah, we are doing good stuff...

...they got the familiarity with some of the language, so there's a confidence for dealing with MSD and their different funders.

Reflecting on the success of the project in building capability and informing program and organizational development, Jack identified a number of enablers to this. The organization was willing to engage in a critically reflexive process. The values of the organization aligned with the values underpinning his approach, “...very much of a ground up.” Decision makers and leaders within the organization had participated in the process. This added gravitas and credibility to the process and ensured it would lead to action. The organizational trust in Jack was developed through their existing relationship. Members recognized his formal training, relevant sector knowledge, and previous experience,

...They weren't going to have to be translating a lot of what they did, that I had enough knowledge to be able to support that type of process.

## Reflections

Jack's practice of evaluation was shaped through his belief that individuals, organizations, and systems were most likely to develop through processes that were ethical and systematic. Jack felt strongly that his integrity as an evaluator, as well as ability to be a change agent, required his practice to align to values of importance to him. At the core of his practice lay a belief that the evaluation process should support change and development.

Jack's values were reflected in an evaluation approach that was process driven, participatory, relational, respectful, responsive, transparent, explicitly evaluative, systematic, and robust. He described himself as a facilitator. Correct process was more likely to create the conditions that would lead to or inform development. Process linked to ethical practice and could itself strengthen evaluation credibility and validity. However, he was primarily concerned with process because it enabled enhancement and transformation.

Drawing on the work of Argyris and Schon, Jack recognized the importance of checking that his actual practice was consistent with his espoused theory of practice. He committed time and resources to this reflexivity.

Jack recognized that his developmental approach supported process use, "...process use is very linked to my development focus." Evaluation was essentially "...a reflective tool." It made sense to him that he had selected for discussion in his interview, an evaluation that had led to stakeholder, organizational, and program development. Given the values and beliefs driving his practice, it was understandable that he had identified these forms of process use as important and intentional.

The evaluation project discussed by Jack was formative and developmental in intent and design. He intentionally adopted a "...people centred approach of designing a theory of change." He understood the process would facilitate critical and evaluative reflection regarding program activities. The process was intended to derive a tool for guiding organizational and program development. Through being responsive to organizational need, focus, and readiness for evaluation, the evaluation became even more formative and developmental in nature than initially planned. In doing so, the process enhanced the capability of stakeholders to themselves ask evaluative questions.

The evaluation discussed by Jack didn't neatly fit the context within which process use is often discussed in the literature, that is, in the context of discrete external program evaluation. The project Jack discussed was a formative evaluation that was intentionally focused on development. Jack was accountable back to the organization commissioning the evaluation, not to an external funder. Process use became an important way that the evaluation provided value and utility to stakeholders. It was difficult to tease it out from other forms of intended use.

The project discussed by Jack was indicative of the breadth of evaluative activity and evaluative roles undertaken by New Zealand evaluators. Jane Davidson observes that New Zealand evaluators are increasingly working alongside organizations, helping them to develop and integrate evaluative structures, reasoning, and logic. They were conducting fewer stand-alone 'evaluations' in the tradition of independent, external evaluation. The project discussed by Jack was small scale. It was partly undertaken on a pro-bono basis. The process was responsive to the organization's need for evaluative guidance. After three years of operation, the organization required an evaluation process that would assist them to revisit their program theory. The success of the process followed the participatory, facilitative, and dialogical approach adopted by Jack. The process was aided by his insider status, relationship, knowledge, and experience. Inevitably, the value and utility derived from the evaluation largely stemmed from process use.

## **‘Lina’**

### **Background**

Lina’s pathway to becoming an evaluator followed an undergraduate degree in sociology, a graduate degree in social work, and then time working in grass root community development. She moved into research, initially market research and then increasingly social research. These initial stages of Lina’s journey occurred outside of New Zealand within a country facing challenging social issues, including extreme poverty. Lina described this context having a profound impact on her development as a researcher and evaluator. She was highly aware of the need to represent and balance multiple interests and voices within the evaluation process and to address issues related to power. Her experiences had helped her develop skills for working effectively within the context of complex social issues. She understood the need for evaluators to work responsibly within such contexts, including the need for reflexivity regarding one’s own power and influence within the evaluation process.

From this background, Lina was increasingly drawn to the critical and analytical dimensions of evaluation. Upon moving to New Zealand, she gained employment as a research and evaluation specialist within a government department. She was instrumental in building the capability and capacity of the department to undertake research and evaluation rather than just project manager such work. Lina’s current role within a consultancy was offering her the opportunity to apply her evaluation skills across different public sector areas.

Lina had long been interested in “...the applied side of things...the practice dimension of my theoretical base and knowledge.” She had a desire to get her “...hands dirty”. While suggesting this interest made “...life more meaningful”, she also sought to locate her practice “...within theoretical frames.” She kept pace with developments in theory and was interested in the “...intersect between theory and practice.”

Lina described herself having a “...deep sense of social connectedness”, a value position of having awareness and regard for “...being a member of society...being socialized into living in a society.” She was driven, both personally and professionally, to act upon her “...social interest”, her “...social conscience,” to “...contribute to the lives of those of my own and those around me.” She was concerned with making a difference, for “...adding

value”, contributing to “...a better world, to better understandings.” Such contribution was “...the purpose of life...” It was the way that one became “...relevant” and not wasteful of one’s life.

## **Evaluation practice**

Lina has been instrumental in establishing the social research and evaluation team within her current workplace. Other teams within the consultancy undertook work in areas such as human resources, strategic planning, and organizational developmental. This provided her the opportunity to integrate evaluation across broad spheres of organizational activity.

Evaluation was a means of determining whether program or policy implementation and outcomes actually met “...original intent” or “...original assumptions.” It was used to clarify needs and to inform new program and policy development. In this way, evaluation could help set “...the agenda for better policy.”

Lina sought “...all dimensions of [evaluation] use...” This might be at an individual or organizational level or through influencing the way that social issues were discussed and understood. While noting she was constantly asked as a consultant “...to...deliver ‘products [findings]’”, she observed “...for me, evaluation is not a product, it's a process”. It was a “...a process of learning.” A singular focus on findings was “...too low level.”

Her awareness of process use had developed while working within government and in close collaboration with policy teams. From initially seeing utilization as the “...use of the [research or evaluation] product,” she began to appreciate how stakeholder engagement in the evaluation process could derive other forms of use. Evaluative reflection and dialogue could shape new ways of understanding phenomena, relevance, and implications for policy. She saw the potential for evaluation utilization and “...opportunity for change” within “...every interaction” or conversation. Use was not just derived from any one “...particular evaluation”, but also from the collective experience of the evaluator and from the overall contribution that “...evaluation as a discipline” could make.

‘Good’ evaluation was “...policy relevant.” It provided utility to intended end users, “...if it is policy relevant, then it will get used.” When evaluation was undertaken to improve the quality of policy advice, Lina was clear the evaluator had a fundamental

responsibility to ensure that the process and products of evaluation provided utility for this purpose.

‘Good’ evaluation had “...methodological rigor” and enabled confidence in findings. It met “...the timelines of policy.” This required a pragmatic approach where the evaluator sought to be “...generally right versus being precisely wrong”. While accepting that policy development was influenced by a range of factors, not only evaluation, ‘good’ evaluation ensured that the evaluation voice was “...actually heard” during decision making.

‘Good’ evaluation had credibility across multiple stakeholders. While required to be policy relevant “...policy people” were not the only audience. However, if evaluation was policy relevant,

...then it will be credible because in establishing the relevance for policy, you have taken all of those issues into consideration and then in your methodological determination you have taken into consideration all of the voices that need to be integrated.

Lina’s evaluation practice was driven by the “...constructivist paradigm.” It was “...utilization focused” and based on an understanding of evaluation as an “...instrument of change.” It was a social learning process that enabled on-going cycles of reflection upon action. She sought high levels of stakeholder participation in the evaluation process so that stakeholders “...are aware, understand, and have an opportunity to contribute.”

Lina described a mixed method evaluation approach, with methods employed to provide necessary breadth and depth of understanding. Qualitative methods were observed to be particularly suitable for understanding needs and identifying appropriate responses to these, “...to actually unpack what is the need...locate needs within a broader social context.”

Lina understood that evaluation occurred within an organizational context and therefore, in order to be used, had to be integrated within organizational development and organizational learning processes,

...It's not just the subject knowledge, it's about how organizations think and view and value something...the whole notion of evaluation use is not about evaluation as a product, but evaluation as a process within an organization...it's all about

organizational learning...if you want use in terms of your report being used, you need to be getting the organization to start thinking and changing its mindset about evaluation and how it views learning.

The evaluator required skills to work within organizations and the ability to draw on the organizational theory and organizational development literatures as well as evaluation theory.

### **Process use**

Lina believed that many of the examples of process use shown to her during her interview were related to each other. She recognized many examples as intentional and important within her practice. She discussed a recently completed evaluation where she believed many forms of process use had occurred. The interview therefore examined more generally her reasons for seeking process use and the practices she adopted to do so.

Lina referred to a recently completed evaluation of an in-service professional development program. A central goal of the program was to develop greater consistency in the practice and delivery of professional development within the sector. There was concern that current practice was largely influenced by the individual style, practice, and experience of professional development educators, and was therefore of a variable nature and quality throughout the country.

The workforce development program was conceptualised as action research. It was anticipated that in providing educators with the opportunity to "...unpack" the theory and knowledge underpinning their practice, the program would support them to change and align their practice more clearly and consistently with a unified theory and knowledge base.

Lina became involved in the evaluation some 18 months into the program's implementation. After her first briefing with the client, it was obvious that,

...there was no clarity on what was the project...the outcomes...the implementation.

There was no implementation plan...

She thus identified the need to first undertake an evaluability assessment, "...I'm not going to touch this and agree to an evaluation without really knowing whether it is evaluable..." It was within and through the resultant assessment that many of the examples

of process use identified by Lina occurred. She considered all the identified examples important and intentional within this work. All contributed in some way to meeting what she considered to be necessary program, organizational, and evaluation development outcomes.

It has been assumed by the program developers that the program would support professional development practitioners to engage in reflective thinking. Through this process, they would understand required developments within their practice and how these developments would lead to improved outcomes from professional development services. Such insights would lead practitioners to undertake necessary practice developments and to be actively involved in shaping the wider organizational changes required to support individual practice level change.

However, the evaluability assessment showed that the program “...was not necessarily designed, or people were not necessarily experiencing it, in the way which the Ministry wanted them to.” It had not been clearly communicated how the program was expected to ultimately shape the professional development practice of participants. Stakeholders “...had lost sight of what the true outcome of the project was going to be.”

The development of a simple program logic diagram was a catalyst for stakeholders to better understand the program. Through the development process, stakeholders developed shared understanding of how the program was expected to act as a mechanism for change and how anticipated change was expected to ultimately link to desired long term outcomes from the delivery of professional development.

Because of the initial lack of common understanding regarding the program’s intervention logic and low implementation fidelity, practitioners were required to engage in a high level of critical thinking regarding their engagement in the program and intended outcomes. Lina intentionally used data collection procedures and other points of contact with practitioners as opportunities for them to reflect evaluatively,

...to think about the world differently. Every conversation I had with each of those providers on a one-on-one basis, it was really getting them to start thinking about from an evaluation point of view...to think about what was the intent of the project and how what they do will achieve the outcomes of the project.

Lina was a facilitator of dialogue, particularly in the initial stages of the evaluation, "...I was a facilitator who was trying to make sense of the world from different world views." She intentionally used the evaluation process to stimulate necessary communication across stakeholders, "...I went to every one of those meetings even though my project didn't require me to..." She adopted the role of,

...change agent because I absolutely got them to think differently about everything else and so I really did bring about and influence change in terms of how they thought about it.

The change agent role continued into later stages of the evaluation as stakeholders continued to use her to engage in critical reflection,

...when I went to collect data they would then ask me...so what's your sense. What are we doing right? What are we doing wrong? What else do we need to be focusing on? And I would facilitate that.

Considering the wider organizational development goals of the program, Lina described herself as a "...bridge" between the practitioners and the organizations they worked within. She observed that practitioners "...were not necessarily high up in the ranks and therefore they felt limited in their ability to influence change." She regularly briefed managers on the evaluation, "...So that the organization would understand what its role was. So clarifier, you know?"

Lina intentionally positioned the evaluation as a process that would be participatory, engaging, facilitative, dialogical, and negotiated,

...I don't do the ones where you just expect people to just go in and collect data and come back and do a bloody good job in presenting your findings. That's not what you are getting me to do.

She positioned herself as someone who would be challenging as required, "...I have no qualms about challenging a stakeholder's position in a particular area". Such challenge encouraged critical reflection from stakeholders, "...about why they are saying the things they do, or why they believe the things that they do." It enabled stakeholders to re-examine the "...known position" from which they operate.

Lina negotiated these roles with stakeholders by ensuring that they understood why a critically reflexive approach was necessary. She was clear that her starting assumption was,

...everybody wants things to be better, everybody wants things to be different, everyone is trying their hardest best to ensure that they are doing a good job.

Her approach required stakeholders "...to trust that we are all here for the same collective good." Stakeholders had,

...to be in a position where they are open and wanting to learn...I need stakeholders to be open and I need them to entertain other ways of knowing.

Lina intentionally developed stakeholders' willingness to learn through the evaluation in this way. The evaluation process was positioned as a collaborative "...journey" or "...path" during which times there would be "...ups and downs" and "...times when we agree and times when we disagree..." The trust of stakeholders to engage in this journey was developed through an evaluation process that was "...open" and "...transparent." She ensured clarity regarding the evaluation agenda and that the process was about achieving the best possible process and outcomes. The ability to work in this way required,

...reputation, credibility, knowledge, and experience...when you are talking to decision makers you need to be reasonably sound...you need...sufficient experience to be able to convince them that you have done this before kind of thing.

Lina described a range of positive outcomes from the process use she identified. Development and use of the program logic had helped stakeholders to think evaluatively. It built shared understanding about the program and helped stakeholders to refocus on core objectives. It assisted stakeholders to "...work backwards...to start thinking about...the fundamental outcome" being sought..." They understood "...how the objectives of the project are actually integrated" with what participants were expected to do.

The program logic identified flaws in the logic of the program and informed necessary program and organizational development. The diagram became "...a communication device for the Ministry for ever and ever." The Ministry valued the evaluation for having made "...a huge contribution to ensuring that the project and the program were actually implemented as was originally intended."

Through involving stakeholders in the evaluation approach, and developing their understanding of it, Lina indicated that stakeholders had become more receptive to the evaluation findings,

...By the time I came to the findings they already knew what the findings were going to be because they had already been socialized into that entire process very early on...

...the value is not in bringing together the story; they have all heard it already. The value is when you then push that story to what it means for the Ministry in general terms.

## **Reflections**

Lina identified various forms of process use within the evaluation she discussed. The evaluation delivered value, not so much "...in the end product," but in the way the process had,

...helped people along the way to think and view life differently, and do a much better job of what they were contracted to do and what they had to do."

The evaluand was itself an action research project and the evaluation was intentionally used to develop the reflective and evaluative capability of participants. The various forms of process use identified, for example, shared understanding, communication, and re-focusing across stakeholders, occurred as part of the process of building of the evaluative capability of stakeholders 'This learning helped to inform the program and organizational development necessary to get the evaluand 'back on track'.

While becoming involved in the evaluation some 18 months into the implementation of the program, Lina described a situation where considerable formative evaluation input was required. She described: poorly conceived and communicated program logic, a lack of shared understanding about the program theory, implementation 'drift', considerable changes in project personnel, and a lack of internal evaluation capability and capacity. She observed,

...nobody really knew what were the underpinning drivers for that initiative, and what I was trying to do was build a kind of consistency in what the key principles and drivers might be so I could anchor the evaluation...

Lina facilitated various forms of program and organizational development so that the evaluation became possible and so that the program was more likely to achieve intended outcomes. Process use was inevitable as she sought to build understanding, clarity, communication, and a re-focusing across stakeholders. Inevitably, these outcomes informed program and organizational development and eventually the implementation of the program.

Reflecting later on the level of formative input required in the evaluation she discussed, Lina observed that such input was commonly required when undertaking evaluation in New Zealand,

...you would normally expect to see that level of clarity in papers, outcomes, and design as part of the policy or program development process. I think that often what happens, at the agency level, either due to staff turnover...a lot of that is actually implicit in the minds of the people that are working on those initiatives but it is not necessarily articulated in clear terms in cabinet papers or policy documents or whatever. So I think what you are trying to do as an evaluator going in at that time, is actually bring some of that intangible...you are trying to make some of the tacit explicit...and I think that will always be a part of that process. However fantastic the policy might be, how well it may be articulated, there is quite a lot of the tacit information and intelligence that you will always need to access in order to make meaning of what it is that you are reading in policy documents, so I think there will always be a role that you will play in terms of clarifying...

In the evaluation example she discussed, Lina demonstrated that she understood that evaluation was a social learning process and an instrument of change. She understood the need to locate evaluation within organizational change and learning processes,

...I see the whole evaluative process as a social process which means that there is a level of engagement, there is a desire to seek to understand multiple perspectives, there is acknowledgement that it has to be used and the only way it will get used is if people that have a role to play and have a contribution to make, their voices are heard, their voice is captured and they are engaging in ways that then help the

socialisation process... often I get invited just to go and do an evaluation framework and work program for the agency and I leave, I only do the front end of it, but in doing the front end of it, I very strongly see that whole as a seed of a social process so that there is ownership, there is acceptance, there is a level of buy-in and you design processes to do that and that to me is the only way that I can be confident that it is going to be used...

Lina understood that evaluation use and influence took many forms. Use was not singularly derived from a specific evaluation. It came from and through the “...cumulative wisdom” and “...collective knowledge” that the evaluator brings to the process. All evaluation processes and interactions provided opportunities to “...influence something”. She worked in policy development contexts characterised by rapid timeframes, high staff turnover, “...change” and “...churn.” She was able to add value to decision making through her accumulated understanding of “...different voices,” different views, and perspectives. She helped stakeholders to engage in different ways of seeing and thinking.

In her follow-up interview, Lina reflected on how local evaluators were focused on process within their practice. In larger evaluation markets like the US, evaluators were often employed on the basis that they brought a specific theoretical form or orientation to their practice, for example, an empowerment approach or a systems perspective. However, in New Zealand,

...we don't position ourselves on the basis of the theoretical, we position ourselves more as a generic practitioner and so automatically we have designed processes and practices that are much more about working with the client to understand ...I have sufficient enough understanding of all the different theoretical approaches to be able to apply them confidently but we don't make that explicit in the way that we do it...that is actually a problem in some ways because I think we are not very transparent about what is our theoretical orientation, what is our value base perspective...look at an RFP for example, how often do we say in our response or tender document, I am going to approach this evaluation using developmental evaluation perspective...we are not very clear and that could be because we don't have a history of evaluation as a profession, the whole [Massey training program in evaluation] is a very recent development...

...I actually believe that we focus too much on process than on theory and I think that is one of the weaknesses in the New Zealand setting, is that everybody has got

the process right but I don't think necessarily we are clear enough as practitioners about what is our own understanding of theory and how we might draw on that and make that explicit...

She suggested that this characteristic of local practice reflected how the evaluation profession and practice had developed in New Zealand,

...it has all come from a group of community workers who are all doing a little bit of research here and there...you have too many independent practitioners...you have a client who haven't necessarily asked for it...we have a general degree and Masters in Social Science Research Methods for a long time and the focus has been on being much more of a generalist, but I do think as a profession if you want to go to the next level, we have to start with the generality which I think is our biggest strength but we also need to have sufficient understanding of theoretical approaches so we can remain true to it...

## **‘Lisa’**

### **Background**

Lisa’s ‘pathway’ to becoming an evaluator followed tertiary training in media and business and then a variety of jobs where she undertook research and evaluative type activities. During her tertiary studies she gained fieldwork experience as an interviewer in large scale survey research projects. This experience was influential in steering her into market and social marketing research. She later worked as an independent researcher and eventually as an evaluation consultant. She had recently undertaken a post-graduate qualification in evaluation and read the evaluation literature on an on-going basis.

Lisa was not driven to practice evaluation to ‘do good’ in the way someone with a social science background might describe. However, she sought to make a difference through her work. This meant “...that you actually help solve some genuine problems that need to be solved.” She was interested in using evaluation to ensure the equitable distribution of public services, to “...help people get services and resources that will make a difference in their lives.”

Lisa’s business background shaped her view of evaluation as a service that should meet client needs and expectations. Evaluation ideally led to useful and actionable outcomes for clients and should be a satisfying and enjoyable process for clients and evaluators alike.

Lisa described a principled, ethical, and reflexive approach to her evaluation practice. She recognized that pākeha evaluators should be reflexive around the limits of their cultural competency and appropriateness when working with Māori. Evaluators needed to be conscious of evaluation processes as interventions that potentially impacted positively or negatively on participants. Through her experience conducting mental health research, she understood that such impacts were inevitable and that researchers needed to prepare for this.

Lisa stressed the importance of relationship building within evaluation. Values such as respect, honesty, and transparency underpinned her relational approach. The evaluator also had to be prepared not to take short-cuts in process. A relationship-driven approach was essential given the high level of interconnectedness within the relatively small population of Aotearoa New Zealand. Within this context, evaluators needed to “...work ethically and

think about their processes to sustain relationships.” Evaluators would almost certainly encounter and work with the same people on repeated occasions,

...we understand the power of relationships, you actually can't afford to do a bad job, it will kill your reputation...all you've got is your reputation...

...when I go into any Māori space, I may come across the same people five or six times in my research life. They will remember how we related the last time, whether I was ‘of my word’...

Lisa also discussed the relatively small number of evaluation clients within New Zealand. She questioned whether traditional notions of ‘insider/outsider’ or ‘internal/external’ applied within this context,

...we end up working with the same people (in their different roles) for years anyway...we know each other...

...Our two degrees of separation means if I want to find out about anybody it's only a few phone calls away, or these days on Facebook.

### **Evaluation practice**

Lisa differentiated evaluation from research on the basis that evaluation was concerned with making evaluative judgements and therefore required the use of evaluative criteria. ‘Good’ evaluation had rigor, was of quality, and was ultimately used, “...It comes down to use in the end.” ‘Good’ evaluation assisted end users to “...make decisions that need to be made, often hard decisions...” Attributes of evaluation that supported utilization included accessibility, synthesis, focus, openness, and transparency. ‘Good’ evaluation was participatory and inclusive,

...people along the way feel that they understand how we got to where we got to, there is no black box; they feel part of the process...

‘Good’ evaluation ensured Māori participation and control of things Māori. It protected the right of Māori to participate ‘as Māori’, for example, through the use of te reo Māori. ‘Good’ evaluation provided understanding of Māori perspectives and issues. Working

within a Māori context required her as pākeha to give up much of the power she may otherwise hold in other contexts.

Lisa described her evaluation practice as pragmatic, relationship driven, participatory, and utilization focused. She was rigorous in her identification and use of evaluative criteria. She brought qualitative and quantitative skills and experience to her practice. She was able to use multiple methods as appropriate in response to need and context (e.g. time, budget). Reflecting on her pragmatic approach, Lisa observed that the evaluator must cut,

...your coat according to your cloth...you never get the ideal time or the ideal amount of money or the ideal client necessarily. Nothing's going to be ideal.

Evaluation designs needed to be adaptive and flexible. The evaluator needed to be able to cope with "...less than ideal situations." They needed to know when to say "...no, that is not possible."

Lisa came to the theory of evaluation after years of practice. The theory provided her with frameworks to organize and frame her practice. Prior to this, her practice had been largely based on what seemed to her to be common sense.

Reflecting further on her relational approach, Lisa described relationships to be "...the absolute central tenet" of the evaluation process. Relationships required trust and trust was the basis that stakeholders typically entered an evaluation process,

...it's really hard for people when they buy our services...What are they buying?  
They are buying something they sometimes can't see or conceptualize at the outset.  
They buy maybe on some pre-established criteria, or our past track record, or they buy on their gut feel about whether they are going to get on with us.

The honouring of stakeholders was central to Lisa's relationship driven practice. Honouring included being clear with stakeholders about what would be required from them through the evaluation and their degree of influence. It was important that established conditions and parameters of participation were adhered to. Honouring built trust in the relationship and the willingness of stakeholders to participate in evaluation.

Lisa built stakeholder trust through an open, honest, and participatory evaluation approach. Her approach followed her understanding of how to work constructively and

respectfully with people. It was an approach distinctly different to evaluation that was “...really black boxed.” She invested time and resources up-front with stakeholders to ensure shared understanding of needs and expectations. Decisions and necessary trade-offs in evaluation design were openly discussed. Emerging findings were shared with stakeholders enabling them to consider meaning and implications. This process led to deeper understanding through mutual learning.

While accepting that a relational approach required time and careful budgeting, it returned value and benefit to the evaluator and stakeholders. It often resulted in a more effective and efficient evaluation process that was responsive to inevitable changes in need and context, “...the world moves on doesn't it, sometimes in the middle of the evaluation.” The process delivered “...better outcomes” for stakeholders. They got “...what they need to aid their decision-making.”

Lisa recognized that her evaluation practice could lie, as appropriate, on a continuum of high to low stakeholder participation. The maintenance of appropriate professional boundaries within stakeholder relationships was important. She generally prioritized the engagement of clients within the evaluation process but within limits, “...there is the golden rule...they've got the gold, they choose the level of engagement.” However, she was always willing to critique the evaluation plans, process, or practices of clients and advocate alternatives as appropriate.

### **Process use**

Lisa identified many of the examples of process use shown to her during her interview as important and intentional within her evaluation practice. She struggled to identify any one example as most important and intentional. The interview therefore examined more generally her reasons for seeking process use and the practices she used to achieve it.

Lisa considered process use to be integral to her evaluation practice. It was evidence of having conducted ‘good’ evaluation. Practices enabling of process use ultimately enhanced the quality, validity, and credibility of evaluation. The journey that stakeholders went through during the course of an evaluation often constituted the most important or valuable outcome for them from the process.

Reflecting on the examples of process use shown to her in her interview, she observed,

...If you have these examples of process use happening, then you've scoped the work up properly, you've negotiated a contract that works, you have made sure that you have checked out what the client really needs from the evaluation before you start...

Lisa intentionally employed a range of evaluation roles and practices in order to generate process use. She was a facilitator, collaborator, and broker. She was engaged in a mutual learning process with stakeholders that generated "...real dialogue." She focused on drawing out the existing knowledge and expertise of stakeholders, and was intentional in building their evaluative capability. Transferring power back to stakeholders, whether in regard to process or findings, was integral to the process,

...that for me has driven a lot of what I do. I constantly look for ways to include processes that support client engagement and ownership of the evaluative process.

Lisa's intentional use of the evaluation process to build evaluative capability was often a necessary response to a lack of capability within many of the client organizations she worked with. She observed,

...this really reminds me of the market research industry back in 1982, it's the same thing...back in those days you wrote, this is what we are doing and this is why we are doing it, here are the questions we are going to ask and here are the purpose of the questions we are going to ask and later on, once the market grew up, you didn't have to do that anymore, you could just say, this is what we are proposing and this is what you will get from it and all that other stuff was missing and I feel we are back in that stage with the evaluation market...where I went this morning, they said, we haven't got a clue about how to do this, we don't even know where to start...

Data analysis was a process of sense making. It was typically a collaborative process that involved stakeholders, at least to the point where meaning and understanding were advanced through their input,

There might be service users, there might be general managers, there might be CEOs even, in the same meeting and everybody's got a voice. And they are all making sense of what's going on.

The sharing of ‘top line’ findings with stakeholders was an invitation for stakeholders to consider,

...here's the kind of feedback that's emerging. Now overall, what do you think this is telling you? Where are the exceptions? What are the surprises? What would you expect to be seeing here? What aren't you seeing here? How would you explain that?

While most clients engaged in the evaluation, Lisa recognized that problems could occur when “...busy people did not engage at points when it would be useful”. Some clients wanted a “...set and forget” evaluation. This is where the client remained largely external to the evaluation process. They say, “...Here it is. Go away and do it. Don't come back until it's finished.”

Lisa discussed how process use was itself supported through being a reflective practitioner and through systematic project management practices. She described the routine documentation and review of events, decisions, processes, and outcomes from each evaluation conducted. She learnt about her practice through this processes and the process informed on-going developments in her practice.

Process use provided utility, value, and benefits to both stakeholders and the evaluator. Stakeholder participation in the evaluation process inevitably built their evaluative capability. This development enhanced their ability to participate meaningfully in the process and to derive value and utility from it. Stakeholders’ involvement in using evaluative frameworks to collect and interpret data enhanced their understanding, acceptance, ownership, and use of evaluation findings. She observed,

...they really get how we make the judgements when they are involved in the process themselves...they will read the rest of the report because they have been part of the process, they tell us the judgement process works for them and they trust it. Values are not up for debate, they were sorted out way earlier in the evaluation. Part of this is you become a trusted advisor by that point...

...they are definitely empowered through that judgement process because it becomes theirs.

...so then when the report comes back they go “Yep, yep, yep” because actually half of it was what they had said in those sessions, they were seeing themselves in there and the findings were not smoke and mirrors, we genuinely built in their expertise.

...often they say, “Aah, I know what we've got to do” and they are off doing it before you've even finished writing the report.

Participatory practices enabling of process use often led to a more effective and efficient evaluation process. Clients were more likely to “...work with you again” once they had experienced the additional value and utility of process use,

...once people have had a taste of developing evaluative criteria, framing the evaluation round the key criteria and making transparent judgement, they tend to want to use that process again, they tell us that the process works really well.

## **Reflections**

Lisa considered process use to be a reflection of evaluation practice that was transparent, respectful, ethical, and genuine in wanting to help people,

...when your processes work well, along the way, all these other [process use] things will happen as well.

She had worked as a consultant throughout most of her research and evaluation career. Her process and relational driven approach followed her understanding of how she could deliver value to clients through the evaluation process. She understood that utility and value could be derived through both the process and outcomes of evaluation. She intentionally sought both forms of use. Her practice was relationship driven and she intentionally built open, respectful, and service orientated relationships with stakeholders. She sought to develop their trust, understanding, and confidence within the evaluation process. She used both qualitative and quantitative methods to design and deliver evaluations that were responsive to need, expectations, and situational constraints.

Lisa’s relationship ethic was reflected in her active approach to client management and servicing. She ensured clear communication about intent and purpose, regular reporting, and a no surprises approach. She understood and described evaluation as a “...dance.” It

was a negotiated process where the evaluator and stakeholders engaged in continuous cycles of “...sense-making” and mutual learning. It was within these spaces where process use inevitably occurred.

Lisa was intentional in using the evaluation process to build the evaluative capability of stakeholders. She understood this enhanced the ability of stakeholders to participate meaningfully within the evaluation process. It enhanced the value and utility that stakeholders derived from the process.

Lisa believed that an evaluation approach that intentionally sought ‘process use’ closely resembled “...kaupapa Māori processes.” From her experience, the value and utility derived from such practice was reinforcing of its continued use, “...we have started to say “Hey, this is great. Why not do this for everyone? This is actually good process.”

From Lisa’s perspective, a relational and participatory approach did not compromise evaluation quality or the rigor of evaluative judgements. By involving stakeholders in the evaluation process, they better understood how evaluative judgments were derived and this enhanced their willingness to accept and respond constructively to evaluation findings.

## **‘Lorraine’**

### **Background**

Lorraine’s pathway to becoming an evaluator followed an applied degree in psychology and social research experience. She had worked as a research assistant, a university based researcher, and a manager of a research and evaluation unit. Following these experiences, she established herself as an independent evaluation consultant. Over time, she had worked across a broad range of evaluation projects, teams, and approaches. Working as an independent consultant provided her with a level of independence, flexibility, and control that was important to her within her work.

### **Evaluation practice**

Lorraine described evaluation as a process that provided judgments of merit and worth and which assessed achievement against intent. It was used to clarify objectives and strategies and to better understand program context, processes, and unintended consequences.

Lorraine described a fundamental desire to work with people and to help them,

I've always had a heart for the underdog...I live in a privileged world...if I can do anything to make a difference, that's my thing.

Evaluation enabled Lorraine to work with individuals and organizations who in turn worked directly with people in need. Using evaluation to enhance performance and program outcomes satisfied her desire to help others through her work.

Lorraine emphasised that evaluation must be rigorous. Interpretations and conclusions must be grounded in data. Analytical and interpretative processes should be transparent and auditable. Evaluation needed “...to be about the truth” and must “...accurately depict what is going on...”

Lorraine was aware and comfortable with the idea of the evaluation process having impact or influence. It was in effect, an intervention. She had developed greater appreciation of the value of a participatory approach. She no longer viewed the evaluator as an expert who was “...right,” but rather someone who worked in partnership with stakeholders. Both parties were engaged in a process of “...learning from each other”.

Stakeholder review of evaluation findings could add contextual, interpretative, and explanatory depth. It was a process that led to “...a deepening of the data rather than [a reinterpretation of it].”

‘Good’ evaluation had resonance for stakeholders. The process helped them clarify and synthesize their understanding and experience. Findings should not be surprising or unexpected.

As an evaluator, Lorraine described herself in the role of “...critical friend.” She worked with stakeholders to shape meaning and understanding. As “...naive questioner”, she used evaluative questioning to engage stakeholders in new ways of thinking and understanding.

Lorraine’s evaluation approach was eclectic. Methodology and method choices were shaped by the evaluation questions and need. They had to be ‘fit for purpose’. Practice and process needed to be culturally appropriate. It was important for the evaluator to understand the limits of their cultural competency and ability to work cross-culturally.

### **Process use**

Lorraine discussed an example of the following type of process use that she felt was important and intentional within her recent practice – ‘The evaluation process has helped programs, organizations or services remain focused, or to re-focus, on core goals and/or objectives’

In the project discussed, Lorraine had built a framework and methodology to guide the evaluation of a workshop being planned by an international NGO. Lorraine then used the framework/methodology to evaluate the workshop and to report the findings back to the organization.

Lorraine was engaged during the planning stages of the workshop and assisted the organization to clarify goals and objectives. She intentionally and initially involved the group in developing the programme theory and intervention logic of the workshop.

Lorraine understood that stakeholder agreement and common focus on core objectives was necessary for designing a useful evaluation. She was primarily motivated to use program theory and intervention logic modelling to meet her needs as an evaluator.

However, she also knew that stakeholders were likely to derive learning from the process that would be of independent value to them.

For example, the evaluation planning process and program theory development had enabled stakeholders to,

...meet each other and to hear what each other were doing, because there were a lot of people doing similar things, getting them to talk about what the key issues were in their area, getting them to talk about a common data base and what should happen about the development of that.

Clarification of the intervention logic had helped stakeholders to remain focused on core objectives. The process had helped to shape the activities they undertook in preparing and conducting the workshop. She observed that stakeholders would sometime,

...go off in all these little tangents of “Wouldn't it be great to do this, and should we be talking about that, and should we be talking about that”, and I would just go back to say, “Okay, I can't see that on our objectives list. So the question then is are you not sticking to the objectives or do you need to add that objective because it's an important thing?”

Learning and development outcomes were inevitable from such reflection. These outcomes occur when the evaluator intentionally operates as a synthesizer and clarifier. In the example discussed, learning through the process had been critical in shaping a workshop that was more likely to achieve intended outcomes. The evaluator had a general obligation to use the evaluation process to shape common understanding and focus if this was lacking,

I think an evaluator can be such a good resource in clear thinking. It is a resource in clear thinking that people should access and if you've got some clear thoughts to bring to a process then you should. To hold back...it doesn't serve the client in my view.

...I've had people say to me, the project would not have succeeded without...it would have veered off in the wrong direction without having had the really clear program logic upfront.

Lorraine's intentionally used the intervention logic modelling process to ensure a common focus on core objectives. This reflected her desire to use evaluation to enhance performance and outcomes. The eventual success of any intervention built from stakeholders having common focus,

...What I'm feeling I'm doing at that moment is, I feel I'm contributing to the success of the whole thing...

Lorraine intentionally used intervention logic modelling as a "...way in" to ask evaluative questions. These questions required stakeholders to reflect critically on their beliefs and assumptions regarding the project. This reflection assisted them to build clarity and shared understanding about their common purpose.

Lorraine believed that the practices and processes used in her example had delivered a range of utility and value to stakeholders. The development of programme theory and the intervention logic had helped stakeholders to clarify what they sought to achieve. This understanding informed their activities. It led to the design and conduct of a workshop that was more likely to achieve intended outcomes. The process of clarifying intent and focus built stakeholder engagement and their ownership within the project. Through better understanding the project, stakeholders also developed a better understanding of the intent and focus of the evaluation. They understood what it would deliver and why and had appropriate expectations about these things. There were no surprises when findings were delivered. Overall, the process had developed a more receptive environment for findings use.

## **Reflections**

Lorraine understood that learning and development from evaluation was enhanced when the evaluator worked collaboratively with stakeholders. When the evaluator and stakeholders worked together as co-learners, space is created for the evaluation process to stimulate mutual learning. Processes of evaluative questioning, reflection, dialogue, and negotiation became mechanisms through which learning occurs. The evaluator works in this context as a facilitator, synthesiser, and clarifier of understanding. Rather than work from afar to deliver findings, knowledge and understanding is constructed through dialogue and interaction.

In the example of process use discussed, Lorraine built the evaluative capability of stakeholders by involving them in the development of programme theory and an intervention logic model. Through this process, stakeholders were required to reflect critically and evaluatively on intended activities.

Lorraine reported later that she was increasingly being engaged by service providers and funders to develop programme theory and intervention logics. The process was often used in preparation for tendering for service contracts or for clarifying contract obligations and expectations. She thus described further examples of how she was using evaluative thinking and processes to inform program and organizational development.

Lorraine saw this work drawing on a set of generic planning and development skills that were potentially used and applied within a range of professional fields. While not necessarily unique to evaluators or to an evaluation context, they were important tools for the evaluator to have in their toolbox.

In undertaking this work, Lorraine believed that she was acting in a consultative and facilitative role that potentially expanded the scope of the evaluator's role, "...it's a facilitative role in clear thinking." While the planning and development processes involved were often integral to an evaluation, they also had stand-alone value for stakeholders and could be undertaken without necessarily leading to an 'evaluation.'

## **‘Mary’**

### **Background**

Mary’s pathway to becoming an evaluator followed post-graduate level training in the social sciences and then employment as a research and evaluation specialist within various government departments.

Mary described her concern for ensuring that evaluation delivered value and utility within the public sector and for achieving a more visible connection between evaluation and organizational decision making. She was particularly interested in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the public investment in evaluation.

Mary provided evaluation support and advice to internal clients of evaluation within a large government department. While the organization had limited in-house capacity to do evaluation, she had considerable hands on involvement managing its conduct and use.

Her organization had previously treated the management of evaluation as largely a contract management exercise. There had been little regard for how evaluation could be actively managed to enhance organizational value and utility. Attention was largely focused on accounting for the delivery of evaluation findings. Utilization was essentially understood as the production and dissemination of evaluation reports. It was an approach based on the assumption that “...the internal client knew what they wanted.” Internal project management followed “...mechanistic” and “...prescribed” processes. External providers of evaluation were typically academics who also stressed the need for evaluation to be independent and somewhat removed from the commissioning agency and government in general.

Many aspects of the approach described by Mary undermined the organizational value and utility of evaluation. Internal clients often lacked the necessary skills to specify useful evaluation questions. Mary suspected that many evaluation providers lacked understanding of the needs of end users working within applied policy contexts. Evaluations conducted were often descriptive social research with recommendations “...attached.” There were often disputes regarding findings and their interpretation as evaluation lacked agreed evaluative criteria. An explicit evaluative logic and framework underpinning the work was often missing.

The organization's current approach to evaluation project management had emerged from this general dissatisfaction. It was recognized that the organization needed to work more collaboratively with stakeholders and providers to ensure that evaluations were designed and conducted to meet their needs. A wider departmental requirement to re-think the evaluation strategy, and pressure for evaluation to play more prominent role under the managing for outcomes framework, also drove the shift in approach.

### **Evaluation practice**

From an organizational perspective, Mary described evaluation as a process of building clarity around intended goals and assessing whether, to what level, how well, and at what level of quality, intended outcomes had been achieved. From a wider governmental perspective, she described evaluation as a means of informing performance and outcomes from government activity and therefore a process that could add value to these activities.

'Good evaluation' involved a collaborative and open process that built shared understanding between evaluator and stakeholders regarding evaluation need, organizational context, the basis upon which evaluative judgement would be determined, intended users, and intended use. 'Good' evaluation was designed and conducted on the basis of this understanding. A 'good' evaluation process initially clarified "...what the point of doing evaluation is." Evaluation did not just begin from the premise that "...We will have to evaluate that" and that's as rich and deep as it gets."

'Good' evaluation also enabled organizations "...to make deliberate, reasoned choices about how best to achieve its outcomes". It provided "...sophisticated understanding of [the operating] environment" and enabled practice and organizational change on the basis of evidence rather than assumptions.

Mary recognized that a collaborative and negotiated approach to evaluation was a learning process. Evaluation was much more than the production and dissemination of findings. In fact, the end report might almost be "...incidental." A process driven approach was different to an approach where evaluation was conceptualised as a pre-specified product to be delivered on the basis of a fixed price proposal.

Mary's understanding and approach had shifted significantly from initially seeing and treating evaluation as largely a "...product." She now understood evaluation as a process undertaken in collaboration with stakeholders. In discussing this shift, she reflected,

...we have kind of suffered [historically] from a slightly traditional research model which involves, you know, a research question, a report...it...kind of like, focuses on the product as opposed to the process of engagement during [the] production of the product...

Her approach to evaluation project management was now more clearly focused on specifying the evaluation need and working collaboratively with providers to shape and conduct evaluation accordingly. She attended to the "...front end" of evaluation and the question "...how does the evaluation function support an organization to do a good job?" She was more cognizant of evaluation as a process that required organizational capability and capacity to think and act evaluatively. She understood that evaluation utilization was influenced by the extent an organization had learning capacity and capability. She was increasingly focused on the manner and processes through which engagement in evaluation built individual and organizational evaluative capability.

### **Process use**

Mary discussed from her recent work, an example of the following type of process use that she felt was important and intentional within her practice – "The participation of evaluation participants and/or stakeholders in the evaluation process has developed their ability to think and act 'evaluatively (e.g. use evaluation logic and questioning)'".

The evaluation project Mary discussed had involved the development of a tool that was used by workforce development practitioners to self-evaluate performance, outcomes, and development needs. Rather than focus on practice at an individual level, the tool took a wider system focus. It enabled assessment of the systematic factors that contributed to performance and outcomes and that would need to be addressed in improving performance. The tool was developed by an external evaluation consultant who worked collaboratively with stakeholders throughout the evaluation.

Mary understood that the value and utility of the tool for stakeholders would be enhanced through their active participation in its development. Their participation would

develop their evaluative capability and ability to use the tool. She therefore considered efforts to ensure that evaluative capability was built through the tool's development as both important and intentional within the project.

Capability building had begun through the evaluation team questioning whether the internal client had correctly interpreted their evaluation need. The question had been asked, "...Do you really know what the state of the world is out there in terms of what people actually do?" This question required the client to re-examine their assumptions about the area of practice being evaluated and their evaluation need. Exploratory research evidenced a different reality to that assumed,

...you could just see their jaws dropping, "Oh, ooh, we thought..." So they had that dissonance kind of experience which meant we could go forward, so they had more trust in us...

As a result of this process, the client came to understand that to determine performance, outcomes and development needs, the evaluation required a broader focus on the overall system that combined to shape quality and success.

The evaluator commissioned to undertake the project initially developed an intervention logic model in collaboration with stakeholders. The collaborative process developed their understanding of workforce development practice, the wider context within which practice occurred, and how systemic factors shaped practice quality and outcomes. The process opened up new ways of understanding both the practice under review as well as what was required to evaluate performance. The process set "...off the reflective capability that was built implicitly into that process...it was very strong."

Using the logic model, the evaluator worked with stakeholders to develop the evaluation tool. The process established what process and practice improvements would be required to improve performance and lead to higher judgments of merit and worth. The transparency of the underlying evaluative logic informed the implementation logic used within the tool. In this way, the tool became an active part of implementation decision making and a powerful aid to organizational learning and development.

The evaluation process was intentionally conducted as an organizational learning process. There was intent to develop stakeholder participation, shared understanding, and

ownership through the process. These were key outcomes in eventually integrating the evaluation tool into routine organizational systems and processes.

Mary discussed a number of ways that the evaluation process had delivered process use. The internal client came to critically evaluate their evaluation need. Through this reflection and an enhanced ability to think evaluatively, they came to understand their evaluation need differently. The client was willing to engage in “...difficult conversations” and to re-examine their assumptions and beliefs about the area of practice under evaluation. As a result of this shift, the project had delivered a powerful tool and process for asking critical evaluative questions about the overall system within and through which workforce development practice occurred. The tool did not just simply describe exemplary practice at the individual practitioner level.

The collaborative approach employed by the evaluator developed stakeholder acceptance, trust, and ownership. The process enhanced the willingness of stakeholders to use the tool and to engage in deep and honest reflection in regard to performance. The trust and ownership developed supported the integration and on-going use of the tool within the stakeholder organization.

Reflecting on the deep level of evaluative thinking facilitated by the process, Mary observed that stakeholders,

...were getting rewarded for being open and reflective and learning orientated, and quite able to focus on failure in a quite constructive fashion as opposed to doing it in a defensive mode.

## **Reflections**

Mary discussed an evaluation where the evaluative capability of stakeholders had been intentionally developed through their participation in the project. Her efforts to ensure that the project built evaluative capability followed her previous dissatisfaction with evaluation delivered from afar and which focused primarily on the production and dissemination of findings. From her experience, evaluation conducted like this often provided limited organizational utility and value and did little to enhance organizational learning and performance.

Mary sought to develop a more obvious link between evaluation and organizational decision making. She sought a situation where,

...the organization is starting to ask serious questions about whether it is doing a good job and uses evaluation for those purposes.

She described considerable shifts in her understanding and approach to evaluation. She had previously understood and largely managed evaluation projects as the delivery of findings by external experts. She now understood evaluation more as a collaborative and emergent process. The identification of evaluative need and appropriate responses to this occurred through dialogue, reflection, negotiation, and mutual learning by stakeholders and the evaluator alike. Rather than evaluation ‘done’ to stakeholders, she now sought to ensure that the evaluation process built evaluative capability at an individual and organizational level. Through such development, stakeholders and stakeholder organizations were more able to engage in evaluation with understanding, purpose, and commitment and therefore derive more value and utility from the process.

## **‘Mere’**

### **Background**

Mere’s pathway to evaluation following postgraduate studies and then a university based position as a formative evaluator. She initially knew little about evaluation in this role and essentially learnt on the job. She described “...a steep learning curve.” Reflecting on this experience she commented,

...I've come to realize that this is the way everybody I know who is an evaluator became an evaluator; by being asked to do an evaluation and going “What is that?” Giving it your best shot and learning on the job basically.

At the time of her interview, Mere was working as an independent evaluation consultant. Since becoming an evaluator, she had conducted some 40 evaluations. While her preference was to work with Māori, she also worked in other contexts, “...if it is a good project and I like what they are trying to do, then I will look at it.”

Mere had earlier worked as a social researcher within a government agency. She had felt uneasy about the research methods and approaches promulgated within the agency. The reason for this become clearer to her some years later when, at post graduate level, she studied Māori research methods,

...There was so much about it that made sense...That's what was wrong with the way I had been looking at and been taught that research had to go before that. So it was like...this actually is really interesting and research is potentially really exciting when I can do it within Māori paradigms.

### **Evaluation practice**

From the time of her initial practice, Mere had recognized the potential of evaluation “...to make a difference in Māori development.” The challenge, “...how evaluation can contribute to Māori development and Māori outcomes,” had shaped her evaluation practice throughout her career. She reflected, “...I'm still trying to realise that potential in my own practice. And I see glimmers of it...”

Mere's evaluation approach was shaped by "...what I care about in evaluation, not my understanding of what I know it can be, but what I care about." Her central concern was for Māori development,

...Because I'm Māori...and Māori are my people and I see so much wonderful richness and goodness and good things, then I see so much despair and lack of hope and stuff as well, and I see that there's...you know, we have all these programs in place and if there's ways to do them better and evaluation can help to do that, or if there's stuff that's working really well and by having an evaluator tell that story so that it can have ongoing funding or be expanded to work in other areas, their reach is increased or rolled out in other places, then that to me is job satisfaction. So that's why I do it.

Mere linked her use of evaluation to support Māori development to her preference for working formatively with organizations and programs, "...it's about finding ways to contribute to programs and getting the best outcomes for Māori..." Utilization was central to 'good' evaluation,

...you can have the best design and stuff and if it isn't used, it's not the best design. You've got the wrong definition of 'best design'.

She paid specific attention to ensuring evaluations were designed to support utilization. She was less interested in conducting evaluations where the potential for use could not be identified or assured prior to conducting the evaluation itself.

Evaluation could be useful in a number of ways. Formatively, it could input into program planning and development. It could inform required developments at higher levels (e.g. policy, funding). It could provide learning and evaluative capability development for stakeholders as they participated in the processes. She observed,

...the learning of the people that you work with as you walk along with them, there are things that they might learn about evaluating their own processes and outcomes and stuff, that's hugely important.

Evaluation capability building might include the building of skills required for stakeholders to conduct evaluation or simply enhanced capability to think evaluatively.

Evaluative capability development was not necessarily possible or achievable in all evaluations. It was more likely within formative evaluation.

Mere understood and described evaluation as a “...hikoi.” As evaluator, she walked alongside program stakeholders,

...feeding back in ways that are useful for them to develop the program to better meet...their definition of success...or whatever the outcomes they are looking for...

Evaluation was a collaborative and mutual learning process. In the role of guide, she assisted stakeholders to understand and define success. She assisted them to establish performance indicators and through evaluative tools and processes, to understand progress towards intended outcomes.

In her practice, Mere acknowledged and built upon the skills, knowledge, and capabilities stakeholders brought to the process. She was engaged in a process of “...drawing that out so they are more conscious of it and using the thinking in program development”. She recognized her enabling approach often changed stakeholders understanding and regard for the usefulness of evaluation, “...they get that this is a really valuable thing that you are doing.”

Her evaluation practice was highly relational and built upon whakapapa and whakawhanaungatanga. Developing relationships and trust was central to her approach. She shared her story, who she was, where she was from, and what connection she had to stakeholders and the evaluand. This enabled stakeholders to “...hook into who I am and where I am coming from...” Relationship provided the ground and context for communicating to stakeholders her evaluation approach,

...I talk about evaluation being a journey that we take together, or we are on the same team, or you set the markers and I help you to do that in ways that work for you and then we go about doing it...

Mere was increasingly confident in her ability to work alongside stakeholders to design evaluations that would be appropriate in context. The evaluation would make sense and provide value to stakeholders as well as meet contractual obligations,

...I feel I have come to a place where I am actually really comfortable to walk into an evaluation context and just trust that process of walking alongside people.

Mere's evaluation practice was based on Māori as well as family values. It was underpinned by,

...an ethic of love...every human person is valuable and has a valuable experience and opinion and so it's working with those and seeing that in every person.

Rather than method or methodology, the philosophy underpinning her practice came first. The philosophy and values underpinning her practice shaped the context of each evaluation, the methods, and methodology used,

...So the methods are absolutely secondary. They are really important, but it's like I said, I have a kete that has methods in it.

The evaluator and stakeholders brought both past and future concerns to the evaluation process. This included, "...all the people that have formed you to be who you are as they do them..." Other experiences brought to the process included previous experiences of evaluation. Evaluation was a journey that did not begin and end with the start and conclusion of the evaluation. The journey could "...go on past the end of the evaluation, for generations often." Through the journey of collaboration and mutual learning, knowledge and understanding of people and experience unfolded and helped to define the evaluation context as well as appropriate methodology and method.

Given the small size of New Zealand and degree of connectedness, particularly amongst Māori, Mere often had whanau or other relationships with evaluation stakeholders. Across different projects, she could occupy positions on a continuum from external and outsider to internal and insider. At times, there may be a blurring of respective positions, for example, when she had whakapapa links with stakeholders or had whakapapa links with people on an evaluation team. Relationships established through the evaluation process would exist long after the evaluation,

...We are all linked by whakapapa, so those definitions you might hear in other places don't necessarily apply either. I think we blur those.

## **Learning and development through the evaluation process**

Mere recognized that the evaluation process was itself an agent of change. The evaluation journey was "...as important as the end result..." The learning and development that could occur for stakeholders through their participation was a distinct form of use. It may or may not happen depending on how and what type of evaluation was conducted. She believed more attention should be given to the role, function, and impact of evaluation as an intervention, but she did not view this as 'process use'. It might be called "...evaluation building capability." However, she was reluctant to use such labels to describe her practice. For example, building evaluation capability was a complex, difficult, and long-term process. It was often difficult to fully achieve given inevitable constraints, for example, that staff often had limited time and resources and could not commit to anything other than their program activities.

Mere's intentionality to develop evaluative capability through the evaluation process was perhaps more obviously linked to her drive to use evaluation to support Māori development,

...Because asking ourselves those really basic questions about how well are we doing and how could we do better are fundamental to doing the best that we can and getting to those successes that we want to have for Māori, or for programs...

Logic modelling was a useful practice that could facilitate cross-stakeholder communication, critical reflection, shared understanding, and transformative learning. However, appropriate use of logic models for these purposes required other factors being in place. In the absence of these, value, and utility for stakeholders could be diminished. Stakeholders needed to be involved in developing models as part of the program development process, rather than trying to retrofit models to existing programs, or using them to try and demonstrate that programs fitted funding requirements. The development group required the skills needed to produce logical models and the time required to develop and remodel them as required. It was important that models fitted the local context. The use of images and concepts with meaning for Maori was important. Models should also be reviewed by tikanga advisors to ensure they were consistent with Maori values. Mere was concerned that many funders had come to expect that logic modelling would be part of any evaluation. Other tools and process may be of greater benefit given

specifics of need and context. Evaluators and stakeholders would be better served if there was a greater focus,

...on providing the right conditions for developing evaluations that fit programs rather than requiring specific tools or processes to be used.

Mere recalled an evaluation that resulted in program stakeholders "...sitting at the table ...together" to receive findings. Without the evaluation, this coming together may otherwise not have happened. Resulting cross-stakeholder communication had enhanced understanding of program issues, potential solutions, and strategies. Disseminating the findings had built beneficial networks that may otherwise not have occurred,

...I took others with me [to the hui]...because that's what I do because I'm Māori. We always take other people with us. Hey, you should meet these people and they should. They hadn't met before and they knew who each other were, what their names were, and they may have even talked on the phone and stuff, but they had never actually eye balled each other."

...And they will refer people to the Māori person that they now have seen a face.

Mere discussed a recent evaluation where she considered stakeholders had learnt and developed through the evaluation process. She considered these outcomes important and intentional. The evaluation was a formative, process, and impact/outcome evaluation of a three year program that was focused on the prevention of a significant social problem. The program was delivered by a Māori social service provider through a Māori funding stream that sought innovative Māori responses to the issue being addressed.

The formative evaluation had enabled Mere to be involved in the initial development of the program. She had walked alongside program staff and assisted in the development of the program as well as the evaluation. From her initial review of program planning documents, she had recognized considerable need for formative evaluation to contribute to program development,

...I could tell from the documents that they didn't actually...there were some sort of higher concepts but not any flesh on that really. It was like how that's going to actually look nobody knew...

Due to Mere's unavailability in later stages of the evaluation, the evaluation was also intentionally designed to develop the capability of program staff to collect and analyse evaluation data. While this added to Mere's intention to build capability through the process, she commented, "...I wouldn't necessarily have done it differently".

Mere described an initial focus on whakawhanaungatanga. She had used the process to establish with stakeholders, "...I'm Māori and I'm on their team..." Points of connection and identification with the stakeholders and their mahi had been established, "...I [also] have personal experiences [relating to the issue being addressed through the program]". She reflected,

...as Māori, that's what we want. We want to hear someone's stories, so sharing my story from the very first meeting, even though that takes time. The first meeting we didn't talk anything about the evaluation almost. It was like, who are you, here's who I am, who are you? I think that establishes that kind of relationship that, you know, she's one of us.

The formative evaluation process informed how staff understood and framed the program and evaluation. The process liberated staff from their orthodox or mainstream view of what the program should be and how it would achieve stated objectives. Logic modelling supported staff to rethink, "...what they are actually going to do and how it might connect with the outcomes that they want." It enabled staff to reconceptualise and frame the program through Māori values and practices. For example, staff had not previously considered the meaning of a key issue within the program from a tikanga perspective. Through encouraging staff to explore and build this understanding, the process enabled staff to redevelop tikanga based practices and protocols within the program. These were not in any way related "...to Government processes or definitions..." Through the shared understanding and affirmation of cultural practice that resulted from the process, staff felt more confident and freer, "...to actually rewrite [program] protocols in a tikanga way." They were able to do this "...without the paranoia of "Is this the right thing?"

Mere intentionally used evaluative questioning to facilitate the critical and transformative thinking required to reconceptualise and develop the program as described, "...just asking those questions all the time. So what's Māori about that? And what's innovative about it?"

Rather than impose an answer or solution, such questioning gave staff "...permission" to re-examine or "...unpack" what was assumed or believed about the program.

Mere saw a number of factors supporting the extent to which the evaluation process had led to learning and development outcomes. These included whakawhanaungatanga, her involvement as formative evaluator from the beginning of the program, the relationship of trust and confidence she had with staff, and the funding of the program as an innovation. Working alongside the program enabled Mere to ask "...evaluative questions along the way." She was able to use her evaluation experience and tools to shape program development. The relationship, trust, and confidence developed established a safe and supportive learning environment. Mere was able to stretch the horizons of staff "...outside of that sort of boxed in thinking that they had ...." She noted,

...they were given the opportunity to choose their evaluators and I think that's my ideal as well. So I know that if they had me there it's because they want me there...

The funding of the program as an innovation provided a mandate to be innovative in program development as well as in the use of evaluation to guide program development.

Mere was increasingly confident in her ability to follow a highly relational and responsive form of practice. She had faith the process would lead to evaluation appropriate in context,

...I realize that I am actually comfortable [now] going into an environment with what other people might consider being unprepared. In the past...I would have wanted to have some kind of process and all sorts of things like that in mind, but now I am happy to go in and just meet and talk with people and from that allow the process to develop.

She felt she had accumulated an appropriate range of evaluation tools and skills,

...I feel reasonably confident when I go into those situations that we can together, them and me, with the knowledge and the tools I have, develop an evaluation and then tweak it as we need to, that will work for them in their situation.

She was able to assess existing capability and capacity and build evaluative capability in a way that "...made sense" to program staff, was useful, integrated, and sustainable.

Mere described a number of learning and development outcomes for stakeholders as a result of the evaluation process. There was collective ownership over the program and the evaluation. This led to "...blurred insider/outsider boundaries." Staff considered themselves part of the evaluation team and Mere a part of the project team. She commented,

...staff feel very much that the evaluation is their evaluation and that it's there to help and support them to do the very best job they can do.

The evaluation process had led staff to new attitudes and understanding about the role, value, and process of evaluation. Some had previous experiences of evaluation as a process where evaluators came in and took required data, "...Can you get it for me?" Staff in her example understood and valued her collaborative and reciprocated approach,

...they are constantly feeling that it's been really amazing for them having an evaluator who comes in and suggests stuff that they would never have thought of before and ways of working and things...

...this was a really different process for them and they were constantly saying "Oh man, it's so good to have an evaluator who gets it..."

Staff had become highly receptive to the role and use of evaluation within the program. They accepted evaluative judgements derived about performance,

...They're excited to know how well they are doing. They don't feel afraid to find out that things didn't work and to go "Oh, okay, let's rethink this because this isn't working." And so they are not risk averse in the same way that they were...

Staff considered the evaluation,

...a really good part of this project...they talk about it being the key difference between this project and most of the other ones they have worked on. They get to think evaluatively about what they are doing in a way that wasn't really encouraged in the other projects. They just sort of rolled them out and got on with them, whereas this one they are always being encouraged to think "How is this going, and could we be doing this better" and they love it.

The logic model was being used by staff to explain and communicate the program to others. It helped them to articulate how,

...tikanga leads to having the right foundation, leads to the outcomes that they want. And it's a Māori image that Māori understand and it's beautiful...the development of [it], and even the end product, has been something that they actually have used to explain their project and feel that it gives them permission to do it a Māori way.

Such communication was educating other stakeholders about “...good ways to work with Māori.” It was also helping the provider to build credibility, trust, and networks with stakeholder organizations,

...They can actually take it and people are “Oh yeah, we get that.” So you are not just a flakey Māori organization...there is a lot of that out there...

Staff were sharing tools developed through the evaluation with other stakeholders and through the wider organization. They were starting to use the tools and processes developed within other projects.

In addition to increased confidence to be innovative within the program, staff also had increased confidence in their relationship with funders. They better understood appropriate and useful data within the context of the program. They were willing to negotiate with funders regarding evaluation reporting,

...we will provide you with some figures but we are not necessarily going to do what you want...provide a whole page of numbers because it doesn't make sense in our context and we are willing to argue that and do it our way.

## **Reflections**

Mere described an evaluation practice that was initially largely developed ‘on-the-job’. Beginning with little formal or theoretical knowledge of what evaluation ‘should’ be, Mere’s practice was shaped by the values, beliefs, and aspirations she brought to her practice. She immediately sought to practice in a way that would realize the potential for evaluation to support Māori development and ultimately, positive “...outcomes for whanau...” The ‘hikoi’ model of evaluation, developed by the organization within which she initially practised evaluation, was influential in this development.

Mere intuitively understood that evaluation was essentially about people and working in relationship with others. Evaluation was an on-going and mutual journey that didn't start and finish at the beginning and end of an evaluation. Stakeholders should be involved in developing evaluation so their understanding of good and success was represented. She described a highly collaborative and participatory approach. She couldn't "...divorce" herself from the journey of evaluation. Rather than just be a means to "...the end", the evaluation process should itself be "...beneficial."

Mere described why she was intentional in using evaluation to support 'as Māori' development,

...outcomes are better for whanau when they feel supported in ways that make sense to them. That's what it's ultimately about. I don't care about just being Māori for Māori's sake, it's about people's lives being changed and it's really clear that when Māori are supported in ways that are sensible to them in Māori ways, they do better...

Using evaluation to support Māori development lay at the heart of her aspirations and motivations as an evaluator. It was central to the satisfaction she drew from the process, "...If I didn't think it was making some kind of difference for Māori, I wouldn't be doing it at all."

Mere was intentional in using the evaluation process to support learning and development outcomes for stakeholders. She was increasingly confident in her ability to facilitate an evaluation process that would meet the needs of the client and other stakeholders. However, the concept of 'process use' had little relevance or influence within her practice. She sought to develop Māori capability and understood that evaluative capability lay at the heart of this process,

...I think that's ultimately how I would like it to be with all the projects, because they are learning skills and things too that they take with them wherever they go after this.

Mere described an evaluation where the evaluation process had led to learning and development outcomes for stakeholders. The evaluation was intentionally designed and conducted to build the capability of staff to collect and analysis data. The evaluation was collectively determined by Mere and stakeholders to be useful and utilizable within the

context of the program. Mere undertook support and development roles throughout the evaluation. There were blurred boundaries between the evaluator and program staff. Evaluation was an integral part of program development. It was therefore difficult and somewhat irrelevant to try and tease out the impact of the evaluation process on program development from other program development. The project reflected the breadth, variety, and responsiveness of local evaluation. Mere was reluctant to label the learning and development outcomes that occurred for stakeholders through the evaluation process. Such outcomes were inevitable given the values and beliefs she brought to her practice, her understanding of 'good' practice, and her motivations and aspirations as a Māori evaluator.

## **‘Peter’**

### **Background**

Peter’s pathway to becoming an evaluator followed a degree in social policy, part time employment within a research company, and eventually full time employment as a researcher/evaluator. Following this position, Peter established himself as an independent research and evaluation consultant. His work spans different public sector areas, although has some focus on health and public health. As Māori, he predominantly works with Māori although not exclusively.

While his journey to evaluation was largely unintentional, Peter recognized that aspects of evaluation aligned to his values and interests. He was drawn to it as a means of contributing to positive change outcomes, particularly for Māori. It linked to his empathy, care, and concern for others. He had a desire to “...see good things” and to “...see people doing well.” He felt optimistic that he could contribute to positive change through his practice. He was also drawn to the financial security potentially offered through a successful evaluation practice. More recently he had come to appreciate that evaluation offered the potential to undertake a variety of roles, for example, project management.

### **Evaluation practice**

Peter saw evaluation being essentially concerned with identifying and answering important questions. It ensured that the perspectives, insights, and lived realities of stakeholders were represented. It provided well informed judgments from evidence. Evaluation should be a useful experience for stakeholders. The process should leave them “...with something that is useful rather than going in there and just doing it on them and going away”.

‘Good evaluation’ was consultative and collaborative. Stakeholder participation was important so that the process was embedded in local context and represented the voice of stakeholders in rich, natural form. The evaluator ideally took the role of “...story presenter” rather than “...story teller.”

‘Good’ evaluation was responsive and flexible. Mixed or alternative methods would be utilized as appropriate. The process would be responsive to specific situation or context. Process and methods used would match the capability and capacity of stakeholders. ‘Good’

evaluation was focused. It minimized demands on stakeholders while still achieving intended outcomes.

Peter had long understood how the evaluation process could lead to stakeholder learning and development. Through in-depth interviews, participants could feel they had “...been heard and listened to.” Interviews provided participants with opportunities for self-reflection that could lead to new insights and understanding. They could lead to new intent, motivation, or strategy to undertake some form of behaviour change (e.g. for example, a decision to undertake exercise). As a form of being in relationship with others, Peter recognized he couldn’t help but engage with participants during interviews at a human and personal level.

Peter reported recent changes within his evaluation practice and approach. In part, these changes had been a response to his growing dissatisfaction with his practice and progress as an evaluator. He was taking a more professional and systematic approach to developing the business side of his practice. He had shifted from seeing evaluation as just a job to being more conscious and intentional in using the evaluation process to develop stakeholder capability and capacity.

Peter described his previous practice as largely routine. It had been a “...horses for courses approach.” He had mainly used familiar methods. While he worked with participants respectfully and sought their rapport, he had previously given little thought “...about what I can leave behind. What I can leave for [stakeholders].” He was now more conscious and focused on how he could deliver something back to stakeholders, for example through enhancing evaluation capability or capacity. He was more conscious he could play the role of change agent and that evaluation was a process of learning and change.

Peter described these shifts, including a more professional business approach, as a “...step up” and “...mind shift.” In part, they reflected his increased confidence in his skills and experience. He was working within a more collegial and supportive peer network. This was also providing him with an “...external reference” that was helping to guide his professional development.

Peter was more consciously framing his evaluation practice on a kaupapa Māori framework. The framework was based upon values such as whakawhaungatanga,

whakapapa, manaakitanga, awhinatanga, koha, and aroha. He had come to conceive evaluation as a tikanga marae process. This framework provided a “...good process for evaluation” in drawing out parallels between marae protocol and the evaluation process. These areas included invitation, welcome and mihi, establishment of intention, undertaking intended business, and on-going relationship. The framework drew attention to the importance of evaluation processes respecting tikanga. It highlighted the establishment and maintenance of respectful relationships as core to evaluation practice. In this way, it reinforced the “...the humanity in evaluation.” That is, evaluation should be people-centred.

Peter recognized that aspects of the framework were to him both innate and learned. It provided a practice guide more aligned with his values. It resonated “...with who I am” and provided “...a vehicle by which I can express who I am.” As a result of basing his practice more consciously on the framework, he was feeling more personally connected to his practice. He was deriving more enjoyment and satisfaction from it “...because I can actually be me.” He commented,

...where I was before you just kind of lose touch with the humanity of the discipline, whereas now it's kind of like “aah, this is good, I can be me and I can have more control over what I do as opposed to being controlled by the process.

### **Learning and development outcomes through the evaluation process**

Peter described an emerging focus within his evaluation practice on ‘giving back.’ Using the evaluation process to build stakeholder capability and capacity was central to this. He described two examples from his recent practice where he had intentionally used the evaluation process to build stakeholder capability/capacity.

The main example discussed occurred within a formative, process, and outcome evaluation of an educational service that was moving from a mainstream model of service delivery to a cultural model of delivery. As part of a collaborative approach to planning, Peter organised a workshop where service staff participated in the development of an evaluation rubric that was to be used within the evaluation.

Peter recognized that the rubric would itself inform the development of a focused and useful evaluation. However, he was also intentional in using the workshop to build

stakeholder capability. He saw the rubric as a tool that could be used by stakeholders in their on-going development and implementation of the service. He intentionally sought for the process to be independently useful to stakeholders for the purposes of program and organizational development. It was his intent that the workshop would build capability through providing stakeholders with a process for clarifying and articulating,

...what they are actually doing and what they are looking for, and how they're actually achieving that or how they want to achieve it.

He sought for the rubric to be "...a very useful and user friendly tool." This outcome had been "...a key motivator" for establishing the workshop process.

Peter intentionally re-positioned the evaluation as a shared process where there was "...no smoke and mirrors." He sought open and equal relationship between the evaluation team and stakeholders. He contrasted this to a practice model where evaluation was imposed, where knowledge sits with the evaluator, and where the process is not transparent or understood by participants. Such an approach was likely to deliver "...surprises."

The workshop was intentionally held within the premises of the service provider and focused initially on developing participants' trust, understanding, and ownership. It began by examining participants' previous experiences of evaluation. This process established background context for the workshop. Rubric development was explained to participants as a process that would reflect their context, perspectives, principles, and ideas. The rubric was explained as a tool for evidencing performance and outcomes and for informing on-going service developments.

The rubric development process enabled participants to reflect critically on their work, what they were doing and why. The rubric itself provided an evaluative framework that enabled participants to articulate the objectives, activities, and logic of the cultural practice model being implemented.

Peter felt the open and participatory nature of the workshop had been successful in building participants' understanding, engagement, and ownership over the evaluation. The process essentially provided a framework for capturing participants' existing knowledge and experience. Participants had become "...excited as they gave the answers and we worked with them to define and redefine the description of things." He reported feedback

such as, “...oh, you've captured what we said really well.” The service manager had commented,

...Oh, that's really useful. This is really good. Ah, you're capturing the things that I haven't had time to write. This is great.

The workshop process had favourably impacted the attitudes and feelings of participants. The open, participatory process had helped to shift participants' attitudes and acceptance of evaluation. However, this was an on-going process and not yet complete. The process had,

...taken away the sort of cloak and dagger approach where [participants are left questioning]...what's the evaluator doing?

...increased the reputation, the credibility...of evaluation.

The process had demystified evaluation so that it wasn't “...scary”. It had developed participants' understanding of the rubric as a tool for evidencing performance and outcomes and for informing on-going service developments. As a result, evaluative judgements eventually derived from the evaluation were likely to be “...more palatable” to stakeholders.

Peter believed that the evaluation process had positively impacted participants' feelings about their work. In doing so, the process had been enabling and empowering,

...I think...it provided them with a great deal of clarity and optimism and hope that things can happen. At least they know where to start or what to work on.

Through developing participants' understanding of evaluation and thus their evaluative capability, Peter hoped the workshop process may also lead participants to being more informed future consumers of evaluation. Through becoming more “...savvy” about evaluation, he hoped they may be more in control of future evaluation activities. They would be more able and prepared to articulate their expectations and needs regarding evaluation.

Peter also briefly discussed how he considered the use of the Photo Voice method had delivered value and benefits to stakeholders participating in an evaluation of an educational

program delivered through a local wananga. The method enabled participants to tell their stories. It represented their local context using words and imagery that brought their reality and experience to life. The use of imagery to tell stories allowed participants "...to vent" and to feel they had been listened to through the evaluation process. The appropriateness of the method to the cultural context of the evaluand had led participants to feel "...confirmed and valued for being Māori..."

## **Reflections**

Peter described a shift in his practice towards the more conscious and deliberate use of the evaluation process to build stakeholder capability and capacity. Through conceptualizing evaluation through a tikanga marae framework, he was seeing how he could work more deliberately to return value and benefit to stakeholders through the evaluation process. The framework was providing him with a personally relevant and meaningful way of connecting his practice to his values and beliefs.

Peter described two examples from his recent practice where he considered himself intentional in using the evaluation process to build stakeholder capability. Stakeholder outcomes described from this included enhanced understanding of evaluation and greater engagement in the process. Other outcomes included shared understanding and the enhanced ability of stakeholders to describe and explain their activities. The ability of stakeholders to use evaluative tools and thinking to inform program development had also been enhanced. Stakeholders also had more favourable attitudes to evaluation, and increased confidence regarding their activities and practice.

While the evaluation literature describes such outcomes as process use, Peter did not conceive or frame his intentionality around capability building in these terms. His deliberativeness was more clearly explained through his framing of evaluation as a tikanga marae process. This framework linked his practice and processes to marae protocol and tikanga Māori. Evaluation was concerned with issues of connection and relationship. The process should respect and be responsive to tikanga. It should honour the knowledge and experience of others. The evaluator had a responsibility to contribute to Māori development and well-being. Evaluation was not a one-off process, but rather occurred within a past and future context. Engaging stakeholders in an evaluation process

established an on-going relationship between the evaluator and stakeholders and therefore responsibilities to consider on-going impacts, connections, and obligations.

It is within and through such framing that Peter's intention to 'give back' through evaluation can be understood. He was uneasy and increasingly dissatisfied with an approach to evaluation where "...it's kind of get in there and you're gone. You are not seen again type of thing..." He described greater satisfaction when the evaluation process left stakeholders "...better off" and when benefits continue "...after I have been there." Approaching evaluation this way had provided Peter with new appreciation that evaluation could be "...a really good vehicle for expressing who I am and being all I can be."

## **‘Richard’**

### **Background**

Richard’s pathway to evaluation followed post-graduate qualifications and employment within research organizations where he initially began to undertake evaluation. Observing there was little attention given to evaluation during his studies, “...were people [even] talking about evaluation back [then]...?”, he had initially learnt about evaluation ‘on the job’. Reflecting on a previous position within a university research unit, where he had started to have some involvement in evaluation, he recalled, “...I was hearing about evaluation, learning about evaluation...”

Evaluation was a more significant part of his current position within a research organization. He was now “...doing evaluation” and was more conscious that his work was often evaluation. Early on in this role, he had been “...on a bit of a learning cycle” and had been grateful for the advisory input of more experienced evaluators.

Richard described his current workplace as busy, “...There is always more work than time.” The organizational focus was primarily on doing research and evaluation rather than spending a lot of time thinking or theorizing about it. There was typically little “...fat” in budgets that enabled attention to issues beyond client requirements, “...I allocate every hour right from the day we do the budget.” There was some flexibility around budgets, particularly when compared to other research companies. Given the busy, applied focus of his workplace, Richard valued his engagement in professional development activities, such as those held through organizations like anzea.

Richard linked his motivation to undertake research and evaluation to a desire to make “...the world a better place...” Evaluation was a process and tool for developing more effective social programs and ultimately better outcomes for program recipients. He was concerned for using evaluation to ensure that programs effectively addressed inequalities. He sought to ensure “...program participants' voices and needs and experiences are a key part of the evaluation.”

Richard recognized his motivations and aspirations as a researcher/evaluator linked to goals and values of importance to him. His life was about “...Making a difference, making a

contribution". Such contribution gave him "...satisfaction," it seemed "...worth-while." He described an underlying "...love for my fellow man..." and concern for social justice,

...I feel very privileged to be in the situation I am in, living in New Zealand and being well educated, having a job that I enjoy. I guess one of my things in life is to have more people have the opportunity to enjoy their lives as much as possible.

### **Evaluation practice**

Reflecting his concern for social betterment, Richard described evaluation a means of ensuring "...programs work as well as possible." He emphasised formative evaluation within his evaluation practice "...to try and make sure things are got right before you start."

Through his work, Richard sought to provide a "...level of understanding and insight beyond what is already known." However, he recognized that evaluation could also provide value through reconfirming or supporting existing knowledge. It also provided value as a collection point or store for accumulated understanding about programs.

Richard defined himself as "...first and foremost" a social researcher. He saw evaluation as part of what he did within this role, "...I don't see myself as just an evaluator like quite a few people probably do." He recognized that evaluation could be distinguished from research on the basis that evaluation typically sought to answer questions related to performance or outcomes from a specific evaluand. However, he was not too concerned about the need for a clear distinction between research and evaluation,

...it's probably one I haven't thought about a lot to be honest...

...it hasn't seemed to me too critical to get it sorted in my own head.

Following the above, Richard recognized that many methods and processes used in evaluation essentially drew on research methods and processes, "...stakeholder interviews", "...documenting the process", "...trying to work out how you might assess any impacts..." His work could at times be labelled interchangeably as research or evaluation. For example, as his research often addressed evaluative questions, "...you could call that social research or you could call it evaluation..." Reflecting on other aspects of his work, "... you could call that formative evaluation or you could call it qualitative research..." Further, "...we do

tracking surveys to monitor impacts...you could call [that] evaluating the impacts...”

Further,

...sometimes it looks to me like the client is not even sure whether they are calling it an evaluation or not. Sometimes I look at something and think, well, normally I would think that was an evaluation but they haven't used the term 'evaluation' in their RFP, so I wouldn't use it too.

Richard was concerned with ensuring the purpose and objectives of projects were clear, projects met client needs, and that findings were ultimately used to make a difference.

Richard understood that positive stakeholder relationships were central to ‘good’ evaluation. Positive relationships facilitated stakeholder involvement in the development and design of projects. They built engagement, acceptance, and ownership over evaluation. These outcomes enhanced the likelihood that stakeholders would eventually accept and use findings,

...If people are on board from the beginning, to feel like they are actually part of the process and have had a say in what's done and how it's done, then it is much more likely they are going to buy into what comes out of it, particularly if you can keep them involved throughout the process...

A minimum level of stakeholder participation would ensure that key stakeholders had knowledge about and understood the evaluation. They would have opportunity to shape purpose and objectives to ensure they received value from it.

Richard acknowledged being less conscious or intentional in his practice regarding how stakeholder participation in the evaluation process could facilitate process use. He remarked,

...To be honest, my focus has been primarily on what is the client wanting us to achieve and not very much probably on what's in it for the people running the programs...

Many of the evaluations he conducted provided limited opportunity for in-depth involvement by stakeholders and therefore limited potential for process use, “...We are really working at a national level...” Despite this context, Richard recalled instances where

he felt process use had occurred through his practice. He recognized the participation of stakeholders in program logic modelling was likely to have led to learning,

...I am sure they would have found it a useful process to go through in terms of understanding what they are up to and where the weaknesses might be...

He also recognized examples of affective or attitudinal process use where stakeholders' participation has led them to change their attitudes, beliefs, or feelings about themselves, evaluation, or the evaluand. Reflecting on a current project,

...I think we probably are making an impact on the ad agency in terms of them valuing research.

...the client has come to see the value of evaluation more [as a monitoring and self-evaluation tool] and bringing that to other parts of their work that I suspect they didn't do before...

In this example, affective/attitudinal changes may have also occurred as a result of the provider recognizing the value being placed on evaluation by funders and having increased regard for evaluation as a way of communicating program performance.

Richard adopted "...an eclectic, pragmatic" approach to his research and evaluation practice. He did not necessarily define his practice through the academic literature,

...I'm not sure I'm knowledgeable about all the literature to actually say that I do this type of approach...

He drew on his skills and experience in both quantitative and qualitative methods to design research/evaluation that "...works." He sought the,

...best way of going about what the client is seeking to achieve or what I think should be achieved...

Richard linked his practical, pragmatic approach to his underlying values and aspirations regarding research and evaluation,

...At the end of the day that's my primary objective...to come up with something that is actually going to make the most difference in terms of contributing to the

groups that it is supposed to be contributing to. And I guess underlying that is the whole social justice focus and wanting to reduce inequalities and all that sort of thing.

He recognized his approach was in part a response to the environment he worked in and the focus on doing as opposed to theorizing about evaluation practice, “...time is money.”

### **Process use**

Richard chose and discussed from his recent work, an example of the following type of process use that he felt was particularly important and intentional in his practice – “The participation of evaluation participants and/or stakeholders in the evaluation process has enhanced their willingness to receive or act upon the findings.

The project Richard drew his example from was an evaluation of a health related professional development training workshop. The evaluators had initially worked in a “...critical friend relationship” with the program providers to assist program design and development. Later stages of the evaluation examined program outcomes.

Richard was intentional in building a relationship with the program provider and ensured opportunities for their on-going input/involvement throughout the evaluation. He provided opportunities for staff to comment on and influence the design of the evaluation. They were consulted regarding an existing program logic model. They reviewed and commented on draft reports. Throughout the evaluation, Richard provided regular feedback regarding emerging issues or findings of significance. There were regular project meetings and open lines of communication.

An initial meeting between himself, provider staff and the funder was intentionally held in the office of the provider, in their “...space.” This was an attempt to position the evaluation as a process that would fit in and work alongside the provider. He ensured the meeting was followed by lunch and time spent building the personal relationship,

...I particularly wanted to make them feel that I wasn't a threat. I like to create a non-threatening environment...

The meeting and lunch was used to develop the provider's understanding about the formative role of the evaluation, "...I think the whole concept of critical friend was totally new to them..." He sought to ensure that staff understood that the evaluation aimed to "...help them to develop the best possible program."

Richard illustrated his deliberateness in maintaining a positive working relationship with the provider through discussing an attempt to develop a rubric within the evaluation. The program was unique, it "...had never been done anywhere in the world in the same format." The provider was therefore concerned about whether and how appropriate performance levels could be established within the rubric. Richard understood and shared the provider's anxiety,

...it was like just pulling figures out of the air...that's when [the provider] started getting quite anxious and scared about...you are dragging these figures out [against] which the whole program is going to be judged against.

Richard considered it more important to maintain the positive relationship with the provider than continue with the rubric,

...I just put myself in their shoes. I would feel exactly the same. I would feel really peeved if someone came and just drew some figures out of the air.

Existing outcome data from a similar program was eventually compared retrospectively to the outcomes data derived through the evaluation and enabled some comparative evaluative judgement of the outcomes achieved.

Richard understood that his relational approach would build the provider's understanding, trust, and confidence in the evaluation. These outcomes would build acceptance, engagement, and ownership over the evaluation and increase the likelihood of findings use, "...if you've got good friendly working relations it will just flow..." Richard felt the providers' responsiveness to recommendations made during early stages of the evaluation reflected the relational and participatory nature of the evaluation,

...they did take that on board and strengthen that area up a lot. I don't think that would have happened, so much anyway, if we hadn't had such a good relationship...

## Reflections

Richard described a pragmatic and applied approach to evaluation. He had largely learnt about evaluation through doing. He was focused on providing useful and utilizable findings. He was concerned that evaluation ultimately led to improved outcomes for program recipients. He valued formative evaluation so that programs were “...right from the start” and more likely to work. His motivation and aspiration to see his work contribute to social betterment linked to underlying values concerning democracy, respect, love of others, and social justice. Ensuring his research and evaluation work made a positive difference in society was more important to Richard than distinguishing it as either ‘research’ or ‘evaluation’. There was a greater focus within his workplace on conducting research/evaluation that met need rather than theorising about practice.

Compared to his focus on findings use, Richard was less conscious and intentional in his practice regarding process use. The type of evaluation typically conducted by Richard provided some explanation for this. He described limited opportunities for in-depth engagement and participation by stakeholders during the evaluation process itself.

Richard found the interview a valuable opportunity to reflect more consciously on process use. Through this reflection, he recognized that a number of different types of process use had occurred through his practice. He discussed a recent evaluation where he had intentionally built stakeholder relationships and participation to enhance the likelihood of findings use. He acknowledged this intention had in part been influenced by previous experiences where limited stakeholder participation and ownership had undermined the extent of findings use that had occurred.

The relationship between stakeholder participation and the enhanced likelihood of finding use has been discussed in the literature as a form of process use. However, it seems incorrect to conclude that Richard intentionally sought ‘process use’. He was motivated to ensure the overall success of the project; that his findings would be used and through this, that the evaluation would inform program development and better outcomes. He recognized that his participatory and collaborative approach was more likely “...to make the evaluation workable”. He recognized that positive relationships were critical to the ability of the evaluator to be a ‘critical friend’. His intentionality also linked to his desire to make a difference through his practice. He understood that his work was less likely to be accepted and used by stakeholders if they lacked buy in to the process and findings.

## **‘Roy’**

### **Background**

Roy’s pathway to evaluation followed an academic career in political science and employment as a political and economic analyst. Roy continued his pursue his interests in public policy through further post-graduate study in New Zealand. It was through this that he formally studied evaluation. He joined the research and evaluation team within a government department and at the time of the interview was continuing to practice evaluation within a government department.

Reflecting on this journey, Roy recognized he had been addressing evaluative questions throughout his career. He move into evaluation was consistent with his career interests and concerns. His understanding and practice of evaluation had developed through a mix of “...training on the job,” on-going professional development through professional evaluation associations, and through his practical working experience.

Roy was currently manager of a research and evaluation team within a large government department. He observed an increasing emphasis on evaluation within government to address questions of cost effectiveness and return on investment. This type of focus had previously had taken more of “...a back seat.”

Roy described some cynicism within the public sector regarding evaluation. There was a perceptions that,

...it doesn’t really help answer all the questions, it raises more questions than it helps answers, or what it answers doesn’t really fully...doesn’t seem credible...

There was some natural resistance to evaluation and some inherent fear of negative findings within the public sector, “...risk aversion that is part of any government or public sector.” There was an on-going need by evaluators working in government to convince internal stakeholder that evaluation should,

...be right at the beginning...an integral part of the policy development process and not be seen as a discreet activity which people switch on and off.

While agreeing that evaluation should ideally be integrated within iterative cycles of evidence gathering, such use didn't always "...win the argument for the funding that goes with that". Organizational culture, willingness, and commitment to operate in more of a learning orientated and critically reflective way were needed for this to occur. Clearer understanding of resultant benefits and value delivered from this approach, as well as incentives to make such shift, were also required. While some departments were attempting to move beyond short term policy concerns, in general, "...people don't see the long run game in sight." The busy, reactive nature of government departments made this difficult.

Roy described less use of evaluation within government "...in that kind of reflective space." Evaluation was often used to justify program and policy decisions. Government departments were less geared generally to use evaluation as,

...expansive reflective thinking, I don't think organizations are geared to do and I don't think that evaluative thinking is part of a kind of organizational culture. They will do it from time to time for more accountability or organizational development needs, when there is pressure to do certain things...

Internal stakeholders within Roy's organization were more likely to come to his evaluation team at the start of policy development process,

...more because that they think that we were aware of the subject...not because they think that we have evaluative skills that can help them piece through at early problem definition stage, through to formulating a kind of theory or some kind of logic etc...they do not really come at it like that.

## **Evaluation practice**

Roy's interest and practice of evaluation followed "...a strong sense of social justice..." Evaluation was a means of "...making a difference." His practice followed his long held interest in issues to do with public good. These concerns had been shaped through his experience living in a country where there was high competition for limited resources and considerable social disadvantage.

Evaluation was essential in any context where the state determined public goods and services and controlled laws governing public life. Given these responsibilities, governments had a duty to address questions such as,

...what makes a difference...are programs working as intended, are they efficient, for whom are they working, for what groups, in what context?

In addressing such questions, Roy recognized that evaluation was underpinned by decisions around values and valuing. It was therefore fundamentally different to research. Criteria determining judgements of merit and value should be collaboratively determined. Relevant interests and concerns should be drawn upon, rather than,

...by some a priori assumptions about this is how you view the world. I think evaluation allows that multitude of [perspectives].

‘Good’ evaluation built clarity and consensus regarding the basis for evaluative judgements,

...have you defined what you mean by success in this context, or have you got the definition at the outset, or do you have clarity that elements of that will evolve during the course of the evaluative process.

‘Good’ evaluation also occurred when the evaluation methodology was “...fit for purpose.” It was appropriate for answering the evaluative question being asked. There was sufficient capacity and capability for conducting the evaluation appropriately.

Utilization was central to good evaluation, particularly within the public sector, “...the real test [of good evaluation] would be to what extent does [evaluation] get utilised well?” The reason and context for evaluation needed to be clear. For example, was evaluation being undertaken for program development, accountability, or learning purposes? Clarification was important in the public sector context as evaluators were not always involved at the beginning of the policy development process. However, transparency regarding the purpose and intended use of evaluation supported stakeholder engagement, data quality, and ethical practice, “...people need to know what is in it for them and what is motivating the commissioners to do this work.”

Roy recognized there were likely to be differences between what he and other evaluators in his organization knew evaluation could be and the approach and use of evaluation possible within his organization. While he understood and appreciated the potential of developmental evaluation, he recognized there was little understanding of the approach within his organization and little possibility of it being undertaken. Internal stakeholders

more typically engaged in evaluation on the basis of evaluation form (e.g. formative, process, impact, outcome). This largely shaped the evaluation approach and practice of evaluators within the department.

Utilization was described as the strongest “...catalyst for the way that we ourselves approach the work.” An utilization focused approach was the “...dominant approach that I would use.” Reflecting his earlier observations regarding good evaluation, Roy was particularly concerned with ensuring clarity of intent and intended use. He was ultimately concerned with,

...how is this work ultimately going to end up, how is this going to be disseminated, how is this going to be utilized?

The concern for utilization largely drove methodological and method decisions. There was limited scope within his organization to think more consciously about practice beyond what was the best way to address the evaluation questions and to ensure findings were used. Mixed methods typically provided the most appropriate and comprehensive way of addressing evaluation questions. The extent evaluation was participatory was also influenced by the organizations’ “...end kind of focus” on findings use. Evaluators were more likely to think about participation issues in order to satisfy their own sense of professional and ethical responsibility.

### **Process use**

Roy had previously recognized process use within his practice through Kirkhart’s idea that evaluation could have intended and unintended influence and that influence could encompass findings use and process use.

Roy chose and discussed from his recent work an example of the following type of process use that he felt was particularly important and intentional within his practice – “The participation of evaluation participants and/or stakeholders in the evaluation process has enhanced their willingness to receive or act upon the findings’.

The example discussed occurred within a recently completed evaluation of a labour market initiative. Roy described a highly participatory approach to designing and conducting the evaluation, “...all voices were heard equally and were heard right from the

beginning.” A collaborative approach was maintained throughout the project and as far as possible given inevitable constraints (e.g. time, resources). The evaluators understood the collaborative approach would build stakeholder engagement and ownership within the evaluation and therefore their eventual use of findings. The launch of the program had been preceded by the development of the research and evaluation strategy. The program was informed by initial research which had provided a systems analysis of underlying problems and issues. This research had involved multiple stakeholders, and had laid the “...ingredients” for a participatory evaluation approach.

Roy also linked the participatory approach to the need to ensure that the evaluation provided authentic understanding of outcomes for overseas stakeholders. The engagement of these stakeholders in the evaluation was critical to its success. The contracted evaluators,

...were quite aware of the possible power dynamics and how public sector research and evaluation sometimes can sometimes privilege some [stakeholders] more than others, so I think it was their particular awareness of this which firmly kind of made them push that particular approach.

The overseas stakeholders had limited English language and were working within a different socio, cultural, and economic context. The use of culturally appropriate evaluators and evaluation methods was therefore emphasised. Both Roy and the contracted evaluators considered the participatory and inclusive approach as “...good evaluation practice” within the cross-cultural context.

A range of practices and processes were undertaken in the evaluation to build stakeholder engagement and participation. Prior to its commissioning, consultation regarding the evaluation and research strategy was undertaken with local and overseas stakeholders. This early engagement built clarity and agreement regarding the purpose and focus of the evaluation. This understanding was likely to enhance the evaluation’s overall usefulness to stakeholders and their eventual use of findings.

Attention was paid to ensuring that overseas stakeholders understood the purpose and intended use of the evaluation, particularly its role in informing program improvements. Its role as a learning process was emphasized through ensuring stakeholders understood that findings would be fed back to them, “...what you are going to say is of importance for us to reflect and learn how this initiative is going...” This transparency and positioning was

considered a means to build the engagement and support of stakeholders within the evaluation.

An evaluation advisory group was established to enable joint governance by key stakeholders. Multiple strategies were used to ensure that stakeholders were kept “...constantly in [the] loop.” These included regular meetings, the circulation of correspondence and meeting minutes, on-going information about progress, briefings at key progress stages, opportunities to comment on action points and emerging findings, and opportunities to review and comment on a summary synthesis of key findings prior to tabling final reports.

Stakeholders participated in determining the success criteria and rubrics used in the evaluation. This required stakeholders to reflect critically regarding criteria and performance levels that would indicate poor, average, or successful outcomes from the initiative. This required a level of thinking beyond that likely if evaluative conclusions had simply been based on “...some level of fixed data on earnings or income or something like that.”

Roy saw the participatory approach having successfully built stakeholder ownership within the evaluation “...they really appreciated somebody didn’t walk in and then tell them that this is what we found...” Ownership was indicated by the level of stakeholder engagement and buy-in maintained over two years, “...nobody dropped off.”

As anticipated, the participatory approach supported a high level of stakeholder acceptance and willingness to use the evaluation findings. Findings identifying required developments within the initiative were widely accepted. The findings were consistent with stakeholders,

...own perception or understanding of reality...There was no way that people said that we are completely surprised by this or that we disagree with this representation of the facts”.

...I am not sure that a robust evaluation and recording data authentically by itself would have done that without this additional process of wanting to engage people in a more authentic way and making sure they are quite transparent and that the end result for this activity is to make sure that it comes back to improve this initiative even further.

Roy identified “...trust and relationship” as key mechanisms that linked stakeholder participation to the usefulness and utilization of the evaluation by stakeholders. He acknowledged, “...I don’t think we had that explicit understanding of this mechanism at the outset.” On reflection, he recognized that the participatory processes undertaken had acted to reinforce trust and relationship throughout the evaluation.

## **Reflections**

Roy was lead to the practice of evaluation through his previous and on-going interest in public policy, political and economic analysis, and the issue of public good. His practice had been shaped by formal training, extensive applied experience, and on-going professional development. His practice was underpinned by a concern for social justice. He understood and was drawn to evaluation as a means of making a difference through enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of public policy and programs. He saw evaluation ultimately concerned with judging merit and value. It was therefore a process that should be shaped through the inclusion and participation of stakeholders.

Roy acknowledged that his practice was largely shaped by the realities, constraints, and opportunities of working within a public sector organization. This included inevitable constraints on the extent to which a fully participatory approach was achievable. His workplace context required an awareness of situational constraints as well as a commitment to push good practice as far possible.

There was a primary concern within his organization that evaluation be used. Following this, his practice was most obviously utilization focused. Most of the attributes he identified as determining good evaluation linked in some way to ensuring that findings were useful and used.

Roy discussed a recent evaluation where the participation of stakeholders had enhanced their willingness to accept and use findings. His decision to discuss this form of process use reflected the importance of findings use within his workplace. Participatory practices undertaken were understood as likely to support eventual findings use. These practices were consistent with practices that Roy considered ‘good’ evaluation.

The participatory and transparent approach described by Roy followed his understanding that the approach was both ethical and ‘right’ given the context of the

evaluation, including its cross-cultural context. Roy understood that the approach would lead to the right questions being asked. It would help ensure the quality, authenticity, and credibility of the evaluation and the ability of the evaluators to make credible assertions regarding performance and outcomes,

...in order to do that in a practical sense you require that level of real and authentic engagement with the participating stakeholders. I guess that was the kind of main driving factor...

...if we didn't produce that kind of authentic data, that was not going to be really useful for improving the initiative. So while it is making sense in a real way to the participants or respondents, but it is also about, if you didn't have that kind of authentic data, it is not really going to contribute to improving where things needed to be really improved, or the strength in areas where things are really going well.

Roy recognized that stakeholder participation in the evaluation had enhanced their willingness to receive and act upon the evaluation findings. In retrospect, he was able to identify this as an example of process use. However, it seems unlikely that at the time of the evaluation he framed or understood his practice and intentions through the term. The interview suggested a range of other explanations, not least his understanding that the approach was ethical and appropriate given the evaluation context and should the evaluation deliver instrumentally usable and useful findings.

## **‘Sally’**

### **Background**

Sally’s pathway to becoming an evaluator followed undergraduate and graduate degrees in psychology and employment as a social researcher. After about three years in this role, Sally was asked to “...do something called ‘evaluation.’” She completed this somewhat naively yet relatively successful and within a year or two was mainly conducting evaluation. She recalled there were relatively few providers of evaluation at this time, however, increasing demand and opportunities for those with appropriate skills and experience.

In her evaluation practice, Sally drew on her training in psychology and intuition about what evaluation should be. She was drawn to evaluation as it met her natural interest “...in other people's stuff.” As a novice evaluator, she recognized she was playing the role of conduit. She was interpreting and communicating stakeholders’ understanding of merit and worth to service purchasers. Recognizing that evaluation needed to deliver utility to end users, Sally described a focus in her early practice on explaining what programs consisted of, what they were delivering, how, and with what impact. She understood that evaluation was concerned with determining merit and worth. Such judgements were based on values and valuing. The evaluator was therefore required to be explicit about the values and criteria underpinning evaluative judgements.

### **Evaluation practice**

Sally’s evaluation practice was underpinned by a desire to provide “...meaningful assistance to society”. She was concerned with using evaluation to ensure the effective use of limited public resources. Evaluation was a “...public service.” It was a means of identifying effectiveness and ensuring accountability, “...it's about value for money for the country.” It ensured that public expenditure is doing “...the right thing” for program recipients. Evaluation had an important role ensuring the appropriateness of programs to local context and culture.

Sally was interested in developing grass roots evaluative capability. She believed in accessible, relatively simple, and effective self-evaluation,

...Everyone should be able to do it effectively for their people, for their clients, their students...

Her interest in demystifying evaluation reflected that she didn't initially come to evaluation "...from an academic perspective." She was concerned that academic models simply applied may be inappropriate within local contexts.

Sally had practiced evaluation within her current workplace for a considerable period of time. Her approach had been influenced by the consultancy model of practice employed by her colleagues. This approach was characterised by careful attention to scoping and planning each evaluation, assessing evaluability, and ensuring there was clarity about rationale, intended use, focus, timeframe, and respective roles and responsibilities. There was a focus on understanding what was already known through literature review and existing data.

Evaluation was the process of determining merit. It was concerned with understanding the what, how, and why of program delivery. It sought to understand the influence of context and "...program realities." Evaluation was a means of determining "...accountability...effectiveness...value for money for the country". Providing judgements of merit, evaluation inevitably drew on values. The evaluator was therefore required to make explicit the values and outcome indicators underpinning evaluative judgements.

As a consultant, Sally recognized that at one level, 'good' evaluation meant clients were "...happy." 'Good' evaluation was therefore participatory as client engagement was central to clients understanding, accepting, and using evaluation. Engagement enhanced client perceptions of value and utility received,

...it doesn't matter how thin your report is, how many gaps are in it, they get it because they already understand what you have done.

However, if clients were only engaged through receipt of a report,

...you are in big trouble because often times it won't be quite what they thought they were going to get.

Regardless of the quality and comprehensiveness of any report, clients in this situation could feel “...short changed.” They were more likely to feel “...that's a helluva lot of money to spend on that document...”

Sally appreciated that participatory practices could add value through process use. Evaluation was not “...just the report” but also “...all the stuff that has happened on the way and all the learning that has happened on the way.” She often received positive feedback from participants engaged in program logic modelling,

“...I learnt so much about my program.” As soon as you start getting that back you know you have done a good job. And that is nothing to do with the final report; this is all process use.

Sally’s evaluation approach was “...stakeholder driven...utilization focused, pragmatic.” She used mixed methods. She considered her approach to be pragmatic as she generally drew on simple tools, “...it doesn't have to be that hard.” She routinely sought a minimum, base level of stakeholder engagement in the process. This was generally the most effective and efficient way to deliver an evaluation “...where everyone's happy.”

She initially focused on developing clear understanding of intended use by end-users, how clients understood effectiveness or success in relation to the evaluand and what would be regarded satisfactory evidence of this, “...What is your boss, what is the committee, what is the decision making group, going to see as valid evidence of that?”

Sally recognized that a high level of stakeholder involvement was not always possible, “...at least 70% of the time” stakeholders lacked the time to be more fully engaged. Some were likely to consider evaluation “...a waste of their time”, not something likely to deliver value. Such situations required the evaluator to ‘sell’ the potential benefits of participation. For example, logic models as a means,

...to report to your Board...[to] align your teams so you all know where you are going...[to achieve] agreement as to what every activity is [being undertaken for].

As a minimum, she sought to ensure that key stakeholders at least understood the purpose and approach of the evaluation and had the opportunity to engage in processes such as logic modelling.

Stakeholder engagement was particularly important during evaluation design and development. Most projects required some level of formative input, regardless of how mature an evaluand or how specified an evaluation appeared to be. The evaluator could not assume that sufficient evaluability assessment had been undertaken prior to commissioning. In her experience, the “...heavy thinking” around the evaluand and the evaluation was often missing. There was often a gap or lack of connection between programs and higher level plans or intent,

...Just because the Ministry thinks that the program is completely evidence based, does not mean anyone on the ground has an understanding of what that is...

...Often they've got nothing telling me how they are going to use the evaluation. It is quite common...

...Is it evidence based? That's a scary question. I can ask that of a multi-million dollar program as much as a little one and you don't really get an answer always.

Sally often had to establish realistic boundaries of accountability and focus within evaluations. She had to identify “...appropriate sphere of influence for any program” and ensure stakeholders understood, “...that they shouldn't have to be accountable to those high level goals.” If evaluations were better designed and conceptualized prior to commissioning, “...your evaluation work would be pretty quick and short and there wouldn't be much to it.”

Involving stakeholders in the evaluation process was a deliberate learning strategy that constituted intentional capability building. Her participatory approach typically delivered a “...whole lot of [evaluative] mentoring.” She developed evaluation capability by involving stakeholders in the development of evaluation plans and frameworks. Capability was also developed as stakeholders came to appreciate the “...layers of thinking that go into the [evaluation process].” They developed more realistic expectations about what evaluation could and couldn't provide. She reflected,

...It's about capability or capacity building because you sort of hope that next time they may at least make more of a go at doing some of that stuff at the beginning...

## Process use

Sally identified most of the examples of process use shown to her during her interview as important and intentional in her practice. The interview therefore examined her reasons for seeking process use and the practices she intentionally adopted to achieve it.

Sally recognized that most of her process use orientated practices were ingrained as routine practice. Rather than consider these intentional, they were "...sub-conscious." This had been enhanced through the many years she had mentored others regarding the importance of process.

All evaluations conducted, regardless of whether formative or summative, required some level of "...formative evaluation". Ensuring clarity and shared understanding regarding the evaluand and its objectives was fundamental to a successful evaluation. "...Solid programs" were more easily evaluated, "...If you don't have a well-focused set of objectives in your program, then you can't evaluate it."

She observed,

...if you are not clear on what you are trying to achieve, then there is no way you are going to know if you got there...I'm been forced into doing all sorts of things, that I guess justify that you have got to do these steps, and the only way I can do that is to bring them on the journey so that they learn about it, otherwise they think what I am doing is a complete overkill, complete waste of time, all I want you to do is collect some data...

Sally used evaluative questioning with stakeholder to develop shared understanding and clarity. She was working here in the "...classic consultant role." Her work inevitably shaped program and organizational development. The evaluation process clarified thinking, developed shared understanding, facilitated communication, and built evaluative capability.

Sally's intent to achieve process use linked to her commitment to practice evaluation in a way that does the "...best by everybody." She was concerned that clients engaged in and benefited from the most appropriate evaluation given their needs. The evaluation process should return value and utility to participants,

...because I'm working with the service on the ground, they often don't get a lot else out of what you are doing. I don't want to just take their information. I want to

make sure it's two way. So if I can take some information and go and give it to the Ministry so they can work out what they are doing. If I can then leave them with some skills about how this program and any other program might be articulated better and/or evaluated, great.

Sally concern for reciprocity in the evaluation process was influenced by Māori and Pacific values,

There is a huge influence in New Zealand of Māori and Pacific values, when I talk about reciprocity, that's where it would have come out for me, that is huge, so this whole idea of understanding the low power of the evaluand, the service on the ground and the need to make sure it is done right by them...I would have had that value in my upbringing ...no Māori in me at all...I had that value, you do the best you can by everyone sort of thing, but across other evaluators, it is easy to say you are going to do that, it is easy to work in ways that are like that because other people are doing it too because of their cultural background...and that is quite different...

Sally intentionally adopted practices understanding that these would generate process use. She often had to re-establish appropriate expectations around program impacts and stakeholder accountabilities, "...I can't walk past [addressing such problems]." This might be achieved by providing stakeholders with relevant literature or through a quick phone call, "...I'm a bit worried that you are really looking to prove this. Is that correct?"

During the evaluation design stage, Sally ascertained the extent there was clarity and shared understanding across stakeholders about the evaluand, its goals and objectives. Telephone interviews, google searches, intranet searches of Ministry websites, funding applications, and service specification reviews, might all be undertaken. Effectively a form of evaluability assessment, this process generated process use. Stakeholders were engaged in dialogue and reflection. Objectives were clarified. Shared understanding was developed. Program and organizational practices adapted or evolved accordingly.

Engaging stakeholders in the development of logic models generated process use, for example, shared understanding, common focus, communication, the development of evaluative capability, program or organizational development, and influence over the future implementation of the evaluand.

Sally had understood early in her career that the evaluator was someone who brought evaluative and technical, but not necessarily content expertise, to the evaluative process. As an evaluator, she described herself in the role of facilitator and conduit, drawing out the existing knowledge and experience of stakeholders,

...they are just like “Wow. I can't believe that you've told me all about my program”  
and I'm like, No, you've told me and I have just structured it for you.

Sally intentionally used ‘naive questioning’ to get stakeholders to reflect on and explain their thinking. This process was also used to draw out different views, understanding, beliefs, and assumptions across stakeholder groups. Process use was inevitable as stakeholders moved towards a shared understanding and common focus through the reflective process.

Sally intentionally used the data collection process to encourage critical reflection, for example, through the way interview questions were framed,

...I'll get emails [following interviews saying] “Wow, that was the best interview I've ever had...I've never ever realised we are doing so much”.

Sally intentionally sought to build the evaluative capability of stakeholders through their engagement in evaluation. She hoped they would be better able to “...recognize the value of what they are delivering” and have better understanding of what was required to enhance performance and outcomes. She encouraged stakeholders to link with other staff and experts in their field. This could provide a further opportunity for stakeholders to step outside the ‘doing’ and to think more critically about their practice,

...if they have got someone they can talk to who understands what they are doing,  
but they can talk to them about some of the decision making and that, then they are  
going to be reflective in their practice which is evaluative practice...

## **Reflections**

Sally considered most of the examples of process use shown to her within her interview as important and intentional within her practice. This intentionality linked to the context within which Sally conducted evaluation as well as to concerns, values, and principles she

brought to her practice. A level of formative input was almost always required in the evaluations she conducted. She observed,

...I think in New Zealand we are good at doing and not thinking and stopping and writing...

...I'm doing a whole lot of work that has nothing to do what I am hired to do...

In this context, Sally's practice inevitably generated process use as she sought to develop required levels of clarity and shared understanding regarding both the evaluand and the evaluation.

Sally's intentionality around process use also linked to her commitment to ensure that evaluation provided value and utility to stakeholder groups, particularly those with little power. Engaging stakeholders in the process built their understanding, acceptance, and use of evaluation. Her evaluation practice was dialogical, reflective, and negotiated. She created spaces where stakeholders and the evaluator were engaged in mutual learning about the evaluand and the evaluation.

At one level, Sally understood that such engagement enabled her to negotiate and efficiently deliver a focused evaluation that resulted in a 'happy' client,

...what I am trying to do is make sure that the people who are buying it off me are not going to end up with egg on their face because they have bought the wrong evaluation.

At another level and particularly for other stakeholders such as program staff and beneficiaries, Sally sought to ensure that the evaluation process returned benefits and value in addition to findings use. Such return often took the form of process use, for example, evaluative capability building, enhanced communication, shared understanding, focused and common intent, enhanced morale, program and organizational development.

Sally reflected further on the importance of ensuring that evaluation was inclusive, respectful, participatory, and ethical when working within New Zealand's small population context. Reputation was critical to one's continued ability to work as an evaluator,

...I've interviewed one person three times in the last 10 years. Three completely different evaluations...Twice they were a program manager and once they were a client of the service...

Reflecting further in regard to working in a Māori context,

...you are going to meet them at some runanga committee and they are going to be a cousin. So there's this culpability thing that you have, this reciprocity, this accountability that's quite unique I think to being in a small country.

Sally believed that some government departments had developed better understanding than others of evaluation as more than social research and the delivery of findings. These departments were more willing to engage in “...a little bit more thinking” around their evaluation need, focus, criteria for making value judgments, and so on. Process use outcomes would seem more likely here; when the evaluation process is considered a space for dialogue, reflection, and mutual learning. In the absence of this understanding, Sally often had to undertake necessary formative work pretty much ‘under the radar’,

...they don't want to pay for it...I only want you to do the survey, I am only buying the survey...

...often times you are being hired by a person who has done a whole lot of survey work, a researcher.

## ‘Shane’

### Background

Shane first became involved in evaluation through an experienced evaluator whom he met through whakapapa connections. The evaluator recognized that Shane had relevant skills and experience and brought him into the evaluation team; he “...fell into evaluation” through this process.

While unsure at first as to what he could contribute to evaluation, Shane later recognized his many relevant skills. He brought knowledge and experience in tikanga and the ability to translate tikanga to non-Māori. He had previously conducted research for his iwi in relation to a Treaty claim. Through previous employment, he had skills and experience in interviewing, evaluative and strategic thinking. Building relationships had been central to previous jobs and he immediately recognized that was foundational to evaluation. He observed,

...I can honestly say that when I came to evaluation I came with a lot of other skills  
... I was always conscious of whether I was being useful in an evaluation team and I  
can say that yeah, I have. I am now. I have contributed purposefully to that team.  
Initially I thought, probably not because I'm still new to this whole thing. Then I  
realised after about four or five years...that I brought a lot of other skills to this  
discipline...the skills of building relationships, the skills of getting into Māori  
communities, the skills of just thinking. They weren't honed or anything by  
evaluation. I knew they were honed in other areas...

Building on what he brought to his initial practice, Shane described his early evaluation training as very much ‘on the job.’ He learnt through working alongside his more experienced colleague. However, he also began to undertake papers and courses in evaluation. This “...really opened my eyes [about evaluation]...” and provided useful frameworks for his existing knowledge and experience. For example, noting that he had brought to his practice existing skills and experience in logical thinking, he observed, “...when I got into evaluation and I heard this thing called logic modelling, I knew exactly what formative evaluation [was]...”

Shane initially worked mainly as a sub-contractor to his more experienced evaluation colleague. Over time, and as his experience and networks developed, he began to lead projects and worked with other Māori and non-Māori evaluators. His development as an evaluator occurred during a time when there were few full time Māori evaluators, “[you] could count the number of Māori evaluators in the country, or who was actually out there doing evaluation.” Shane and his colleagues became active in building Māori capacity and networks in evaluation as well as networks with non-Māori evaluators throughout Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia.

Sharing knowledge and experiences with other evaluators, both Māori and non-Māori, had been important in developing his practice. It was also important in the development of local practice generally,

...debating, talking about theories, talking about Māori theories, improving our practice.”

...opportunities to talk about practice, talk about theories, how does it relate to New Zealand theories, just building up kind of like a network and just helping to shape thinking.

### **Evaluation practice**

While research described the ‘what’s so’, evaluation provided the ‘so what?’ It was different to research as it provided some form of evaluative judgement regarding program design, implementation, performance, or outcomes. Shane’s evaluation approach and practice came “...from me as a Māori.” Reflecting on methodology as theory that informed method choice and ‘methods’ as tools selected to collect and analyse data, his methodology was “...tikanga Māori.” Different evaluation approaches and methods provided “...tools to use.” For example, Patton was useful for reinforcing thinking and practice regarding evaluation use and usefulness. Fetterman “...resonates” in regard to evaluation practice as an empowerment process, “...that which is helping empower our people, my Māori people, with skills.” Davidson was valued in providing tools and frameworks regarding evaluation logic and reasoning.

Regardless of methods used and any constraints on the evaluation process due to factors such as budget, tikanga principles “...are ever present.” These were described to

include “...whanaungatanga”, “...being cognizant of where you are from”, “...respect”, “...trusting”, “...reciprocity”, “...looking after things, treasuring things and treasuring people”, “...manaakitanga”, and “...aroha.”

The development and maintenance of relationships sat at the heart of Shane’s practice. Powhiri, mihi whakatau, karakia, waiata, the sharing of kai, and koha, were all used to establish connection and trust,

...as soon as you mention your connection to them, they go ah, he's one of us. And you can see the barriers just slip away.

Initial meetings with stakeholders focused on building relationship,

...how about we have a visit. Kanohi, kanohi, always if you can get it and then setting that up. We are just here to tell you who we are; no work, no nothing, just who we are. And develop relationship. Where we come from, so next time we meet...but nine times out of ten it's, “nah, nah, just do it now...”

Connection and relationship was important at many levels; from powhiri that may be used to introduce evaluations and team members of stakeholders, through to the conduct of interviews,

...That's what I try and have in any interview that I do, whether it's a focus group, whether it's a key informant interview, whether I'm the second person there or the lead person there...

All relationships and any evaluation occurred within a past, current, and future context. Whakapapa and connection could build stakeholder trust,

...Ah, you're such and such's boy...You're welcome. I know your father...And I know you won't do me any harm.

However, whakapapa also meant that Māori evaluators faced additional accountabilities regarding the process and conduct of evaluation,

...If we make a mistake, it's not us that's making the mistake, it's my father that's making the mistake, and all my people behind me...

Shane reflected further on the importance of relationship and process within evaluation,

...it is important because New Zealand is so small and the Māori world is even smaller. So if you are going to work in the Māori world...we could be doing an interview like this and tomorrow, you and I are walking on a marae together for a funeral and then slipping in the back and both you and I are doing the dishes together. So there's always that kind of relationship you have as the interviewer and interviewee, but then when you go to the ... in another life, in another world, you've said things to me and I've said things to you in that interview...that's a different relationship. For us Māori, the relationship is still the same. I suppose it's the same for everybody, so you would want that relationship to be still intact when you left.

...I just know that one day they will either say I remember you, or they might have some of the old people there in the room and there might be somebody there...I don't remember you, but I remember what you did with my nephew.

...Or someone in this room is going to meet up with me. It will happen. It may not be this year, may not be next year, but it will happen. We will meet again...

Shane recognized that Māori engagement in evaluation inevitably occurred within the context of Māori experience of colonization. This added to the importance of relationship and process. Eventually, he was likely to engage with stakeholders in other roles and context,

...for that time being you are the government, even though you might meet somewhere else, on a plane or somewhere else, as different people.

Attention to relationship and process was first and foremost about being “...spiritually safe, tikanga safe.” However, Shane also recognized that it was central to his ability to do his job, “...There has to be trust. They've got to trust you.” Weaknesses in data could most often be traced back to a failure to establish sufficient relationship and subsequent trust, “...nine times out of 10, the relationship wasn't that strong, for that person to open up.” Appropriate process and establishment of relationship was therefore important both on grounds of tikanga, as well as for evaluation purposes, “...do the interview; get the data; get the data with respect.”

Following tikanga, and in acknowledgement of the resources invested by stakeholders in the evaluation process, Shane always sought to give back to stakeholders in some way through their participation, “...I feel I always have to leave them in a place where I found them, as they were, or if not, in a better place; if I carry that with me, sweet as.” While this was fundamental to his practice, he also acknowledged,

...there's always a line. I'm the evaluator, you're the evaluand and I am here to do a job. And if I can do it in a way that's a good experience, that we can leave something there for you, there's that kind of like...reciprocity of that koha taking place. Your koha is your time. My koha perhaps is some of the skills that I have to offer. And then you can take it or leave it if you want to.

...I am not doing what I do to tout for work. I am not there to blow my trumpet. If I know that I am going there to do the work, do the evaluation, do what I was paid to do, and if I can provide them with some opportunities to build capabilities and capacity, then I will. At least it is offered. If it is not taken...oh well. But you get a sense that you know when it's okay to give; when it becomes a gift as opposed to charity. I think I've got a sense that I know.

Shane's evaluation approach and practice was fundamentally concerned with Māori development. Evaluation provided an opportunity “...to make a difference” through informing appropriate policy, program, and organizational development and through building stakeholder and organizational capability.

Shane recalled early experiences evaluating programs where, due to weaknesses in program design and implementation, it was clear from the outset that programs would never “...have worked.” He observed,

...The experience I've had is that some of the policies that came out were just ... I don't know, I don't know where they came from, WeetBix packet or something! Some Minister had a bright idea and on the journey from the Minister to the policy people to the implementation, it's just gone horribly wrong for a lot of initiatives.

These experiences led to his interest in using formative evaluation to inform more effective policy and program development for Māori. It was here that he and other Māori evaluators “...could have a lot of influence...”

Shane recognized that his interest in formative evaluation inevitably led to his common use of logic models, “...you stood a better chance of your program working if you had one at the beginning”. While acknowledging limitations within the process, logic modelling was an effective process for drawing out from stakeholders the assumptions and beliefs that underpinned their programs and activities. He used logic models to enable critical reflection and as a framework to focus evaluative questioning regarding program design and implementation, “...What is your assumption here, what is your assumption here, and how have you tested that assumption?”

Shane’s concern for using evaluation to support Māori development was reflected in his intentional focus on using the evaluation process to build the capacity and capability of stakeholders. He had recognized early in his evaluation career that the effectiveness of Māori provider organizations was often constrained because of capacity and capability issues. He had come to understand how building evaluative and strategic capability “...could help Māori community development...how we can make a difference.” He remarked,

...Getting the right people, getting the people with right thinking, getting them to think strategically and things like that. And I knew I could do it.

Organizational effectiveness and sustainability did not necessarily come from external evaluation, but rather, through organizations having the capability to think evaluatively. If this was lacking,

...then you really can't answer those kind of self-evaluative questions and that's what I hope that evaluation can bring to a lot of providers.

Building evaluative capability through the evaluation process required the trust and willingness of organizations to open up to external scrutiny and to critical reflection,

...you build the relationships up so that you can have these honest, open conversations about improvement.

Shane used evaluative questioning to build evaluative capability and to give back through the evaluation process. These questions encouraged stakeholders to re-examine the causal theories, assumptions, or strategic thinking underpinning their activities,

...What did you have in mind?...Where did the thinking come from for this program?...What really did you have in mind?...How were you going to implement this?

...How do you know? What resources did you provide to enable these people, with this initiative, to achieve these expected outcomes?...Did you think you were going to get that outcome...okay...we might not get that in the long term, but say in the two to three years of the initiative, what is it that could be realistically achieved, with these resources?

While having experiences of stakeholders looking to him as an expert who would provide “...the answers,” Shane observed,

...if I go with the premise that I'm going to help develop capability, then it provides me with the opportunity to ask those questions.

Shane consciously and deliberately framed questions so they became opportunities to get stakeholders “...thinking.” Therefore, rather than asking ‘why’, he intentionally asked questions such as “...How come it's like that? How could you have done this differently?” The interview process was enabling. It acknowledged existing skills, knowledge, and experience,

...You see, you had it all the time. You don't need clowns like me...mihi koe, tena iti, walk with a humble heart, make yourself smaller. You don't need clowns like me to come in and tell you what you already know.

...see, you had these [answers] all the time. Our old people gave you these. “Oh, yeah.” You know how they sort of looked at the young one and said “Yeah, you're going to be the one that's cutting meat at the back. You stay up the front and you sing the songs.” They had it like that. We are just going to hone it a bit better for you. “Ah, okay.” And use the principles that they had and have the ability to place those principles in other areas of work that you do. The looking after all visitors that come on the marae and the metaphor for that, look how you have looked after me coming to your place. It's the same thing. You are just the reflection of what they did on the marae. What you are doing here, you are looking after me here. It's a whole reciprocal thing. “Ah, is that what ...?” It's not black and white. You tell them that kind of thing, talk to them like that and they go “farrrr” and then you

know when you have that kind of conversation, that the relationship is at a level where you are on an equal footing. You stop being the expert and you become the...I think what did [evaluator] call it, [a] critical friend.

Evaluative questioning was used to inform the development of program theory. It clarified the formative, process, and outcome components of an evaluation through lining up “...inputs, outputs, activities, short term, long term outputs...” While the outcome from logic modelling was important for the evaluator in this way, the process also provided independent value and benefit for stakeholders.

Shane was intentional in positioning evaluation as a respectful and useful learning experience. He sought to maintain the mana and integrity of stakeholders through focusing on improvement potential and building evaluative capability, autonomy, and confidence,

...You become aroha for some of these groups. So that's one of the other things that underpins what we do and how we do it and why we do it...and why I do it. It's so that it can be useful.

Capability development ideally led to a situation where providers would themselves invite external scrutiny from agencies such as government funders,

...You come in here. Here's all our data. This is what we have done. We've got nothing to hide. Here's all our financials. Here are all our minutes. And here's the program, come in...

Evaluative capability was a sign of evaluation readiness. There was clarity of intent, rationale, or theory. There was confidence regarding program performance and the availability of appropriate data to evidence this.

## **Reflections**

The (western) literature labels the process through which stakeholder participation in the evaluation process can build evaluative capability as ‘process use.’ However, Shane did not view the evaluative capability he sought to develop through this frame. Rather, he described an evaluation practice guided by his knowledge and respect for tikanga. His practice drew on and continued to be “...honed” through the integration of evaluation tools and different approaches. However, his practice first and foremost came from his

identification and accountabilities as Māori. His attention to the process of evaluation reflected his understanding that all relationships, including those established through evaluation, occurred within a past, current, and future context, and that this created additional accountabilities regarding evaluation process and outcomes.

Shane's intent to build evaluative capability most obviously linked to tikanga. He understood that building evaluative capability led to more evaluative, learning orientated, and sustainable Māori provider organizations. Such growth supported Māori development and improved outcomes for Māori.

Shane's practice was shaped through his experience and understanding that formative evaluation could make a difference for Māori. It could prevent ineffective programs being foisted "...on my people." Through formative evaluation and the use of tools such as program logic modelling, Shane favoured evaluation as a developmental process. It gave back through concurrently developing skills in evaluative, strategic, and critical thinking. Good evaluation and being an effective evaluator was as much about influencing, mobilizing, and empowering people through the process as it was about the collection and reporting of data.

## **‘Steve’**

### **Background**

Steve’s pathway to becoming an evaluator followed tertiary study in the social sciences and then various policy, research, and evaluation positions within government. After time overseas conducting and commissioning evaluation, Steve worked back in New Zealand as a self-employed consultant. He then took up his current position as evaluation specialist within a consulting company.

Rather than being “...the last step in a program cycle or policy cycle”, Steve was drawn to the potential of evaluation to be “...the first step”. The “...culture and habit” of asking “...hard questions” and the role of evaluation in answering such questions, also appealed. He was attracted to the way that evaluation engaged with and sought to understand the “...complexity of social systems and programs and policies...”

Steve had concerns for “...improving the wellbeing of people...social equity” and for “...social justice...” His preference to work in a public sector context was underpinned by his belief that government had an important role ensuring that all citizens had,

...equality of access and opportunity to different services and programs, but also equality in terms of outcomes as far as possible.

### **Evaluation practice**

Evaluation was understood as “...a systematic way of judging the value of something”. Systematic’ meant clarity in intended objectives, questions, and utilization, “...you are going in and looking for answers that address particular questions...” Evaluation led to “...better outcomes for people...” It provided “...greater understanding about processes and impacts.” Evaluation could be used more developmentally, for example, to identify appropriate evaluation focus and to support program or organizational development. In fulfilling such roles, evaluation was a “...mirror” that provided stakeholders with an opportunity to engage in critical reflection. Through this process, evaluation provided the opportunity to advance understanding of programs, their implementation and outcomes.

‘Good’ evaluation was used rather than undertaken because “...it seems to be the right thing to do...” Steve’s concern for utilization was shaped in part by his experience

commissioning evaluation. Here he had been “...the bridge between the consultant and the organization making sure what was coming in was useable across an organization...” ‘Good’ evaluation engaged with stakeholders so as a minimum they understood,

...the purpose of the evaluation...what it is seeking to address, what questions it is seeking to answer and what its overall purpose is.

This understanding helped to ensure “...clear and realistic...expectations about what evaluation can and cannot achieve.”

Steve’s practice was intentionally participatory because utilization was a primary concern. Utilization was “...the biggest challenge” facing evaluation and evaluators. He understood that stakeholder participation and engagement in evaluation enhanced buy in and the acceptance and use of findings,

...because people at least have the opportunity to see what those processes and methods are, and [to] provide their advice on those.

In the case of negative or unfavourable findings, participation and engagement made it more likely that stakeholders would consider the evaluation “...robust.” This made it more difficult for them to disagree with end findings.

Steve described having experienced process use through his practice. Stakeholder participation provided them,

...space, that opportunity to step outside of what they are doing...applying those things that you don't necessarily even think about but that evaluation way of thinking and doing things which is getting them to think about certain questions and assumptions they might have about the program...getting them to stop and think and question the way they are doing things...

A failure to utilize the reflective capacity of evaluation throughout the evaluation process was “...not going to help anyone.”

Steve described his approach to evaluation as mixed method and utilization focused. He focused on building and maintaining stakeholder engagement throughout the evaluation process even if an evaluation was not using particularly participatory methods. Upfront engagement with stakeholders enhanced his understanding of end-users needs such as

timeframes, context, reporting requirements, and intended use. Processes such as interim reporting and regular meetings supported a “...no surprises” approach. Stakeholder engagement provided a “...checking process” that kept stakeholders linked into the evaluation process as it progressed. It provided opportunities for stakeholders to consider and comment on emerging findings. The process drew on “...their knowledge of whatever it is, the program or the wider sector.”

Most evaluations required the initial input of “...evaluation minds” to clarify the purpose, objectives, and focus of the evaluand and evaluation. Given the level of upfront scoping, clarification, and planning typically required, Steve took “...quite a formative approach”, even in the case of more summative evaluation. Commissioning agencies often had limited capability to specify appropriate evaluation objectives. They could also have unrealistic expectations of the evaluand and evaluation. While “...ideally you would want to go into an evaluation and have all that well defined and that's kind of your starting point”, he didn't “...see that happening a lot of the time.” He later reflected,

...we want a summative evaluation of this, so you turn up expecting to see them pretty fixed and you are handed over a document that kind of sets out all the objectives and what it is trying to achieve and maybe a logic model and all of that, but often than not, it is still, even in summative evaluation, it can still be a bit unclear as to, you know, there might not be widespread consensus on what the objectives were.

Recognizing that he was often contributing to the formative development of programs and organizations, Steve reinforced that he did not consider evaluation to only be ‘good’ or successful if it lead to learning and development. The success of evaluation should not be judged solely on the eventual success of the evaluand.

### **Process use**

Steve chose and discussed from his recent work, an example of the following type of process use that he felt was particularly important and intentional within his evaluation practice - “The evaluation process has helped programs, organizations, or services remain focused, or to re-focus, on core goals and/or objectives’

Steve drew his example from a recently completed formative evaluation of a major program of health sector reform. The program had involved a number of stakeholder organizations at governmental, regional, provider, and community levels. As a formative evaluation, the evaluation was concerned with identifying issues within the reform program. It provided direction on how these issues could be addressed in order to support the on-going implementation of the program.

It had become apparent to the evaluators early in the evaluation that a common vision amongst stakeholders regarding the reform program had slipped,

...off the agenda...we could see people were speaking slightly different language about this...So we knew it needed refocusing.

...we were evaluating what was really a change management process...for this program to be successful there was going to need to be quite substantial change within a couple of these organizations...

For the reform to be successful, stakeholders “...needed to be pretty focused on a common set of objectives.” The role of the evaluation in helping to build communication and shared understanding across stakeholders was therefore considered by Steve to be important.

Steve was intentional in using the evaluation process to encourage stakeholders to reflect on their understanding and implementation of the program in order to move them closer to a common vision. This understanding and focus was primarily achieved through a series of stakeholder workshops. The workshops provided a means of surfacing and discussing the lack of shared vision with stakeholders. It was an opportunity to draw attention to the issue and reflect on how it was “...playing out” on the ground. In making the problem and the need to respond to it, “...much more visible,” the process re-energized stakeholders and focused their attention on addressing it.

A range of processes were used within the evaluation to facilitate stakeholder engagement and to facilitate their critical reflection regarding the reform. Stakeholder groups had various levels of involvement in planning and design. An evaluation management committee was established to enable stakeholder participation throughout the process. Regular workshops were held with stakeholders to raise core issues and topics

relevant to the reform process and to assess emerging findings in relation to these. Issues and emerging findings were discussed in relation to relevant literature. Stakeholders were actively involved in interpreting the meaning and implications of the findings.

Steve identified a number of outcomes from the way the evaluation process had helped to build common understanding and focus amongst stakeholders. Stakeholders appreciated the need for consistent messages regarding the intent of the reform program. The communication strategy was subsequently developed in response to this. Program staff developed a series of guidelines regarding the reform process. These clarified the roles and responsibilities of partner organizations and explained why it was appropriate for specific organizations to undertake designated roles.

Stakeholder communication facilitated through the evaluation process helped stakeholders to understand the “...back story” of each stakeholder group. It allowed the various needs, constraints, and expectations experienced by each partner to be communicated. This positively influenced the attitudes of partners in regard to what was being asked of them and others within the program,

...we didn't realize you guys had to report to Treasury, at that level of detail and why they needed it...I can see why then you have been demanding this information from us or why you require that...and then from the government...to the community sector, oh, we didn't realise quite what the issues were with having to...you know the community having the capacity to meet with us and what it might cost them and therefore why you have always been demanding community fees from us.

Individual stakeholders did not necessarily understand the significance or importance of organizational level issues within the overall program or what respective agencies had achieved. The evaluation helped stakeholders to develop this understanding through making these wider issues visible. For example, cross-stakeholder communication enabled through the process developed shared understanding of why and how data collected in the program was to be used. From this, stakeholders were more accepting of data requirements,

...it created a shared understanding about how that data was used; how useful it was at a political level for getting on-going support for the reform program...

## Reflections

Steve discussed a formative evaluation process that helped to develop a common vision across stakeholders that was important for the eventual success of the evaluand. The evaluation process was intentionally used to facilitate critical reflection and learning that moved stakeholders towards common understanding and focus.

This form of process use reflects formative evaluation processes and the learning and development typically sought through this form of evaluation. Steve typically adopted a formative approach to his work, regardless of the type of evaluation being conducted. In his experience, most evaluations required the evaluator, initially at least, to undertake formative activities, for example, clarifying aims and objectives and the stage and state of program implementation. These activities required communication across stakeholders and supported the development of shared understanding across stakeholders. Such outcomes potentially lead to program and organizational development or influenced program implementation.

Steve's evaluation practice was participatory and focused on building stakeholder engagement. His approach was primarily motivated by a desire to enhance findings use. However, Steve also recognized that such practice would naturally provide opportunities for process use learning and broader evaluation influence to occur; process use was a "...key benefit" from undertaking evaluation.

## **‘Susan’**

### **Background**

Susan’s pathway to being an evaluator followed earlier involvement undertaking evaluative type research, a period teaching evaluation, and then employment in market research. She then established herself as an independent evaluation consultant. Working as a consultant enabled her some control over the work she undertook, who she worked with, and how she worked.

### **Evaluation practice**

Evaluation was a means to support social change, social justice, and social betterment. Evaluation had the potential to “...make a difference.” It could “...improve the state of the world for as many people as possible.” Evaluation was “...political action.” It was a process that should be concerned with understanding how inequality shaped social problems and therefore appropriate solutions to problems. Evaluation was “...inherently unsafe” for evaluators and stakeholders. It was a political activity concerned with making evaluative judgments. Evaluators inevitably needed to address issues concerning power and who controls the construction and use of evaluative knowledge.

Susan described evaluation as the assessment of design, implementation, and outcomes in relation to need, evidence, effective practice, and intention. However, evaluation was more than just collecting and analyzing data. All evaluation actions and processes could have an effect. The evaluation process was itself an intervention that could have positive or negative impacts on stakeholders.

Evaluation was “...discovery through exploration.” It was a learning process for all involved. Learning required critical reflection and the willingness of stakeholders to re-examine the way they understood and made meaning of actions and decisions. Evaluation facilitated such review through enabling cycles of evaluative questioning, reflection, and “...sense-making.”

‘Good’ evaluation occurred when there was genuine commitment from stakeholders to use it. Without such intent, evaluation was “...dishonest...an appalling waste of the taxpayers’ money...of my time...an insult to all...people...involved.” However, as a

consultant, Susan recognized that there were limits to the extent she could control ‘findings use.’ This situation reinforced her commitment to practicing evaluation in a way that ensured stakeholders also received value and utility through their engagement in the evaluation process.

Susan evaluation practice was based on a partnership model that was shaped by the values and beliefs she brought to her practice and her experience working with Māori. She reflected,

...so much of what I did right from the start was working with and for Māori. [My practice] was automatically and immediately part of the Treaty relationship...

...pretty much everything I have done in the last 17 years has pretty much been following a kaupapa Māori model.

Susan’s practice was intentionally eclectic, participatory, consultative, pragmatic, ethical, and values-based. She used mixed methods when appropriate and when data credibility and utilization was strengthened as a result. She understood that knowledge and reality was constructed and interpreted. This reinforced the importance of triangulation and the need for the evaluator to be constantly reflexive. It pointed to the importance of conducting evaluation as a team. A team approach enabled different meanings and possibilities within the data to be examined. It guarded against bias and assumptions that might influence analysis and reporting.

### **Process use**

Note: Susan’s interview was used to trial a more open-ended approach to generating reflections on process use. Rather than use the sorting exercise used in the other interviews, her interview focused more generally on how and why she sought process use.

Susan described process use as an important and integral part of her evaluation practice. It was part of doing ‘good’ evaluation. It could potentially occur across all stages of the evaluation process, for stakeholders and evaluators alike. She observed,

...I will not infrequently come out of an evaluation interview with some kind of determination myself to be different in some way from now on, or to think differently in some way from now on, or to do something, not necessarily for that

person or necessarily for that cause, program, or issue...so what you are calling process use...it's not just an impact for all the other stakeholders, it is also an impact for the evaluator as a stakeholder.

Susan believed evaluators should respect how the evaluation process could impact stakeholders, evaluation data, and outcomes from evaluation. Evaluators should actively manage these impacts to ensure positive rather than negative impacts. Regarding the conduct of interviews, "...what you get from somebody is a function of your relationship with them." She was aware of the need to monitor her language (and body language) within interviews, recognizing this could influence the data collected.

Susan intentionally used participatory practices to generate process use. Stakeholders were typically involved in evaluation design, sometimes in the conduct of the evaluation and typically through stages of data analysis. Stakeholder participation and engagement helped to ensure the right evaluation questions were asked and that credible, valid, and quality findings were produced and used.

The evaluator was a co-learner. Evaluation was a mutual learning process. Stakeholders brought existing knowledge and expertise to the evaluation process. Susan communicated to stakeholders her understanding that evaluation was a mutual learning process that could provide value and utility in addition to meeting the objectives of the client. She encouraged stakeholders to define priorities and questions of value to them within the evaluation. This process opened up new lines of inquiry and understanding within the evaluation.

Susan sought to develop strong and authentic relationships with stakeholders. She was comfortable adopting 'insider' roles. These practices enhanced stakeholder engagement in evaluation, their acceptance of the evaluation process, and the credibility and quality of findings.

She undertook the role of conduit, synthesizer, sense-maker, and facilitator of critical reflection. She facilitated,

...people's willingness to look at stuff in ways that ...[everyone]...can learn from.

Evaluation was an opportunity for stakeholders,

...to look really hard at something in a way that they might not have before...to spit out the stuff that they are not willing to say to other people...

Susan's evaluation approach was open-ended and reflexive. She was attuned to the potential of the evaluation process to support critical reflection and to generate new understanding for stakeholders and the evaluator. She observed,

...in any interaction there's a potential for me to learn something and there's a potential for them to learn something.

She designed data collection tools and processes to derive information "...of greatest value to [stakeholders]." Her approach to interviewing gave,

...people as much opportunity to talk about the things that they want to talk about... the interview guide [is] only ever a checklist...a beginning...a checklist...

Data collection and 'sense-making' occurred through formal data collection methods such as interviews as well as through more informal contacts with stakeholders, for example, through observation and social interactions.

## **Reflections**

Susan described a participatory, dialogical, and reflexive approach to evaluation. She understood that the evaluation process presented opportunities for the evaluator and stakeholders to learn and develop. She was intentional in utilizing these opportunities as a way of enhancing the value and utility of evaluation.

Susan did not see process use as something that occurred alongside or in addition to evaluation. Rather, it was integral to what she considered evaluation to be, what she understood as 'good' evaluation, and what she sought to achieve through her practice. She had difficulty seeing process use as something separate to practice. She questioned the literature that framed it this way.

As an evaluator, Susan considered herself a co-learner. She conducted evaluation with stakeholders rather than to them. Evaluation findings were 'created' rather than 'found'. She took seriously her obligation not just to 'take' from stakeholders but also to return

value and utility to them. She sought to break down differences in power that could exist between stakeholders groups. She integrated the expertise, knowledge, and ‘stake’ that all stakeholders brought to evaluation. The activation of this potential required a willingness and ability by the evaluator to have authentic stakeholder relationships.

Susan recognized that strong relationships could enhance stakeholders’ engagement in evaluation and the value and utility they derived from the process. However, she also observed,

...it goes beyond this, it is about creating a relationship that is not just confined to that evaluation or to ‘evaluation’...so the relationship that you create, to the extent that it is appropriate and possible in the circumstance...it’s about creating lasting relationships that evaluation becomes just one part of...

Susan’s relational practice had been shaped by local context, including the relational values of Māori. Given the small population and high level of interpersonal connectedness that existed within Aotearoa New Zealand, “...quite often, especially in New Zealand, you already know the people you are talking to anyway...”

Susan’s approach followed her understanding that participatory practices could enhance the credibility, validity, quality, and use of evaluation. However, at another level, her commitment to a partnership and relational form of evaluation reflected the values and beliefs she brought to her practice, her commitment to biculturalism, and her responsiveness to the social, cultural, and historical context of evaluation practice in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## **‘Tony’**

### **Background**

Tony’s pathway to evaluation followed tertiary studies in physical and human geography followed by employment as an educational researcher. Over time, he increasingly became involved in evaluative type research, “...I sort of came across it accidentally.” He began to read about evaluation and later moved to a research and evaluation position within a government agency. Here he began to have more structured and regular engagement with the practice of evaluation.

Tony recalled that he initially understood and was attracted to evaluation as a research approach that enabled multiple methods, “...it generally sparked my interest in being able to use a lot of different methods to identify what was really happening.” It was later that he developed a deeper understanding of evaluation theory and an appreciation of evaluation distinct from research. This growth came through further research and evaluation roles in government, attendance at conferences, further reading of the literature, and networking with other practitioners.

Tony was currently a research and evaluation manager within a government department. Aside from the time spent working in educational research and some time in market research, he had otherwise always worked within the public sector. This context provided some certainty and structure around a career path in research and evaluation. He was attracted to public service. He felt “...good” that his work enabled him to help others,

...you can feel like you're telling stories about things that people may not know about themselves...helping to move ideas forward...the other attraction about just helping. You know, members of the public have queries, Ministers have queries, they come into power with certain objectives and you are, by proxy, helping to fulfil those aims and wishes...

Tony acknowledged that within his workplace, evaluation was “...not always first on people's minds.” Internal stakeholders tended to include or consider evaluation “...a little after ideas have been cemented in place.” He observed,

...we try and make those ideas and approaches more plastic and fit evaluation in there somewhere. Sometimes it comes off and sometimes it doesn't.

Tony described a wider organization that historically had tended to compartmentalize knowledge, experience, and function across the organization. It had adopted an almost “...mechanical” way of thinking about how things work. Reflecting on this,

...How do you view the financial analyst? Are they there just to keep you safe day to day? Or do you actually consult with them about your long term [strategy]?

Evaluation was also described as having been viewed more “...mechanically” as producer of data/information,

...we are in a similar boat. How do you think about the researcher and evaluator? Someone to help you tick the boxes or someone to help you plan for tomorrow?

He was optimistic an organizational restructure would lead to the more proactive and expansive use of evaluation,

...not just the output and the results...move away from ticking boxes to understanding and making connections about what on earth is actually going on.

...I think we'll be able to more consciously include process learning rather than sort of serendipitously or in an ad hoc nature.

Tony reported the increasing use of evaluation within the public sector as a “...instrument to measure value” or “...return on investment”. He compared this “...instrumental, almost mechanical ...” use of evaluation to a previous “...more humanistic interpretation.” This had been more “...socially responsible use...[that looked] at things like equity and equality...” This shift, as with other change across the public sector, was being,

...shaped by political circumstances, changing Ministerial expectations...the government's fiscal position.

Recognizing the breadth and diversity of evaluation practice, and his own journey discovering this, he was concerned that public servants new to evaluation may no longer be exposed to this breadth of understanding,

...They might need to scurry around a bit to scoop up the history of understanding in quite a condensed amount of time and try to reconcile that with, if they are in the

public sector, what they have to do now. That would be quite a different journey for them.

## **Evaluation practice**

Tony recognized that evaluation was distinguishable from research on the basis that it addressed questions, often comparative questions, to do with value, merit, and worth, “...the value of a complex thing.” Evaluation was concerned with understanding the different lens and perspectives through which evaluative judgement were derived,

...evaluation, more than research, gives us a way of trying to examine that grey in all its shades from different positions.

‘Good’ evaluation was shaped by requirements and expectations within his workplace, “...work imperatives and political requirements...you need to be part of those work requirements.” In this context, he considered criteria for good evaluation similar to those for good research. It required clarity and focus regarding the evaluation questions. This required the ability to,

...talk to a range of stakeholders and clients and witnesses about what's important to describe as the value of this thing, the evaluand that we are interested in.

Considerable initial work was often required to clarify the needs of internal stakeholders and intended use. Stakeholders were often not clear about how their initial evaluation questions linked to broader organizational intent, goals, or objectives. There could be a gap or a lag between operations and strategy. Operations could “...charge ahead” or alternatively “...the ideas are further down the road than the actual delivery...”

Following identification of the right questions, ‘good’ evaluation required an appropriate design and appropriate person capability and capacity. Required was,

...technical capability...to translate those needs into questions and methods that actually stand up to some scrutiny and then the project management and policy nous really, to see the project through, translate the results into something digestible and realistic that will then stand a good chance of being influential and utilized.

Also important was the ability and skills to manage,

...the number of people who might be impacted and affected by this...the extent to which stakeholder analysis has been done; the mitigation of what might be at risk has been thought through adequately...

Given the time and resources invested in evaluation, Tony reinforced that utilization, making “...a difference,” and having “influence,” were central to good evaluation, “...Good evaluators need to publish and persuade.”

Reflecting the importance of utilization within his workplace, and recognizing that utilization linked to “...public value and service...”, Tony described his evaluation approach as most obviously utilization focused,

...start with the end in mind and whatever you do make sure that it's going to have some relevance and usefulness...

Tony's practice had developed over time from initially a very positivist understanding of evaluation. Through his experience of conducting evaluation in real world settings, he became increasingly uneasy with the position that ‘the truth’ was determined by statistical significance or in relation to the null hypothesis. His developing understanding and practice of evaluation had helped him to appreciate that truth and knowledge were “...more pliable than I thought it was.” Meaning could be different “...for different groups of people.”

In developing a broader “...appreciation of what constitutes the truth”, Tony recognized that “...You had to inquire more deeply and evaluation seemed to offer a road...” He valued multiple methods as often best suited to establishing “...what the truth was for different people, impacted by different policies and programs.” It was essentially a way of validating, confirming, and reinforcing conclusions,

...what does the survey say? What did the focus groups say? What did the feedback through the email or web site say? What did the stakeholders who asked for this evaluation suspect was going to happen? And putting that all together and weighing it up.

Tony recognized some variance across projects regarding the extent evaluation conducted by his team was able to be participatory. Available resources (time and cost) and

the willingness and availability of stakeholders to participate were influential factors. While the “...practice and ethos” of some team members was highly participatory, he had realistic expectations regarding the extent of participation typically achievable, “...it's just that I'm aware of the time and cost it takes to get the genuine participation...”

The extent and nature of internal stakeholder participation tended to be driven by utilization concerns. Internal stakeholders were typically more involved in governance, rather than doing roles. Critically, stakeholders needed to be “...sitting down at the table helping to formulate ideas around questions and approach.” This helped to ensure that findings were useful and used. Internal stakeholders tended to have less involvement during design and data collection, “...we tend to draw the line at design...” However, they were likely to be involved again in analysis and reporting stages.

Tony described some consciousness and intent about process use within his team. However, he believed this largely reflected the individual experience, training, and commitments of team members,

...If it weren't for that, we probably wouldn't give it any thought. We might carry out an evaluation in a very...Kellogs cereal box sort of way...[this meaning]...only comparing a limited range of measurable attributes.

Within the wider organization, utilization was more explicitly focused on,

...the findings and the decisions that might result and to be quite blunt, whether somebody's going to read it. Are they actually going to take the time to invest in reading what we've done and give any attention to make that more likely than not.

The extent an internal stakeholder may seek process use could correspond with the extent such engagement was required, important, or motivating for people within their positions. While a senior manager may recognize the value of process use, they may have limited ability to demand it within the parameters of their role. He observed that engagement tended,

...to come from those closest to the program or the policy and less so maybe from the policy analyst who was directly involved in writing the paper to get funding for the program or the program manager, he or she, who was responsible for its delivery.

Tony identified that a number of different forms of process use occurred through his practice. He recognized the collaborative development of evaluation questions with stakeholders could lead to learning outcomes,

...just seeing people's eyebrows...“oh, I'm challenged by that. That's an interesting question, [I] never thought of asking that before. What do you mean by that?” Which means, they are interested in getting behind what you proposed...

Program logic modelling was a process that often led to process use,

..stakeholders love it, and go, “Aah, right, we knew that”... It is that critical reflection. They knew they were doing good work but they didn't really know exactly how it all fitted together and we've just helped them put that picture together in a more coherent way.

...it has surprised me over the years just how useful [logic modelling] has been. And often it's the policy analysts who are pulled to and fro between Minister's objectives, public perceptions, physical constraints and concerns, and a myriad of other inputs into their decision making. So it's no wonder their thinking has been... not intellectually poor, but just sort of logically not well organized.

The evaluation process could provide stakeholders with time and opportunity to reflect evaluatively and critically on their work, something,

...they all want to do, but in the structure of their work and their organization they are seldom given the time to do. Along comes evaluation and creates this free space. They go...“aah, yeah, I've always wanted to know that”. It's initially not what they say. They have that reaction...“I never thought of it that way”. Later on you find out yeah, they've always been thinking about that, but evaluation gave them the space to be free to harness that.

The evaluation process could also give the evaluand,

...a profile. Something that might have been quite below the radar, or in amongst the milieu of what's going on, is all of a sudden given the attention and scrutiny of an evaluation. And it's beneficial for those people who are supporters or

proponents of that particular idea to have the evaluation, because all of a sudden the light's cast on.

Tony recognized that this form of process use could have political dimensions, for example, when evaluation was used to demonstrate concern or good management regarding the evaluand,

...I am demonstrating to you...concerned member of the public or opposition that I care enough about it to do quite a heavy investment. You know, I'm not just making a general enquiry. It's a disciplined, robust, structured approach to learning about what's going on here.

### **Process use**

Tony described a recent evaluation project conducted by his evaluation team and within which he considered an example of process use had occurred. The example concerned an evaluation of a program that had funded community projects. The evaluation utilized the significant change methodology and assembled a panel of experts to review outcome data for respective projects. While the project comprised some process evaluation, the evaluation was primarily concerned with whether the various project investments made by the program were meritorious and worthwhile.

There was an expectation that outcome data would be collected within the program alongside the community projects funded. However, in seeking this data during the course of the evaluation, limitations in the quality and level of data collected were identified. That is, while there was considerable “...care and duty over the tax payer’s funds”, the evaluation process identified the need for much more “...serious attention to the measuring of results and conceptualization of those results.”

The evaluation process showed that while the organization was good at managing and accounting for the expenditure of program funds, there was less focus on the establishment and management of data collection systems to evidence outcomes. Tony considered this learning as ‘process use.’ While there had been some prior expectation that the evaluation would lead to such learning, the evaluation was primarily focused on “...impact effectiveness.” However, through this process “...we actually couldn't avoid learning about our own processes at the time.” In this respect, the process use described by Tony may be

considered relatively unintentional, but certainly significant and important. He noted that subsequent learning,

...will absolutely be included in planning around any future things like this, so it's now emerged out of the mythology of how funds operate, and is now committed to in writing, and put in front of people whose job it is to design these sorts of funding programs so they are absolutely conscious of it.

The meta-view enabled by the evaluation was one reason why the evaluation was able to detect problems with data collection across the program as a whole, "...we were seeing the same sort of pattern..." Individual projects within the program had been administered on a project-by-project basis. Through "...that frame by frame, project by project view," program staff had had limited time or opportunity,

...to really look back or forward across what they were going to do and what they had done. It's one of those fortunate things about evaluation; you do get to watch the game play out in front of you rather than just each piece.

The evaluation,

...got to run all the frames together and see how as a group these projects played out and see what was in common and what was different amongst them. So we were able to stick a kebab stick through everything and see the totality of what was going on.

An on-line forum created by the project to enable communication between the contracted experts and other program stakeholder also supported the emerging learning,

...this very slow accumulation of conversation and conversation and conversation with the people who had requested the evaluation, and behind them they were talking with people who had run the project.

Tony recalled,

...it was evident from their exchanges that this was becoming an issue" and that questions began to be raised, "...How come there isn't more about this? And in the project specification it said that people would do this. Why isn't it there?" So we went in with a presumption that what was said to be done would have been done

and then by asking the question about how come it wasn't, we started going down this road of discovery. That's how it sort of morphed into a finding really.

## **Reflections**

Tony described an understanding and practice of evaluation shaped through applied experience, on-going professional development, and mentorship from other evaluators. These were identified to include William Shadish, Michael Patton, Patricia Rogers, Sue Funnell, David Fetterman, Bert Perrin, John Owens, and Bob Williams. He brought to his practice deep regard for the breadth of evaluation practice and the importance of multiple perspectives, constructed and interpretive knowledge.

Tony's practice was also shaped by the needs and expectations of evaluation stakeholders within his workplace. While Tony understood process use as a form of use, the wider organization was more generally focused on findings use. Reflecting this, Tony's practice most obviously followed an utilised focused approach. As a manager, it followed that Tony emphasized good project management as critical to good evaluation. It was important that evaluation questions linked to need and intended use. The design and implementation of evaluation should lead to evaluation findings having use and influence.

It was in the questioning and dialogue necessary to plan, manage, and deliver good evaluation that Tony recognized the inevitability of process use. Through evaluative processes, stakeholders often derived learning and development outcomes distinct from findings use. However, rather than claim process use as something that was intentionally sought, he framed it more as something that often happened as a result of the evaluation process. The example of process use discussed by Tony fitted this mould. Learning about the capacity and focus of the organization to undertake outcome monitoring emerged through the inquiry. While this learning eventually became a finding, and was important within the context of both the program and wider organization, it was largely unintended. It was not necessarily framed or understood as process use when it occurred,

...I think we might have talked about real time feedback, I think...just that idea of being able to impart the observations about the results and how the process of the program had played out and providing that feedback back to stakeholders, yeah, we were certainly busy doing that...

## **‘Trish’**

### **Background**

Trish’s pathway to becoming an evaluator followed tertiary education to Masters level and then policy, research, and evaluation positions within government. She then established herself as an independent evaluation consultant. She had completed her Masters as a sole parent and had been a beneficiary during the benefit cuts of the 1980s. Reflecting on this time, Trish recognized that she had experienced,

...that loss of self-esteem that goes with having your wages paid by the state, and having to grovel for everything that you need...

This experience shaped the social justice values that she brought to her initial career within the public sector and her desire to contribute to social betterment through her work.

Trish worked in policy as well as program delivery settings within the public sector. She came to see how evaluation could “...straddle” policy and delivery and link applied service delivery to theoretical and conceptual thinking. She was intentional in pursuing roles that provided experience and skills in policy development and service delivery.

Trish’s move into the public sector occurred at a time when the government was implementing a range of programs in response to the social impacts of the 1980s benefit cuts. As “...the Treasury lens started to bear down” on these initiatives, demand for evaluation increased. Trish recalled,

...someone one day said to me, “you know how to do evaluation don't you?”, and I said, “Sure.”

She was seconded onto an evaluation project and thus began her evaluation career. Trish considered her analytical skills, including quantitative skills, as well as her interest and ability to work cross-culturally, as reasons why she was approached to undertake evaluation. She had,

...already shown an inclination if you like and an interest in issues to do with ethnicity and for Maori, and had shown that I had an ability to work in that space as pakeha.

Trish was drawn to the applied nature of evaluation and the challenge of applying the philosophical and conceptual ideas that underpinned evaluation to “...real world issues with people in delivery settings.” This required the ability to “...craft useful findings that actually can be applied.” The evaluator was,

...constantly doing that cross walk if you like between conceptual, philosophical kind of approaches and ideas, and practical realities.

Reflecting on what had influenced her applied focus, she observed, “...it comes out of that really early experience I think of real hardship that I experienced as a sole parent.” Also influential was growing up in a close knit community that reinforced ethics of relationship, participation, contribution, and service. She was also influenced by her father’s later career move into community health, and her parents’ emerging consciousness and responsiveness to biculturalism and the Treaty.

As a consultant, Trish valued being able to exercise choice regarding the work she undertook and with whom she worked. She valued the innovation and creativity possible within her practice. Principles underpinning her choices regarding the work she undertook, and with whom she worked, included that colleagues shared her commitment to biculturalism and that stakeholders were committed to utilization.

### **Evaluation practice**

Evaluation to Trish was a naturally occurring human activity undertaken implicitly from birth to develop and sustain life. When used within a policy and program context, it was a “...systematic way of looking at ...quality, value and importance...” While agreeing with the definition of evaluation as the determination of merit and worth, this had shaped an understanding of evaluation that was focused on the “...end.” That is, evaluation was the “...product” that emerged as a result of systematic inquiry. Her thinking had evolved to understanding that determinations of merit and worth were something the evaluator undertook throughout and not just at the end of the evaluation process.

Trish discussed a desire to make a difference, to be useful. Evaluation was a means of contributing to “...social betterment...social justice, to making the world a better place.” As a democratic process, it enabled,

...voices in our communities and in our society who don't traditionally have the power, being able to have the power...to engage with the existing power structures.

As a learning orientated change process, it was a means of identifying new and better ways of doing and being. Evaluation had the potential to provide “...new insights”, to move stakeholders “...into a new space”, to provide “...new ways of thinking.” It provided a place where “...disruption of paradigm, of models of the world” could occur. The evaluator had a key role facilitating “...unlearning”, “...relearning” and “...new learning.”

Trish understood that much of the learning facilitated by evaluation occurred through the “...mechanism of questioning” and through the evaluator assuming the role of “...questioner.” Asking questions required stakeholders to reflect on what they were doing and why. In this way, asking questions was a “...change mechanism.” Evaluation was essentially a process that disrupted existing beliefs, meanings, and assumptions. It was inevitable that change occurred through the questioning process. In her experience, stakeholders “...never think about their program in the same way.”

Given the investment of time and resources required for evaluation, utilization was a moral imperative. Utility was a core determinant of ‘good’ evaluation. She was “...seriously over evaluations that go into black boxes and never get to see the light of day.” She was increasingly undertaking evaluability assessments or scoping assessments prior to undertaking evaluation to determine their likely use, usefulness, and credibility. From these assessments, she was prepared to make “...the call” regarding whether the evaluation should be undertaken.

Trish was intentional in making sure that evaluation was “...useful” and credible within context. It was part of the evaluator’s role to design, conduct, and report evaluation in a way that was “...contextually credible.” This responsiveness might require attention to who conducts the evaluation, methods used, or how it was presented. She recalled a recent example where a logic model using square boxes was “...not going down very well” with stakeholders. Through rounding the edges of the boxes in the model and presenting it on card, yet without changing any content, “...it went beautifully.”

Trish described her practice as “...constructivist” and “...interpretivist.” She appreciated that reality, meaning, and knowledge were “...contested” and situated. She drew from participatory, utilization focused, empowerment, transformative, and kaupapa Māori

evaluation approaches. Systems complexity, knowledge management, and organizational learning were influential knowledge frameworks. An intention to build the evaluative capability of stakeholders through the evaluation process lay at the “...core” of her practice.

While agreeing with the principles of empowerment evaluation, Trish disagreed with the idea that the evaluator could empower others; that one could anoint someone else ‘empowered’. Rather, she understood that learning and development occurred through the evaluator and stakeholders working together. Working collaboratively with stakeholders required the evaluator to give up some of their “...power” From her experience, this ultimately led to better outcomes from evaluations and for stakeholders. This was about,

...rangatiratanga...about people having the control of their own lives and creating the space for that learning, but actually ultimately, the judgment about what they do being theirs.

Trish described herself as an evaluator in roles such as “...facilitator of learning, a facilitator, a critical friend, a partner.”

She brought to evaluation a set of values, ethics, beliefs, and commitments that shaped her practice. She acknowledged potential tensions if stakeholders expected her to be ‘independent’, that is, an objective, distant observer who did not have a point of view. Trish observed that she was,

...quite often [working] from a place...where I have a value orientation that's absolutely aligned to what this organization is doing and therefore my role is about facilitating, achieving the things that they want to achieve as an evaluator, however I do that, which isn't always evaluation. It's actually evaluative thinking and practice...

Trish reflected on how her own evaluation practice, and practice generally in Aotearoa New Zealand, had developed during a time of considerable social, cultural, and political change. This included the rise of neo-liberal economic policy, the “...dismantling” of the welfare state, increasing recognition of the principles and responsibilities established under the Treaty, and a renaissance of Maori identity, rights, and autonomy. It was inevitable that the local development of evaluation practice had been “...grounded” in and influenced by this context. The deliberate effort of universities and practitioners to develop Māori

evaluation capacity was a unique process in an international context. It was also a process that had inevitably influenced local practice.

Trish was aware and intentional in seeking process use through her practice. It was her belief “...without doubt” that the majority of stakeholder learning that occurred through her practice occurred through the evaluation process.

Trish recognized the political nature of policy and program decision-making. Programming decisions were often out of the control of people working at the ground level and with whom evaluators often worked. Given this, she was concerned the stakeholder learning and innovation that could develop through process use could “...get killed in the swipe of a pen.”

### **Process use example**

Trish chose and discussed from her recent work, an example of the following type of process use that she felt was particularly important and intentional in her practice – “The participation of evaluation participants and/or stakeholders in the evaluation process has developed their ability to think and act ‘evaluatively (e.g. use evaluation logic and questioning)’.

Trish drew her example from an evaluation of a program delivered by a mental health service. The provider worked from a consumer led, recovery paradigm that challenged mainstream medical models. The evaluation team “...very deliberately” set out, through the evaluation process, to build the capacity of stakeholders to think and act evaluatively. Underpinning this approach was the assumption that evaluative capacity was something stakeholders had “...naturally” and that evaluation could develop this in a more systematic and transparent way.

The evaluation was conducted through a participatory approach. Trish worked with service managers, staff and some clients to develop and then use rubrics to derive evaluative assessments. The development process was informed by a literature review that was shared with stakeholders. Mixed methods were used to ensure that evaluative criteria were examined using multiple sources of evidence. Management and staff participated in data synthesis processes through a series of round table workshops.

Trish recognized that management level leadership was crucial to building the willingness and motivation of staff to participate in the evaluation as a capacity development process. She was deliberate in building an open and trusting relationship with the CEO. Time was spent developing the relationship and ensuring there was clarity in areas such as roles and “...safeguards” that would assure the continuation of the evaluation even in the event of difficulties. The CEO was “...right on board” and “...totally in the evaluation space.” She played a critical role as “...navigator and a facilitator of other relationships and of resources” that enabled the evaluation and the capacity development process to occur.

Individual and organizational trust was developed through ensuring that demands or requirements from management and staff were transparent. Through this process,

...they can trust you to contact them if anything happens. There are no secrets...I'll put everything out on the table.

Trish recognized that she had developed trust through demonstrating respect and care within her relationships with management and staff. She observed, “...it's about demonstrating that you care about what they do” and that “...you value them as a person.” She was committed to working with management and staff “...the whole way through.”

The intentional building of relationship and trust “...at the front end” had opened up “...a free space for us to work in the organization.” Management and staff were willing and motivated to engage in the process of developing evaluative criteria and then using these to synthesise data and derive evaluative judgments. Given they didn't necessarily bring similar paradigms of practice and theory to the process, Trish acknowledged that the process was “...quite risky”. However, in getting “...the front end sort of stuff organized”, engaging stakeholders in critical reflection was “...less and less risky.”

The process of developing the evaluative criteria and rubrics used in the evaluation provided a framework and process that enabled management and staff to debate the values that would underpin criteria of success. What would success “...look like.” The process was enabling and facilitative. It drew out, integrated, and as required, reframed the existing knowledge and expertise of stakeholders. While not necessarily achieving shared agreement of values and criteria used, shared understanding of the valuing process resulted. Requiring

discussion and debate, “...which ones are in and which ones are out,” the process inevitably facilitated critical reflection.

Timeframes for the rubric development process and data synthesis and sense making sessions were not pre-determined. Rather, time and space was allocated as required to enable necessary questioning, reflection, and dialogue. It was a process that involved “...laying on the table people's values.” This required skills in addition to collecting and analysing evaluation data. Trish observed, “...you are much more of a facilitator, an increasingly sophisticated facilitator.” Transparency was required regarding how the process, including participant involvement, led to evaluative conclusions. It required the ability and willingness of the evaluator to articulate “...how the whole process hangs together.”

Trish described a range of capability development outcomes from the evaluation and rubric development process she described. In general, and more often than not, she believed that rubric development delivered some level of value or benefit to all participants. For example, enhanced understanding of each other, programs and activities, and what was important when making evaluative judgments.

Trish believed that her respectful, open, and enabling approach had built an environment where there was a willingness to engage and openly discuss “...difficulties and problems” within the program. It was “...quite a profound kind of space to work in.” The process enhanced organizational members’ understanding of their work and why they did what they did. Through providing a systematic and transparent framework upon which to determine success, stakeholders came to understand what was shared and not shared regarding how they understood the nature of their work and on what basis success was determined. The process built stakeholders’ understanding of what they could directly influence and achieve through their work, areas of required improvement, and how they could evidence outcomes, “...It's fascinating to watch their confidence and their ability to negotiate those boundaries.”

The process led stakeholders to realize evaluation was not something “...done to them.” Rather it was “...about them, they can see themselves in it.” They recognized they had a “...stake” in the process, that it could be useful and could make a difference. Therefore, rather than resist the process, they came to understand their power in shaping the process. They were affirmed as the “...experts” in making evaluative judgments of their work

through drawing on existing knowledge and experience. Evaluation became a process that packaged together and evidenced existing capacity and capability. In this way, the evaluator became more responsible and accountable for identifying and utilizing existing data, experience, and expertise. Trish now assumed that rich data, advanced thinking, expertise, “...legitimate and credible forms of information for the evaluative process and evaluation,” existed within all organizations. However, stakeholders may not necessarily “...see it like that.”

Trish believed the various learning and development outcomes described had built the willingness and motivation of stakeholders to engage in evaluative thinking and practice. In relation to identified gaps in necessary data or information for evaluative purposes, she commented, “...it's amazing how it shifts...you go back and they've got data. They've done it.”

Through building capacity to use evaluation data to evidence outcomes, the process had built the capacity and confidence of stakeholders to communicate organizational performance and outcomes to others, including funders. She observed,

...up until that time I think they had a lot of anecdote and qualitative story about the service, but had never understood how they might systematically draw other data together to tell that story.

Program management and staff were “...confidently out there talking about their program in a way that they weren't before.” Previously, “...they were much more reticent about its effectiveness, about its ability to influence consumers' lives.” This confidence and ability also supported their ability to negotiate “...the limits of their accountability with funders as well as their ongoing sustainability.”

The service provider was also starting to use the resources developed through the evaluation within other aspects of their work; in one example, to guide the professional development of peer support workers employed within the organization. In this way, the process was helping to embed evaluative skills, understanding, and communication throughout the organization.

## Reflections

Trish discussed why and how she intentionally built the evaluative capability of stakeholders within her selected evaluation example. Her intent and practice reflected her commitment to practicing evaluation as an open, enabling, equalitarian, and democratic process. She saw evaluation as a collaborative process where the evaluator worked in partnership with stakeholders to integrate existing values, knowledge, and expertise. Through her experience, much of the learning and development that occurred for stakeholders from evaluation occurred through the process. Intention to build the evaluative capability of stakeholders, so they were more able to meaningfully participate in and use evaluation, lay at the core of her practice.

Trish observed that while process use was not a term she consciously used within her practice, it reinforced her consciousness and intention to use the evaluation process to facilitate learning and development outcomes.

Trish described how the process of developing evaluative criteria and rubrics led to a range of learning and development outcomes for stakeholders. In this way, the process was capability building. Learning outcomes described included the development of common understanding amongst stakeholders regarding the values and valuing process that underpinned judgements of program success. Skills developed included the ability to collect, analyse, and synthesise evaluation data for the purpose of deriving evaluative conclusions. Attitudinal and affective developments included new attitudes and feelings about the use and value of evaluation. Evaluation was re-positioned from something done to stakeholders to a process that recognized and built their stake, power, expertise, and ownership. This enhanced the willingness of stakeholders to engage in evaluation as a process of critical reflection and to use findings to inform program development.

## **Appendix I: Case Story Follow-up Interview Schedule**

### **Initial response**

Does the summary ring true, make sense?

Does the summary seem plausible?

Any concerns or issues raised?

### **Accuracy**

Any areas of inaccuracy?

### **Detail/comprehensiveness**

Any areas where more detail/explanation/context required?

Anything missing?

### **Inferences/explanations**

Clarity of link/progression from data to inferences?

Agreement/disagreement with inferences/explanations?

Rival inferences/explanations?

Do inferences/explanations stimulate further inferences/explanations?

### **Final reflections**

Clarity of link/progression from summary to final reflections?

Agreement/disagreement?

Additional reflections?

### **Final comments**

Overall credibility/authenticity?

Impact of summary?

## Appendix J: Research Memo

### Reflection on survey discussion (14/05/10)

In discussion with Helen about the survey on 06/05/10, she suggested the need for some underlying theory of diversity upon which to base selection of the in-depth interviews (i.e. if the research purpose is to explore meaning making related to PU across different evaluator and evaluation contexts). She suggested some form of screening tool that would identify diversity (e.g. possibly something providing understanding of evaluation practice, values, approach etc)

I wondered whether this approach would ultimately be underpinned by an 'evaluation practice' theory (i.e. that there are some practice approaches/values) predicted to be more supportive or less supportive of process use? While this is likely to be the case, I have moved away from explicitly starting with this assumption and thus the originally conceived conceptual model of evaluation practice for process use.

Under the new research proposal and the constructivist/interpretivist frame, it is now proposed that sampling for the in-depth interviews will be solely based on variation related to process use, with no initial underlying prediction or theory as why such variation may exist.

The current 'measures' of variation in the survey are:

1. Practitioner awareness that given process use examples have occurred from/through their practice (Aware, Not Aware, Not Sure)
2. Practitioner self-report of the extent identified process use examples are considered intentional in their practice (Not at all Intentional to Very Intentional)
3. Practitioner self-report of the extent identified process use examples are considered an important part of their practice (Not at all Important to Very important)

4. Practitioner self-report of the extent evaluation practice is considered effective in achieving identified examples of process use (Not at all Effective to Very Effective)

Taken collectively, respondent answers on these four domains would be used to derive a measure of the extent to which process use appears to have been an important part of their evaluation practice in the last 12 months.

The in-depth interviews are now intended to explore how meaning making (constructions) around process use in turn influences:

1. how process use is experienced by practitioners, how it is defined/described, where and in what form it is seen as occurring
2. whether process use is sought through evaluation practice and through what type of practices
3. extent to which and why process use is considered important and practice considered intentional and effective in achieving it.
4. types of enablers and barriers to process use experienced

Under the constructivist/interpretivist frame, the only ‘theory’ going into the interviews would be that the constructed meanings and influence of these may differ across evaluator and evaluation context (e.g. there may be differences in how ‘process use’ is defined, described, understood, experienced, sought after, considered important, and how and why practice is considered effective in achieving it).

The research purpose is based on the premise that we first need to understand this diversity before considering how the findings may provide direction for enhancing process use outcomes. For example, for one practitioner working within a government context, developments/changes may be required at an organizational or political level, for a Maori practitioner it may require a strengthening of kaupapa Maori values, for another it may require development in participatory methods.

So selecting the in-depth interviews on the basis of diversity is very important for the research. Through better understanding practitioner and evaluation context differences, the

research may point to a variety of responses for enhancing process use outcomes (e.g. organizational, political, cultural, practice).

The original research proposal was based on the starting premise and assumption that the ‘solution’ would be at the practice level (i.e. a practice based model). I can now see that a more appropriate overall goal would be to provide direction for enhancing process use outcomes - as in some contexts, required change may be at a social, cultural, political, or structural level rather than at the practice level (e.g. enhancing process use outcomes may be more about addressing practice barriers and creating a more enabling environment for process use rather than changing evaluators’ existing practice).

### **Risk using survey as selection tool**

I think our discussion has been about the risk of using the current survey, in the constructivist/interpretivist frame, to screen and select the in-depth interviews on the basis of the process use importance ‘measure’ derived from the survey.

At the moment I am suggesting that we would aim to select and interview some practitioners where process use appears to be an important part of their practice and somewhere process use appears to be less important. The demographic questions would also be used to ensure diversity across the sample and the ability to explore the influence of different evaluator and evaluation context.

I can see risk that:

1. Case selection will be based on a pre-determined or limited ‘view’ of what process use ‘looks like’ (as represented in the examples given in the survey). The introduction to this question informs respondents that the examples have been drawn from the literature so that there is some reference to where these ‘constructions’ or accounts have come from. In keeping with Patton’s description of process use as a ‘sensitising concept’, the examples could also be seen as simply providing ‘direction’ or raising awareness as to what process use may look like and where we may find it.
2. However, practitioner self-report of process use importance and practice intentionality and effectiveness may therefore also provide limited, invalid, or

inaccurate accounts of these things (as they are based on the pre-determined accounts of what process use ‘likes’ look)

3. I can see that someone’s ‘label’ from the survey (process use of high/low importance) could then be exposed as incorrect once in the in-depth interview (e.g. ‘process use’ may well be identified as occurring regularly, considered important and practice intentional and effective...when discussed and described in the terms and through the experiences and meanings understood by the individual).
4. I have suggested that the possibility that the survey findings could be ‘deconstructed’ in this way could be one of the research objectives and link into the debates concerning positivist and constructivist ideas of knowing and reality. However, Helen has questioned the value of this – I can see that such deconstruction would potentially raise the issue of the validity of the survey as a screening tool and therefore the question of why it was used for this purpose in the first place.

Therefore, possible options may be:

1. Not do the survey first and develop upfront some other way of selecting in-depth interview participants solely on the basis of evaluator diversity (and not have an a priori measure of process use). Sampling here would be purely on the basis of practitioner diversity and the proposition that process use is likely to have different meanings and manifestations across diversity. I would develop the required number of practitioner ‘profiles’ sought for the interviews, based on practitioner diversity (e.g. ethnicity, practice context, experience) and these could be directly recruited through evaluation networks. The literature would give some direction to the types of profiles where it could be expected that process use would be an important part of practice (e.g. those using primarily qualitative methods, those committed to participatory methods) and less important part (e.g. those primarily using quantitative methods, those working in the positivist paradigm). Both profile types would be selected for interviewing. Conducting the interviews upfront would get around the problem of surveying first and having to use the existing (and possibly limited) constructions of process use as currently exist. The interviews would be used to see whether different

understandings/meanings of process use exist and then the survey could be developed to reflect these and used to understand the extent to which the wider group of practitioners share these meanings. Further, new issues may arise from the interviews which may warrant surveying on. The order of going from qualitative to quantitative seems to be more defensible under the constructivist/interpretivist frame. Helen has indicated that she is most comfortable with this approach.

2. Implement the survey first as a tool that will collect some useful and interesting information in its own right and therefore that which has a legitimate role in the overall research. Justify the ‘epistemological’ fit of the survey in the overall research using the arguments described in the previous memo. Screen and select the in-depth interviews as in Option 1 above.
3. Implement the survey first as a tool (as above) as well as that which acts to sensitise practitioners to process use and identifies practitioners who are willing to be interviewed in-depth. The demographic questions would be used to ensure the desired diversity in the interview sample (e.g. by gender, ethnicity, working context, methods primarily used, evaluation experience, knowledge and confidence – this raising the question are there further demographic questions that should be asked?). Selection would again be based totally on practitioner diversity and the diversity proposition (with no a priori prediction or knowledge of the extent to which process use may or may not be considered a part of practice, important etc).
4. Implement the survey first and use as currently proposed – both to collect useful information in own right and to screen and select for the in-depth interviews on the basis of the derived ‘process use importance’ measure and practitioner diversity (from the demographic questions). Sampling would be based on variation on the phenomena of interest (process use) as well as practitioner diversity to enable exploration of the relationship between these variables (assuming that the survey is a valid screen on process use variation).

After talking with Helen again about the different options, I am probably now in favour of 1 as I can see that it makes ‘most sense’ under the constructivist frame. I wouldn’t lose

the survey however, we could expect that from the qualitative it is further developed to be better grounded in the meanings and manifestations of process use that exist in the local context.

## Appendix K: Tauaki to Māori Participants



*Tenā koe*

*Ko Michael Blewden tōku ingoa*

*Nō Kirikiriroa ahau*

*Kei Tamaki Makaurau ahau e noho ana*

*Kei te mahi ahau i te SHORE and Whariki Research Centre, Massey University*

*Ko England, Ko Norway oku iwi*

*Ko Blewden Ko Raven oku hapū*

*Ko Endeavor tōku waka*

*Ko Porongia tōku maunga*

*Ko Wāikato tōku awa*

*Ko toku whare, ko tōku mārae*

Thank for your interest in my research which centres on the way in which evaluation stakeholders can learn from, develop, or benefit in other ways, through their participation in the evaluation process. My work specifically examines the reasons why evaluators are intentional in seeking this type of evaluation use through their evaluation practice and whether and how these reasons shape their practice. My interest in this area follows my own practice as an evaluator and my personal experience of how both the findings and the process of evaluation can be used by stakeholders.

I am seeking to negotiate Māori participation in the research for three reasons. Firstly, process based values and principles underpin both a Māori worldview, Māori models of learning and kaupapa Māori evaluation practice. Māori participation therefore acknowledges the centrality of process based practices for Māori evaluators. Secondly, any legitimate attempt to advance understanding of 'process use' within Aotearoa New Zealand must acknowledge and include Māori knowledge, experience, perspective and meaning. I take the position that it is through developing understanding of diversity, rather than through developing generalizable 'truths' or explanatory 'laws', that research can advance knowledge. Thirdly, under the Treaty of Waitangi, Māori have an equal right to participate, as Māori, in the research and to receive benefits from and through this participation.

My research inevitably sits within a historical and contemporary context of non-Māori research exploiting Māori participation for non-Māori gain. In response to this, I seek to begin a process of negotiating your possible participation in this research in a manner which ensures benefits to Māori and which does no harm. However, I also acknowledge that this

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process cannot entail a true partnership, in that the research is ultimately controlled by the requirements of a PhD and my self-interests in completing this.

In negotiating these tensions, I invite you to consider your participation based on a full understanding of the context of the research, the research objectives, how the research will be used, and your assessment of the respective benefits and risks of your participation. To assist this, a further information sheet on the research and statement of the research purpose and objectives are attached.

Should you have any concerns or issues about the research, I am committed to addressing these and negotiating your participation on a basis that is acceptable to you. I will be responsive to how you wish to retain control over both the process of participating in the research, as well as the analysis, interpretation, and reporting of Māori knowledge. As required, I will meet and/or talk with you throughout the process to ensure that my analysis, understanding, and reporting is validated and verified by you.

I am committed to a comprehensive analysis of the Māori findings so that the research provides understanding of Māori meanings, perspectives and practices. Differences between Māori and non-Māori will be examined and discussed in order to advance understanding, rather than to make comparative judgements or to position Māori as the 'other' in relation to non-Māori.

I look forward to discussing these matters further with you.

Nāku i runga i aku mihi ki a koe

Michael Blewden