

UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN

EVALUATION RESEARCH: A DOCUMENT STUDY

by

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## ABSTRACT

Stakeholder participation in evaluation has become increasingly acceptable in evaluation practice as researchers strive to produce relevant and useful studies. However, evaluator understanding of the operational dynamics of participation is limited.

This exploratory descriptive study qualitatively examined twelve documents comprising retrospective reviews or case studies of participatory attempts for the purpose of identifying the factors that contribute to effective stakeholder participation. The study explored the participatory dynamics, the mechanisms by which participation is operationalized, and the relational dynamics between researcher and stakeholder. Four factors for practice were significant: the participatory process should reinforce the genuineness of stakeholder participation, participation is enabled by attention to group process, successful participation cultivates a sense of ownership, and stakeholder involvement creates ready-for-use conditions among participants.

Although collaboration was shown to be a complex process, the benefits to evaluations are significant. Evaluations which involve multiple stakeholders are more likely to be sensitive to local contexts and result in increased validity and utilization. The participation of stakeholders in evaluation has important implications for the evaluator's role in facilitating the group

process and attending to varied stakeholder learning styles. Extensive planning and preparation by the researcher impacts the meaningfulness of participation for stakeholders. Beneficiary involvement was shown to present unique challenges to evaluators, especially in the areas of access to information and equity of participation.

Stakeholder participation in evaluation has tremendous implications for social policy and social work practice. Elements of authentic participation in evaluation correspond to factors which legitimize participation in policy settings. By redefining their roles and skills, social workers can enable service recipients to have real impact in evaluations, in policy planning and program development, and in their own treatment plans.

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## INTRODUCTION

Program evaluation has increasingly acknowledged the importance of stakeholders in the evaluation process. In response to criticisms that evaluation research provides too narrow a focus, answers insignificant questions, and is unused, evaluators have expanded their focus to include the participation of stakeholder groups in the evaluation process.

The literature reveals that although evaluation researchers support a philosophy which maintains the need for multiple stakeholder involvement, many evaluations cater only to the needs and wants of decision makers and/or policy makers. Such evaluations have been criticized for being divorced from the legitimate interests of service providers and beneficiaries.

Although the rationale for the inclusion of multiple stakeholders is compelling, collaborative research in practice is still lacking. This can be attributed, in part, to a pervasive lack of understanding and awareness of the nature and dynamics of the participatory process for researchers who want to include stakeholders in evaluation. Collaborative research with multiple stakeholders continues to present a tremendous challenge to most evaluation researchers.

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that contribute to the effective participation of stakeholders in evaluation research through consideration of the dynamics of participation and the mechanisms by which participation is

operationalized. Special consideration is given to the nature of interactions between researcher and stakeholder. This examination provides evaluators with an understanding of the central concepts of stakeholder participation including the procedural dynamics, relational interactions, and the contextual factors which affect the development and success of the approach.

This study is guided by a social justice perspective toward program evaluation, a conceptual framework espoused by House (1976, 1980) and rooted in Rawls' (1971) theory of justice. It is a view that is concerned with democratizing evaluation to ensure that all groups are included and that their interests are represented fairly and equally. House (1993) reveals that Rawls' concept of equality of opportunity or "equal respect" empowers participants to participate effectively and meaningfully in a democratic process.

This problem is important for the study of social problems as current evaluations may be producing results which are less than satisfactory. By excluding certain stakeholders, such as beneficiaries, from determining the substantive focus of evaluations, the relevancy and validity of the information collected may be compromised.

## Chapter 1

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Program Evaluation

Program evaluation escalated in the 1960's, following the surge of new social programs designed primarily for the disadvantaged as deterrents against the negative effects of poverty. As programs were launched in such areas as education, health, housing, criminal justice and welfare, politicians and taxpayers insisted on assessment and formal accounting for huge financial investments. If social programs were intended to improve the welfare of individuals and societies, they wanted assurance that funds were being spent as intended and that they were producing intended results (Rubin & Babbie, 1989; Patton, 1987).

Following the expansion of social programs, program evaluation developed and matured, distancing itself from scientific research and becoming its own expert profession. This literature review briefly outlines the origins and dynamics of program evaluation, discusses the impact and importance of utilization issues on its development, and reviews the role of the stakeholder in evaluation approaches. Many of the references are taken from literature published in the 1980s, when the most prolific discussion on this topic occurred.

Historically, evaluation research was judged by the same standards as scientific research. However, many researchers and professionals in the field demanded revisions to the conventional formal evaluation, indicating that the issues in evaluating social programs were not being served by the current scientific model. As opposed to scientific research, evaluations are used to make decisions concerning ongoing funding, to determine whether changes were needed to improve a program's effectiveness or efficiency, to determine whether a program had reached its intended goals or objectives, and/or to assess the long-term effects of a program.

Social researchers (Cronbach, 1982; Patton, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1989) promote the ideology that evaluations should provide maximal usefulness to decisions makers and evaluation consumers. They regard evaluation research as a means to provide a spectrum of information and to raise new questions and new perspectives, rather than simply to determine that something had an effect. Cronbach et al. (1980) propose that research should inform us about the side effects, not just the "effects", and should provide a more holistic picture of different outcomes. Cronbach (1982) concurs with Hastings' (1966) earlier argument that what was needed was data that could reveal the "why" of the results. Even proponents of the scientific methodology, Cook & Campbell (1976), acknowledge that questions most suited to the scientific blueprint are not always questions that are most relevant for social research.

These researchers propose that evaluations that span a broad range of questions have a better chance of being relevant--by stimulating discussion and providing diverse perspectives--and that emphasis should be placed on the relevancy of the information not on the form of inquiry. They indicate that although conventional research may be producing statistically significant effects, these effects may not be substantive. Patton (1986) suggests that evaluation researchers should be fair and conscientious in taking account of multiple perspectives, multiple interests, and multiple realities.

With the realization that social program evaluation is substantially different than basic research, evaluation evolved into its own specialized profession (House, 1994) and includes a wide range of approaches and methodologies. Evaluators produce information aimed at action in order to affect program decision making and policy decisions, distancing themselves from traditional scientific research aimed at "truth". Patton (1987) reports that:

Evaluation has gone beyond a narrow focus on whether a program has attained its goals to encompass a broad array of questions, purposes, approaches, models and uses....Users of evaluation have become more demanding and less tolerant of evaluations that are overly academic, irrelevant to their needs, and/or wasteful of time and resources. (p. 18)

Defined broadly as the "systematic examination of events occurring in and consequent on a contemporary program" (Cronbach et al., 1980, p. 14), social program evaluations are designed to provide useful and accurate information about a program--its activities, characteristics, dynamics, and outcomes--in order to

improve the program in question or assist in decision-making processes related to the program under review.

### Utilization

Many researchers develop evaluations with the sole purpose of providing high-quality information to decision makers. It is assumed that evaluation results will be used if evaluation investigations are shaped around the needs and wants of decision makers.

Evaluations which appeal to the preferences of decision makers are stated to be associated with higher levels of use (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Patton, 1987; Reineke, 1991). Evaluation users are encouraged to "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 the results" (Cousins and Leithwood, 1986, p. 360). Decision makers and program managers are identified as "stakeholders" in the evaluation, and evaluators include them as collaborators in the research process because they believe that their continued involvement will enhance utilization (Patton, 1986, 1987; Chelimsky, 1987; Smith, 1988; Mowbray, 1988; Gill & Zimmerman, 1990; Wholey, 1983).

Patton (1988a), the pioneer in utilization-focused research, finds that this approach is both marketable and accountable. He advocates that evaluations designed for decision makers are

making major impacts and that evaluations performed at the local level are appropriate for client-oriented studies.

Patton's views, however, are challenged by colleagues who claim that targeting evaluations to key decision makers has not noticeably increased the impact of evaluations on program decisions (Weiss, 1988a; Cronbach, 1982; Levine & Levine, 1977). Weiss and Cronbach argue that decisions are not usually determined by a single decision maker but by a pluralistic, policy-making community. They contend that efforts by evaluators to make their findings "user friendly" have not resulted in an increase of the influence of evaluations on decision makers. In fact, Weiss suggests that satisfying the immediate client may imply irrelevance to the concerns of other groups of policy actors.

Weiss questions whether evaluators who are under pressure to satisfy needs of clients or interest groups and who are responsible to evaluation funders rather than scientific peers, are placing too much emphasis on the saleability of evaluation rather than on integrity. Gilsinan & Volpe (1986) support this query by suggesting that "worry about whether or how results of our efforts get used by those in decision-making positions raises the issue of the entrepreneurial role versus the scientist role" (p. 180).

Regardless, both Weiss and Patton have been criticized for being too preoccupied with decision makers to the neglect of the consumer and the general public, eliciting strong responses from

many researchers (Smith & Chircup, 1987; House, 1994, 1980; Stake, 1983b, 1986; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Berk & Rossi, 1976; Leviton & Hughes, 1981; Maclure, 1990; Reineke, 1991; Zinober et al., 1984). House (1994, 1980) indicates that evaluation has become a political activity--one designed to serve the needs of decision makers. He considers focusing only on the user's interest as unjustifiable, unreasonable, and immoral. Berk & Rossi (1976) suggest that "to see oneself as a hired hand and incorporate the values of employers into research designs is to abdicate one's moral and political responsibilities to other [stakeholders]" (p. 328). Guba & Lincoln (1989) indicate that reserving power and decision-making authority to users is "not only morally and ethically wrong but also politically naive and conceptually narrow" (p. 15). To deny stakeholders the opportunity to participate and struggle with issues of value to them is seen as a disservice (Reineke, 1991). Even proponents of the conventional scientific methodology defend the concept of multiple stakeholder representation:

Formal policymakers should probably not be the only group whose information needs, and hence whose political interests, evaluators should meet. Every policy decision has the potential to impact on multiple stakeholder groups, and discussions with these groups often teach us that they want to learn different things. (Cook, 1985, p. 44)

As a result of these influences, the concept of utilization was modified as other stakeholders came to be seen as equally important, especially those who delivered and those who consumed services. Greene (1988b) reveals "differentiated concepts of evaluation use which include instrumental (decision- or action-



oriented), conceptual (educational), and symbolic (political or persuasive) uses" (p. 341).

Mark & Shotland (1985) indicate that the rationales for involving stakeholders in evaluation extend beyond increased utilization and include a desire to accurately represent the decision making process and a recognition that stakeholder participation serves as a mechanism of empowerment. Representing the views of multiple stakeholders in evaluation has become an accepted practice in evaluation research (House, 1990).

### Stakeholders

Stake (1981) reveals that Marcia Guttentag coined the term stakeholder to help identify whose side the evaluator was on. Stakeholders can be divided into three groups: those persons or groups for whom an evaluation report is to be directed, those persons or groups who have a vested interest in the outcome or impact of an evaluation, and those persons or groups that are put at risk by the evaluation. Guba and Lincoln (1981) categorize these groups as agents, beneficiaries, and victims.

These stakeholders represent multiple perspectives and interests, with each group bringing their own assumptions and values into the evaluation process. These groups may include policy makers, politicians, special interest groups, program funders or managers, program staff (service providers), labour

unions, program clients (beneficiaries), prospective clients, family members of clients, and concerned or disgruntled citizens.

The stakeholder concept represents an appreciation that each program affects many groups, which have divergent and even incompatible concerns. It realizes--and legitimizes--the diversity of interests at play in the program world. It recognizes the multiple perspectives that these interests bring to judgement and understanding. It takes evaluation down from the pedestal and places it in the midst of the fray. It aims to make evaluation a conveyer of information, not a deliverer of truth; an aid, not a judge. Realization of the legitimacy of competing interests and the multiplicity of perspectives and willingness to place evaluation at the service of diverse groups are important intellectual advances. (Weiss, 1986, pp. 153-154)

For many evaluators (House, 1993, 1980, 1986b; Stake, 1983b; Scriven, 1980), the commitment to multiple stakeholders in evaluation research is not an attempt to increase utilization but to redefine the decision-making community--"to counteract the concentration of expert control" (Smith & Chircup, 1987, p. 12). House (1980) advances the concept of democratization of research because:

People should be given a choice so that things are not determined for them, even in their own interests, but choice should be distributed in such a manner that social groups and social classes have equal opportunities for making such choices. Lower social groups should be given an opportunity to determine the choices in their interests. (p. 145)

Many evaluators encourage special efforts to bring in questions and interests of minority and disadvantaged groups--groups who are relatively powerless or at risk of exploitation or disenfranchisement (House, 1993, 1980; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Cronbach et al., 1980; Cronbach, 1982). It is their contention that the existence of a stake, in any shape or form, should give the stakeholder the right to participate and to provide input in

the evaluation. "One of the major potential contributions of evaluation is to help those with a legitimate interest in a given issue to recognize what is at stake for them" (Cronbach et al., 1980, p. 105).

### Focusing Evaluation Questions

Alkin et al. (1985) indicate that the process of framing the evaluation questions is one of the most essential aspects of evaluation. A decision to evaluate for one particular client, program manager or decision maker, influences the kinds of questions asked (Shadish et al. 1991), and a decision to look at something means a decision not to look at something else (Patton, 1986; Cronbach et al., 1980).

Rossi & Freeman (1993) reveal that what is seen as a problem by one group may not be perceived as such by others. This is reinforced by Crane's (1985) assertion that "one group's social problem is often the result of another group's social policy" (p. 3). Patton (1986) concludes that "the practice of evaluators answering the wrong question...is widespread" (p. 64).

Wallston (1981) believes that there has been a general undervaluing of questions in the research process. She reflects that "we tend to ask questions of interest to us, that reflect areas important and/or problematic to us" (p. 606), revealing that we could run the risk of asking all the wrong questions. Although a participatory model with a variety of perspectives may

be difficult in certain stages of the research process, Wallston considers it to be an essential step in hypothesis generation. Cronbach and his associates (1980) concur that the responsibility of the evaluator to include multiple interests is especially important when the research questions are being formulated.

The literature has underscored the importance of stakeholder participation in the process of identifying specific questions for evaluation (Gold, 1983; Lincoln & Guba, 1981; Patton, 1978; Cook, 1985; Levine & Levine, 1977; Rubin & Babbie, 1989).

The evaluator has a duty to identify all audiences, to do his best to determine what their concerns and issues are, and to honor and respond to those concerns and issues. Failure to do so may cause significant evaluation questions to be overlooked or to be diminished in importance. Justice and fairness require that everyone with a stake also have a voice. (Lincoln & Guba, 1981, p. 306)

A respect for the direct experiences and aspirations of stakeholders requires and legitimizes the consideration of multiple sources and types of research questions (Cook, 1985).

Feminist research believes that "objective" research assumes that "the one asking the questions knows better than the subject what the important questions are" (Tomm, 1987, p. 4). Cronbach et al. (1980) suggest that experts and decision makers have "blind spots" and recommend that both prospective and actual program clients should be consulted at this stage. Tovar (1989) reveals that "collaboration in groups can be a very successful strategy for selecting relevant evaluation questions" (p. 52).

### Beneficiaries

The involvement of beneficiaries as stakeholders in evaluation has been given particular emphasis in the formation stage of an evaluation. Rossi & Freeman (1993) imply that in some evaluations the beneficiary would appear to have the strongest stake in the outcome of a program's evaluation. Whitaker (1974) proposes that "in order to include criteria of responsiveness and equity, it is necessary to allow the people being served to provide standards for evaluation" (p. 760). Even Campbell has been stated to value knowledge obtained from beneficiaries more than that from social scientists because "the impressions of program participants are more likely to be grounded in extensive program experience" (Shadish, Cook, & Leviton, 1991, p. 133).

Maclure (1990) asserts that not to allow the participation of beneficiaries in evaluation "would be tantamount to believing that the automobile manufacturer is the most appropriate person to evaluate the worth of a car, not the buyer or consumer" (p. 150). The belief that outside, objective researchers are in a better position to judge programs and effects than the client is considered to be illogical.

Most proponents of beneficiary involvement in evaluation research feel that each stakeholder group should share equally in the evaluation process. They request the opportunity for all groups with a stake to participate--a recognition and

appreciation of the challenges and opportunities facing each stakeholding group and a chance for greater understanding and respect between groups with differing perspectives.

As most programs are not equally responsive to the needs of all people, it has been suggested that consumers should have the right to respond to issues that may affect them through the program or evaluation. This may include not only the beneficiaries of services but, potentially, prospective beneficiaries and beneficiaries excluded from services. It is important to give voice to those most affected by the program being evaluated, particularly if they have some vulnerability that could make them potential "victims" (House, 1993, 1980; Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

#### Mental Health Citizen Advisory Boards

Mental health services has actually been the leader in advocating for the rights of consumers in evaluation. Traditionally, citizens and clients had little input into the professional areas of mental health; however, in 1975, the Community Mental Health Centre (CMHC) Amendments in the United States mandated citizen involvement, specifically in the evaluation of community health centre programs. As a result, Citizen Advisory Boards were developed in many communities.

Zinober, Dinkel, & Windle (1984) argue that evaluation activity in mental health services should be viewed:

less as a specialized domain of a technician evaluator and more as a collaborative endeavor....This argues for increased participation in evaluation by program managers and service staff, program clients, and even the general public. (p. 224)

Advocates reveal, however, that although attempts to include citizens have been established, evaluations are often still ineffective because the actual consumers of services are seldom involved (Morrison, 1978; Prager, 1986).

Due to their "participant-observer" role, program clients are regarded as being able to provide more meaningful evaluations than members of the community (Pinto & Fiester, 1979). Morrison (1978) and Prager (1986) propose that even psychiatric patients are appropriate and knowledgeable evaluators of the services they receive. Whereas it is very time-consuming for a citizen to become sufficiently familiar with a clinic and its services, this is not the case with clients. Because they are familiar with a clinic and its treatment programs, a client is better able to provide substantial and meaningful information and suggestions to enhance the evaluation. Thus, the client-consumer is the best person to evaluate the services received.

Since community representatives are not always cognizant of the needs of patients or devoted to the protection of their rights, a governing board should include among its members past and present patients and their relatives. (Chu & Trotter, 1974, p. 85)

Prager (1986) believes that clients are becoming increasingly more sophisticated and more aware of their needs. They are also becoming more willing to confront organizations and advocate for change.

It is almost paradoxical that, although mental health clients have spent a good part of their lives learning and implementing skills in relationships and communication, help is still largely defined, planned, and evaluated for them, not by them. (Prager, 1986, p. 5)

### Paradigm Approaches to Stakeholder Participation

Several paradigms, summarized briefly below, encourage the use of beneficiaries and consumers as collaborators in the research process. Two of these paradigms, participatory research and feminist research, reveal a proactive posture--one of empowerment--whereby subjects and beneficiaries are no longer victims but have the knowledge and tools to shape their own destiny. The third paradigm, fourth generation research, encompasses a unique form of qualitative research which has been differentiated as a distinct approach to evaluation.

#### Participatory Research

Participatory research is inherently connected to popular education in Latin America and is sometimes known as participatory action research or action research. Although some researchers in North America have referred to stakeholder involvement in research as "participatory research," the term was originally coined in South America and refers to an inherently distinct research philosophy and methodology.



Participatory research is an educational process intended to produce change and is most often carried out by the oppressed, with the possible facilitation of an external researcher. Drawing on the teachings of Paulo Fierre (1972), participatory research advocates that ordinary people have the ability to understand and analyze their own social reality, as well as the ability to shape their own lives and destinies.

Only full and complete control by the group under study would constitute proper participatory research by popular education standards (Latapí, 1988; Tandon, 1988; Maclure, 1990). Thus, common people are considered to be the researchers, determining the questions, gathering data, participating in the analysis, and deciding how the information will be used. Proponents of participatory research claim that the advantage of this extent of cooperation and essentially, co-investigation, is the acquisition of knowledge normally beyond the reach of other researchers. A key premise is that the involvement of local people will facilitate an even clearer picture of social reality than possible otherwise.

"Participatory research emphasizes the use of knowledge as one of the major bases for power and control in our society. It has enormous potential as a major contributor in transforming the struggles of poor and deprived people" (Tandon, 1988, p. 7). It is the principles of shared ownership, learning, and action which distinguish participatory research from other models of social science research.

### Feminist Research

Feminist research validates knowledge that is gained through women's experiences as important, real, and valuable. It emphasizes the necessity of interaction with research subjects as participants--observing responses and listening to women's descriptions of their own realities.

Feminist research finds its roots in the belief that conceptions of knowledge and truth that are accepted today have been shaped throughout history by the male-dominated culture. Drawing on their own perspectives...men have set values that have become the guiding principles for men and women alike. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 5)

Mies (1983) reveals that a result of the traditional, hierarchical research format has been that much of the data collected through sophisticated research methodology is irrelevant and possibly invalid because data often reflected expectations rather than truth.

Many feminist researchers believe that research subjects should become full collaborators in the research process (Duelli Klein, 1983; Mies, 1983; Kirby, 1991). They share a strong conviction that in feminist research, power must be shared among participants. Belenky et al. (1986) describes that "in a community, unlike a hierarchy, people get to know each other. They do not act as representatives of positions or as occupants of roles but as individuals with particular styles of thinking" (p. 221).

Feminist researchers advocate research studies that facilitate and support the movement against the oppression and

isolation of women. "When women accept responsibility for evaluating and continually revealing their assumptions about knowledge, the attention and respect that they might have once awarded to the expert is transformed" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 40).

Although feminist research holds similar ideologies as participatory research, its roots lay in the North American feminist movement. Its focus is on empowering women and including women as stakeholders in the research process. Feminist research can also be accomplished by "expert" women researchers and does not require complete control of the group under study, as does participatory research. Feminist research may, at times, draw on some of the philosophies and techniques used in participatory research to accomplish its goals.

#### Fourth Generation Evaluation

In their presentation of fourth generation evaluation, Guba and Lincoln (1989) assert that fourth generation evaluation can only be implemented within the methodological canons of the constructivist paradigm. They suggest that although naturalistic (or qualitative) techniques can be used within the confines of the conventional evaluation paradigm, naturalistic evaluation requires a complete paradigm shift. Because some evaluators were not making this distinction, they renamed naturalistic inquiry as fourth generation evaluation.

The ontological assumption of constructivism is that realities are only a series of mental and social reconstructions. There is no objective reality. Epistemologically, constructivism denies subject-object dualism, stating that it is interaction that "creates". Fourth generation evaluation is described as a "collaborative process in that several stakeholder groups share control of the evaluators over the methodological and interpretative decisions that are made" (Guba, 1987, p. 39). The evaluator is seen as a reality shaper, mediator and change agent. The direction of the evaluation is shaped through interaction and involvement with the participants or informers.

Professional researchers solicit "concerns, needs and issues" of informants in a hermeneutic, dialectic process. This process feeds itself by asking informants about other individuals or groups that may hold a different opinion than theirs, may benefit or lose because of the program of evaluation, or may have strong feelings about a program. Social reality is constructed by obtaining a consensus, as much as is possible, through continually recycling the researcher's findings through these multiple informants.

#### The Stakeholder Approach: Two Controversial Attempts

The stakeholder-approach was developed in the mid 1970's by the National Institute of Education (NIE) in an attempt to increase utilizations of evaluations by giving a wide variety of

participants a strong voice in the evaluation process. Evaluations were being heavily criticized by the public and the creation of an evaluation approach which was responsive to multiple concerns was a deliberate attempt to address some of these concerns.

The stakeholder concept, as identified by Bryk & Raudenbush (1983), was designed to address the following concerns: "How can the evaluation of programs and policies be structured so that the knowledge produced will be relevant and accessible" and "How can evaluations fairly represent the diverse, potentially conflicting concerns of those who have an interest in a program?" (p. 97).

Two programs were selected for evaluation: Cities in Schools (CIS) and Push/Excel (Excel). Both programs were determined to be highly complex, controversial, and politically "loaded" (Weiss, 1983a, 1983b; Stake, 1983, 1986). CIS was a collection of inner-city school projects for estranged youth which incorporated traditional academic tasks, cultural and athletic activities, and one-on-one counselling and tutoring. This program was strongly endorsed by Rosalyn Carter and the White House administration. Excel was a motivational program started by the Reverend Jesse Jackson in an effort to persuade black youth to excel in school. The program, which is described more as a movement than a program (Farrar & House, 1983), taught a message of self-help and set high standards of achievement through incentive programs, pledges to excellence, and a written code of conduct. Parents were urged to take an active interest

in their children's education and schools were challenged to raise their standards for both behaviour and academic performance.

Weiss (1983) agreed with Stake (1983) that the emergent nature of both programs made them extremely difficult to evaluate. The programs were determined to have high turnover and little continuity. They were:

characterized by high levels of ambiguity. Their activities differed from day to day and from site to site. The programs were not administered by orderly school bureaucracies according to predictable sets of rules but by outside, movement-like groups. They depended in considerable part on the dedication of committed workers and the charisma of leaders. (Weiss, 1983a, p. 155-156)

In their reviews of these two evaluations, Stake (1983) and Farrar & House (1983) conclude that the quantitative evaluation designs were ill-suited to either the programs or their context and did not consider the evaluation needs of decision makers. Although the evaluations were designed to be "stakeholder friendly," the following critiques reveal that their results were less than satisfactory.

#### Cities in Schools

In his evaluation of the Cities-in-Schools evaluation, Stake (1983) found that the use of the term stakeholder was limited and did not provide direct involvement for many groups. Although decision makers and consumers were initially included as stakeholders, program staff were neglected in this process.

Stakeholders were also viewed as an audience or as information receivers and not as collaborators in the evaluation process.

The principal researcher, Murray, eventually focused exclusively on decision makers and abandoned consumers because he perceived them to be unhelpful and uninvolved. As Murray reported:

"The idea of using clients as stakeholders never really got off the ground. How do you get parents and kids together in Indianapolis? You have to use the program to get them together. So what do you get? You get the fan club. You get parents who really like the program...But this isn't having a stake in it." (Stake, 1983, p. 26)

Several factors were found to impede the stakeholder approach. Stake determined that the research proposal did not anticipate that there "might be difficulty communicating with stakeholders or in understanding their information needs" (1983, p. 18). In fact, they treated stakeholder involvement "as if it could be handled within ordinary information processing operations" (1986, p. 29). The CIS evaluation also held high expectations of stakeholders, assuming that they would actively pursue a participatory role and that they were cognizant and explicit of their own need. Stake reveals that these assumptions and the resulting lack of planning may have been due, in part, to the unenthusiastic treatment of stakeholder involvement by members of the evaluation research society, who commissioned the study.

Although Stake (1983) assessed that the findings gave an accurate portrayal of program difficulties and accomplishments, including which stakeholders or consistencies supported or

opposed CIS, "the evaluation team did not take full advantage of the stakeholder concept" (p. 29).

#### Push/Excel

In their case study of this evaluation, Farrar & House (1983) revealed that the stakeholder notion was not well used and that stakeholders contributed little to the evaluation design or dissemination of findings. The principal investigators, Murray and Gold, agreed that their method needed considerable improvement.

Several barriers were attributed to the stakeholders: stakeholder naivete about what an evaluation can accomplish, concern over political issues versus community involvement, stakeholders' limited knowledge about local operations or goals, and a general lack of sophistication in evaluation research. Researchers were blamed for being lukewarm about stakeholder involvement and for paying scant attention to stakeholder needs (Farrar & House, 1983, pp. 45-46). Murray remarked that although some parents expressed a general interest in their children doing well, many felt powerless to do anything, and Gold acknowledged his frustration of working with parents unfamiliar with talking about these issues.



## Collaborative Evaluation

### Evaluator Attitudes Concerning Implementation Issues

Many of the same researchers who maintain the importance of multiple perspectives and agree that beneficiaries and citizens often have a stake in program evaluation also reveal their scepticism of a nonresearcher's ability to effectively participate in the evaluation process. They express personal apprehensions about the practical limitations of such an approach.

Several concerns are attributed to the nonresearcher and, in particular, the beneficiary of services. These include both personal and situational factors in that nonresearchers: may ask uninformed, trivial, or unsophisticated questions (Cook & Shadish, 1986; Shadish et al, 1991; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Weiss, 1983b); do not have a better understanding of the needs and problems than professionals or do not know enough to make useful suggestions for change (Pinto & Fiester, 1979); may not understand the purposes of the evaluation, may fear reprisal if they make negative remarks, or may be unable to cooperate fully due to poor health (Knott, 1988); are too poorly educated concerning such matters (Knott, 1988; Rossi & Freeman, 1993); may have mainly negative attitudes towards the program or the evaluation (Tronya & Foster, 1988); do not have the time or interest (Shadish et al., 1991); may try to protect their own

interest or possibly mistake their own interests (House, 1980; Krause & Howard, 1976); may refuse to participate if other groups are included (Reinharz, 1983); and prefer to maintain low visibility or keep a low profile (Lincoln & Guba, 1981; Rossi & Freeman, 1993).

Other concerns relate to the researcher or evaluator in that they: may not understand the concept of stakeholder-based evaluation or be "lukewarm" about stakeholder involvement (Farrar & House, 1983); are faced with too many perspectives, possibly competing ones (Shadish et al, 1991; Rossi & Freeman, 1993); may be unable to juggle the competing demands of participation and technical integrity (Weiss, 1983a); may have a natural desire to retain control, or may lack experience with or understanding of stakeholder roles (Dinkel, Zinober, & Flaherty, 1981); may find it too time consuming to include peripheral audiences or may overlook them (Stake, 1983; Lincoln & Guba, 1981); may embrace a political role and play advocate instead of evaluator (Gibbs, 1974); and/or may leave the decision maker with a problem instead of a solution (Cochran, 1980).

Evaluators have also been concerned about maintaining technical integrity, especially in evaluations that maintain an utilization rationale. Chelimsky (1987) argues that technical quality is a prerequisite for meaningful use, and Patton (1987) reveals that evaluators who get too close to stakeholders "may jeopardize scientific integrity" (Patton, 1987). Cousins and Leithwood (1986), in their assessment of use-related factors,

found that technical quality had the strongest relationship to utilization. Weiss (1983b) concurs that stakeholder involvement is likely to compromise the technical quality of evaluations.

Studies of staff attitudes toward stakeholder participation in evaluation reveal that there is a wide range of ambiguity in regards to the role of stakeholders in the evaluation process. The infrequency of participation may be the result of "the lack of experience with, and understanding of, the role which [stakeholders] might play in evaluation, or of the activities they might perform" (Dinkel et al., 1981, p. 60). Other barriers include staff resistance to change, perceptions of stakeholder involvement as an attack or threat to their personal credibility, and a lack of knowledge of demonstrated procedures for stakeholder involvement.

In their investigation of the attitudes of governing board and management staff attitudes toward citizen participation in mental health agencies, Pinto & Fiester (1979) found that "despite the general perception that citizen input is to be valued, both groups felt that citizens did not...know enough about community mental health centres to make useful suggestions for change in service" (p. 265). A review of patterns in program evaluation practice among evaluators by Shadish and Epstein (1987) revealed that "evaluators identified themselves as experts who came in to judge and educate--apparently we evaluators have little doubt that we have something to offer beyond merely reflecting stakeholder opinions" (p. 576). They found that few

respondents were familiar with diverse theories of evaluation such as writings by Scriven and Stake--leaders in stakeholder based approaches. They conclude that "it is hard to argue that this low level of familiarity with theory is desirable, if for no other reason than the fact that evaluators are deprived of knowledge of the options they have available to use in their practice" (p. 586).

#### Stakeholder Participation in Action

Researchers who have been involved in collaborative research with stakeholders reveal that there are both advantages and disadvantages to the inclusion of stakeholders in the evaluation process. They report significant shifts in the roles and relationships between researcher and stakeholder working together in a collaborative process.

There seems to be general agreement that the inclusion of multiple stakeholders requires an increased investment in time and energy (Stake, 1986; Reinharz, 1983; and Tronya & Foster, 1988; Routledge, 1993; Tovar, 1989). This was also true for stakeholders, as collaborative research demanded a great deal of time which could be considered unrealistic within the confines of busy lives or work schedules (Tronya & Foster, 1988; Dawson & D'Amico, 1985; Donmoyer, 1990). Having staff as stakeholders was also found to hinder the collaborative process when staff resented or feared being evaluated (Tronya & Foster, 1988).

Status differential problems was observed between upper-middle class staff and blue-collar working stakeholders and, at times, professional staff discounted stakeholders' views because of their lack of education or professional training (Donmoyer, 199).

Stakeholders, placed in a decision making arena, have demonstrated different information needs which can be very demanding on evaluators (Palumbo & Hallett, 1993; Lobosco & Newman, 1992; Couto, 1987). Further, researchers found clear division in stakeholders' assessments of programs (McGarrell & Sabath, 1994). Technical difficulties developed when stakeholders constructed a survey that was too long to code and too difficult to analyze, and the use of volunteers resulted in incorrect coding of the survey and other errors requiring extensive time to rectify (Couto, 1987).

An evaluation based in Mexico revealed that stakeholders who were required by their employer to collect data and perform analysis were not very enthusiastic participants in the evaluation process. In addition, stakeholders were unable to sustain an evaluation for which they had sole responsibility, partly due to the lack of finances and other resources. (Brunner & Guzam, 1989).

Evaluators have also found the unintended side effect of the researcher taking more responsibility and power than planned due to stakeholder dynamics or to consumers' demands and expectations to play the "expert role" (Kirkup, 1986; Reinharz, 1983). Researchers have also reported a reduced sense of control and

feeling that they may have sacrificed their autonomy and or objectivity (Reineke, 1991; Tronya & Foster, 1988; Reinhartz, 1983).

On the other hand, collaborative research was found to solicit high participation rates and accelerate the utilization of findings while maintaining technical integrity (Patton, 1987; Couto, 1987; Dawson & d'Amico, 1985). Stakeholders, including beneficiaries, were willing partners in the evaluation and decision making process and were able to contribute meaningfully to the evaluation process (Malekoff, 1994; Routledge, 1993; Lobosco & Newman, 1992; Lawrence, 1989; Couto, 1987; Barkdoll, 1993). Stakeholder involvement also helped to reinforce limited financial resources for evaluations (Dawson & D'Amico, 1985). A study on stakeholder information preferences revealed that among a diverse group of stakeholders there was a high degree of consistency in the importance attached to different types of information (Deutsch & Malmberg, 1986).

The inclusion of decision makers and program staff has been shown to increase the meaningfulness and validity of findings and to make the research process less intrusive thus reducing staff reaction to the evaluation (Patton, 1987, Reineke, 1991). Stakeholder dialogue was also found to contribute to staff ownership and empowerment. "Early stakeholder participation established the legitimacy of [staff] input into the evaluation and reinforced the perception that it was being done with and for them" (Reineke, 1991, p. 41). Staff participation also provided

credibility and served to improve communication among staff members (Dawson & D'Amico, 1985).

Subject, or beneficiary, participation was also discovered to minimize the researcher's bias (Reinharz, 1983), increase evaluator understanding of program background factors, and create valuable information networks and liaisons for the programs under review (Lawrence, 1989). Researchers have also found that beneficiary participation in evaluation increased the validity of the data collection instruments and the results (Carey & Smith, 1992; Owston, 1986). Beneficiary involvement also created a sense of empowerment among participants and led to social action (Malekoff, 1994; Routledge, 1993). "The process demonstrates that consumers not only know what they want, and can articulate very clearly the reality they find themselves in, but also work actively and collectively to affect changes (Routledge, 1993, p. 106).

A review of five case studies of stakeholder involvement in mental health centres (Dinkel, Zinober, & Flaherty, 1981) revealed that given the means and the opportunity, consumers of mental health services are capable of being actively and meaningfully involved in the professional tasks and organizational responsibilities of evaluation. Consumers were involved in a variety of tasks from reviewing evaluation findings to having full regulatory authority for implementing evaluations. They provided useful information and recommendations which were determined to have direct impact on the programs studied. One

researcher found that beneficiaries of mental health services actually tended to be more positive about a program's outlook than staff (Morrison, 1978).

### Roles and Relationships

Researchers reveal that the inclusion of stakeholders in evaluation changes the role of evaluators. Patton (1987) reports that:

the involvement of program staff or clients as colleagues in program evaluation changes the relationship between evaluators and staff. The relationship becomes interactive and cooperative rather than one-sided and antagonistic. (p. 212)

Role conflict was determined to be a major stumbling block to the effectiveness of CIS and Excel evaluations (Cohen, 1983). Gold (1983) states that "the effects of competing values and priorities placed the evaluator in considerable role conflict" (p. 67). Gold concedes that when role expectations caused uncertainty or conflict in CIS or Excel, the evaluators regressed to a more familiar and traditional role.

Alkin & Associates (1985) suggest that the choice of role can be related to the evaluator's commitment to involve users in evaluation. How stakeholders participate can often be predetermined by the role selected by the researcher. If the evaluator takes the role of the detached, neutral judge or dedicated scientist, stakeholder participation constitutes something very different than if the researcher takes the role of



a colleague or advocate. Similarly, the role assigned to a stakeholder of answering questions determined by experts or participating in decision making will ultimately affect the continuum of participation. The task of identifying stakeholder groups can also vary greatly, depending on the skill of the evaluators and their experience.

Evaluators hold various views, some competing, on the role of the evaluator in collaborative research. Cronbach (1982) envisions the role of the evaluator as one of a consultant or advisor to the political community. He identifies the role of an evaluator as one who should speak to the concerns of the many constituents with interests at stake. The "evaluator's function is to help each person who holds a stake in social and institutional actions to understand a proposed action just as well as stakeholders with competing interests do" (Cronbach et al, 1980, p. 66). Although the researcher is compelled to bring in competing views, Cronbach feels this can be accomplished by the researcher and does not require the stakeholder's direct involvement.

Patton (1988a, 1987, 1986) considers the evaluator to be an expert scientist, group facilitator, and teacher. The evaluator is seen as a trainer and facilitator--one who trains program managers and decision makers how to use research and facilitates their involvement for the purpose of stimulating use. This is accomplished through shared decision making in a collaborative atmosphere.

Lincoln & Guba (1981) suggest that the evaluator "has the right to prioritize the audience in terms of the level of stake each holds, and to respond to them in that priority order to the extent that resources permit" (p. 304). They see the evaluator's role as one of human instrument, collaborator, and investigator, as well as that of reality shaper and change agent.

Some researchers argue that the inclusion of stakeholders, especially certain beneficiaries, is not likely to develop spontaneously and will need advocate support. House (1986b, 1980), well known for his role as an advocate of disadvantaged or minority groups, argues that the evaluator has a responsibility to search for and listen to vulnerable stakeholders. He regards attempts to speak for stakeholders as paternalistic. House believes that the role of a democratic evaluator is one of a broker, ensuring that all interests are represented and actively pursued. He distinguishes between an evaluator who is impartial versus one who is indifferent.

Inherent in a stakeholder approach to evaluation are problems in personal and role relationships between researcher and nonresearcher participant, regardless of who is selected as a stakeholder. Consideration of relational dynamics would appear to be an important issue in collaborative research.

### Ethical Considerations

Mark and Shotland (1985) reveal that stakeholder-based evaluation raises unique value questions for evaluators. Inherent in a stakeholder approach are value judgements concerning the selection of stakeholder groups for participation and which stakeholder groups' values will control the evaluation. These value judgements raise complex issues of power and control.

The evaluator often plays a crucial role in deciding who is chosen as a stakeholder, determining what is adequate group representation, and deciding how much authority is granted to stakeholding groups. Out of necessity, choices are often made among competing agendas to represent the interests of one group over another (Smith, 1985).

Weiss (1983a) inquires "who defines which groups are stakeholders and which groups are not?....[and] does the right to decide who is in and who is out reduce the efficacy of stakeholder evaluation as an instrument of democratization?" (p. 10). Kenny (1982) remarks that "it strikes me that the highest form of elitism occurs when persons unchosen by the disadvantaged say that they speak for the disadvantaged or they say that they take the disadvantaged's interests into account" (p. 21 & 22).

Smith (1985) argues that "moral problems can arise from unforeseen consequences or from the fact that the methods used to implement an action could in fact thwart its achievement or cause

other values to suffer" (p. 8). For example, Mark & Shotland (1985) reveal the potential problems of having an "all-inclusive" approach to stakeholder involvement: should a rapist be considered a stakeholder in an evaluation of rape laws?, or should a businessman whose primary interests are profits be considered a legitimate stakeholder in a community care home evaluation where substandard care can result in increased profits?

Evaluators are challenged to explore the rationale for stakeholder involvement during the planning phase and to be open and honest about their value choices (Smith, 1985; Mark & Shotland; 1985). Mark & Shotland (1985) recommend classification of stakeholders into groups with perceived power and those with perceived legitimacy of the stakeholding group's interests. They suggest that high utilization and decision making rationales should emphasize powerful stakeholders while empowerment rationales should include low-power stakeholders.

Evaluators may prefer not to deal with such issues, but they must unless they choose to involve all stakeholders equally, regardless of the groups' legitimacy--a strategy that itself clearly involves a value judgement. (Mark & Shotland, 1985, p. 614)

How stakeholders are involved in evaluation can be represented on a continuum, from token participation to genuine power sharing. It has been identified by Maclure (1990) that "the terms 'participation' and 'participatory' are ambiguous. They express good intentions, but they are elusive references to the fundamentals of practice" (p. 7). Cousins & Earl (1992)

reveal that participation is often loosely defined. The inclusion of beneficiaries in particular, has been challenged as to whether their inclusion is genuine corroboration or just a form of cooptation (Prager, 1986; Mark & Shotland, 1985, Dawson & D'Amico, 1985; Stake, 1983; Weiss, 1983b).

Mark & Shotland (1985) disclose that stakeholder involvement does not necessarily lead to stakeholder influence and that stakeholder-based evaluations assume that stakeholder participation is a positive value. They present an alternative perspective of "pseudoempowerment" which exposes the potential risk of evaluators having full control of the process, to the neglect of stakeholder concerns, or the risk of researchers maintaining control over substantive issues, granting stakeholders power only on insignificant issues.

Evaluation which involves stakeholders does not automatically transform into a democratic evaluation in which their interests will be represented (Mathison, 1991). Smith (1985) states that "moral problems can arise because we focus so much on our good intentions that we ignore the harmful side effects of our actions (p. 8). House (1993, 1990) reveals that, even when the powerless or poor have equal opportunities for participation, they do not have equal power to influence or use evaluations nor do they have equal protection from the evaluation. Further, stakeholder representatives may not properly represent the interests of powerless groups. Weiss (1983b) acknowledges that:

The stakeholder approach could be construed as a way of deflecting stakeholder attention from decisions that more directly affect them....Whether a reduction of inequities in the evaluation process results in net gains for all stakeholders is a matter that deserves attention. (p. 93)

Dawson & D'Amico (1985) reveal further risks to evaluation integrity:

Evaluators run the risk of avoiding threatening issues, equivocating negative findings, or generally being less than candid in order to protect their relationships with developer participants. Program staff, on the other hand, run the risk of relying too heavily on information they feel they have helped generate, accepting and acting on evaluation recommendations at face value without sufficient critical analysis. (p. 194)

When stakeholders are involved in the evaluation process is also regarded as a value judgement (Reineke, 1991).

Collaborative attempts with stakeholders reveal important value choices concerning evaluation content. In their reflections of an attempt to apply a client-centered model of inservice education in practice, Tronya & Foster (1988) were faced with differences of opinion between evaluators and staff on what constituted effectiveness and constraints within a teaching context. As researchers committed to anti-racist educational principles, pursuing a satisfactory resolution of the meanings of such "abstract, complex and (politically) disputed terms" was found to have enormous ethical implications. They realized that any decisions they made as researchers and the resulting strategies would be both judgemental and value-laden.

Does the researcher abandon his/her principles to the vagaries of the marketplace? If so, the apparent egalitarian relationship between teacher (client) and researcher is abandoned in favour of the former's priorities. If the researcher decides not to engage in

collaborative research then the principle of egalitarianism and cooperation is again sacrificed: this time on the altar of the researcher's principles and interests. (p. 297)

Although the researchers had hoped to remain true to the principles of collaboration, they found they were faced with exactly what the client-centered model proposed to avoid. They conclude that "it is important that the research is conducted in a context in which the ethical commitments of the researcher have been clarified" (p. 298).

#### Relevance to Social Work

Social program evaluation is an integral component of the role of social work in society. The role of program evaluation has continued to grow and expand to include multiple kinds of evaluations and multiple approaches to the evaluation process.

The influence of social work has served to enhance the role of program evaluation--to reveal that questions suited for social research varied from their scientific counterpart. Social workers required evaluations that would provide useful and accurate information about programs in order to suggest improvements and assist in decision making processes. As a result, they insisted that evaluations be relevant and that they address the concerns of a variety of stakeholders.

Social workers dedicated to advancing the cause of oppressed and disadvantaged groups must be sceptical of evaluations that cater only to the needs and wants of decision makers and policy

makers. As results that are statistically significant may not be substantively significant, social workers need to be concerned about the relevancy of outcomes. Essentially, the examination of a black box when one is standing outside the box looking in may produce a different result than an examination where one is actually standing inside the box.

House (1986) indicates that efforts to democratize evaluations through the participation of non-evaluators have not been very successful. "It is...clear that participatory approaches have a very long way to go and face an uphill struggle against evaluation conceived as a purely technical art conducted by experts" (p. 9). Murray (1983) concludes that "aspects of the stakeholder process provide cause for prolonged debate and discussion within the evaluation community", indicating that it is the "intense, continual interactions that it requires with all the parties to an evaluation" which is both its strength and its danger (p. 60).

Although the concept of stakeholder participation in evaluation originated more than 30 years ago, the concept has not "taken off" as might be expected. The literature reveals the discrepancies that exist between negative expectations of stakeholder participation by evaluators and the stakeholders' genuine ability to participate meaningfully in the evaluation process. In fact, collaborative evaluation in action has revealed more practical and operational limitations than difficulties due to personal attributes of stakeholders.



Routledge (1993) suggests that the benefits outweigh the constraints: "at times facilitators have to give a great deal of themselves, but that is more than returned by the support and encouragement they receive" (p. 107). However, evaluator ambiguity and uncertainty continues to hinder the facilitation of stakeholders in evaluation research.

Whereas the notion of bringing in viewpoints of non-researchers, citizens, and service recipients is admirable, stakeholder-based evaluation has not been adequately conceptualized. Evaluators are still confronted with a series of unresolved issues concerning stakeholder collaboration, including disagreements about how it should be implemented (House, 1993). Greene (1988b) reveals that:

many of the theoretical and operational elements of stakeholder participation are not yet well understood, for example, stakeholder definition and selection, the nature and meaning of participation, and role expectations of participatory researchers. (p. 341)

Cousins and Earl (1990) confirm that "we need to know a lot more, however, about the conditions within which participation is sensible and feasible" (p. 408).

Far from being a natural phenomenon, participation often involves the restructuring of relationships and the restructuring of power within those relationships. Good intentions for multiple stakeholder participation can be influenced by the role taken on by the evaluator, the role given to the stakeholder, and ultimately, by how a stakeholder is defined. It is essential that consideration is given to these relational dynamics and

their implications before embarking on a stakeholder approach to evaluation. Weiss (1983) anticipates that:

As experience accumulates and if we conscientiously learn from that experience, we should be able to specify the conditions under which the stakeholder approach is likely to prove useful and probe the realistic limits of its potential. (p. 10)

Further study on the nature and dynamics of the participatory process, including operational dimensions and relational dynamics, is necessary. An increased understanding of the central concepts of stakeholder collaboration may reveal the operational and contextual factors necessary to consider prior to embarking on such an evaluation approach.

## Chapter 2

### METHODOLOGY

#### Research Design

Although the rationale for the inclusion of stakeholders in evaluation research is compelling, collaborative research, in practice, is still found to be the exception rather than the rule. A pervasive lack of information and understanding of the nature and consequence of stakeholder collaboration has hampered stakeholder inclusion in the evaluation process. This is revealed in the discrepancy between the perceived limitations of the approach and the tangible and verifiable results as discussed in the literature review. It is apparent that stakeholder collaboration still presents a tremendous challenge to most evaluation researchers.

This exploratory document study employs qualitative analysis to explore the nature of stakeholder involvement in program evaluation. The study is guided by the research question: What contributes to the effective participation of stakeholders in program evaluation? Literature reports and evaluation studies rich in feedback on stakeholder involvement in evaluation were analyzed in an attempt provide an understanding of key factors that facilitate effective collaboration with stakeholders. The phenomenological focus of the analysis highlights the operational

dimensions of stakeholder participation. Special consideration is given to the nature of interactions between researcher and stakeholder and the contextual factors which may affect the development or success of participation.

### Sampling Design

An extensive review of the literature was undertaken by the researcher to locate documents pertaining to program evaluation and the use or nonuse of stakeholders and participants. Documents were sought which were rich in details and in contextual information on the operational dimensions of stakeholder involvement in program evaluation. Case studies and reviews of stakeholder approaches to evaluation research were found to contain valuable first-hand accounts of participatory processes. These documents were often the culmination of extensive field notes by the researcher concerning the participatory process and included both researcher and stakeholder reflections on the participatory strategies. Many authors included actual quotations of reactions from stakeholders to the participatory process. These documents allowed the opportunity to examine a diverse range of participatory approaches operating within very different contexts.

Publications and documents written from popular research, fourth generation research, and feminist research were purposely

excluded as data for this study, specifically because each is presented as a unique and different research paradigm.

### Sample

A purposeful sample of twelve documents comprise the data for this study. These twelve documents include both case studies and retrospective reviews and provide authentic first-hand accounts of stakeholder involvement in a variety of evaluation settings. The articles illuminate various operational dimensions of stakeholder participation, the relational dynamics between researcher and stakeholder, and the contextual factors affecting participation. Patton (1991) qualifies that "information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term 'purposeful sampling'" (p. 169).

### Description of Sample

Alkin, M. C., & Patton, M. Q. (1987). Working Both Sides of the Street, pp. 19-32.

Using both a narrative and conversational format, Alkin and Patton discuss the process of evaluation and the elements involved in their attempt to work collaboratively both as program director (Patton) and evaluator (Alkin) on a Caribbean Agricultural Extension Project. The purpose of this \$5 million project was to increase the effectiveness of agricultural

extensions services in eight Caribbean counties. This project involved such key stakeholders as program staff, government officials, farmers, and academic staff. The evaluation's scope covered a two-year period. The focus of their discussion is on the "process" in which their partnership evolved, including the roles and relationships between team members, how the evaluation was focused, and the benefits of multiple stakeholder involvement.

Allen, D. G. et al. (1994). One System, many perspectives: Stakeholders and Mental Health System Evaluation, pp. 47-51.

In what appears to be a preliminary report, these authors describe the use of a modified action research model to integrate the perspectives of multiple stakeholders in the evaluation of a state's mental health reform. This two-year evaluation was contracted by the Legislative Budget Committee. The evaluation team attempted to broaden the range of perspectives on mental health system evaluation by incorporating as many stakeholders as possible into the study through the use of an advisory panel and through interviews and presentations to influential and political groups. To comprise the stakeholder group, evaluators recruited members from consumer and family groups, service providers, administrators, regional offices and state hospitals, and various legislative and governmental members. The authors recount how stakeholders were involved in various aspects of the evaluation, from the definition of research questions, to sampling, measurement, and analysis.

Ayers, T. D. (1987). Stakeholders as Partners in Evaluation: A Stakeholder-Collaborative Approach, pp. 263-271.

This paper presents a case study of a stakeholder-collaborative approach in an educational forum. The evaluation involved a public school system located on the island of Guam--an unincorporated territory of the United States. The school system had recently been reorganized to include a controversial shift from a junior high (grades 7-9) to a middle (6-8) school structure. An evaluation of the middle school system was organized and, in response to the highly politicized situation surrounding this issue, responsibility was assigned to a task force of non-evaluation personnel. Technical assistance was provided by an evaluation consultant who was a non-voting member of the task force during this year-long study. The task force included school administrators, teachers, union representatives, and community representatives. Ayers discusses the procedures and roles of participants in the design, administration, and interpretation phases of the evaluation.

Barrick, C. B., & Cogliano, J. F. (1993). Stakeholder Involvement: Mythology or Methodology?, pp. 33-37.

This paper describes the efforts of a committee to involve nursing faculty as stakeholders in a program evaluation pursuant to meeting accreditation requirements. The authors describe the experiences of the committee over a five-year period, placing an emphasis on strategies used to foster success. The combination of a number of factors had resulted in the committee perceiving

the implementation of any evaluation plan to be "myth". This paper describes the committee's successful move toward a strategy of methodology which clarified their role as the evaluator and the staff's role in data collection and interpretation and use of findings.

Brandon, P. R., Newton, B. J., & Harman, J. W. (1993). Enhancing Validity Through Beneficiaries' Equitable Involvement in Identifying and Prioritizing Homeless Children's Educational Problems, pp. 287-293.

Brandon et al. discuss the involvement of beneficiaries' in evaluation and present an example of an evaluation designed to enhance validity through equitable participation. This state-wide study of the educational problems of homeless children in Hawaii involved teachers, homeless shelter providers, and parents (the program beneficiaries) as stakeholders. They discuss methods on identifying and prioritizing the evaluation problem and reconciling differences between groups, focusing on how they involved all three stakeholder groups. The authors reveal the procedures used to ensure equitable participation by beneficiaries and how beneficiary involvement enhanced relevance.

Crow, G. M., Levine, L., & Nager, N. (1992). Are Three Heads Better Than One? Reflections on Doing Collaborative Interdisciplinary Research, pp. 737-753.

This paper presents reflections on an interdisciplinary and collaborate approach to conducting an in-house study of students who left other occupations for teaching. The portions of this paper which relate to the interdisciplinary attempt among the



researcher were not included as data, although they provided a reference for data on their collaborative attempts. The authors describe and analyze their attempts at external collaboration with both faculty advisors and students and include their observations on what facilitated and constrained this process. This article is somewhat unique in that the goals and roles for collaboration evolved during the course of the study.

Faase, T. P., & Pujdak, S. (1987). Shared Understanding of Organizational Culture, pp. 75-82.

This article describes the shared understanding that developed between the client and evaluator in an evaluation of a Roman Catholic religious organization. For some time, the administrative staff within the religious order had been sensing the need and urgency for retrenchment and consolidation of members. The purpose of the evaluation was to consider the implications for the province of the occurrence and timing of this retrenchment. Faase was chosen as evaluator because of his knowledge about the sociology of religion and previous research in religious settings. Both Faase (evaluator) and Pujdak (client) include their reflections on this shared evaluation attempt which required mutual support and collaboration.

Gill, S. J., & Zimmerman, N. R. (1990). Racial/Ethnic and Gender Bias in the Courts: A Stakeholder-Focused Evaluation, pp. 103-108.

Gill & Zimmerman describe a stakeholder-focused approach used to evaluate racial/ethnic and gender bias in the Michigan

court system. These two evaluators were invited to assist in gathering and analyzing data for two task forces appointed by the State Supreme Court to study these issues. The task forces included judges, attorneys, court administrators, and other professionals experienced with the court system. Stakeholders were involved in the initial study design, development of data collection instruments, data collection, and interpretation of results of this two-year project. Stakeholders were involved for their content and language expertise and to enhance utilization. Gill and Zimmerman discuss the application of a stakeholder-focused model of evaluation to a sensitive and complex research project and describe each level of stakeholder involvement.

Greene, J. C. (1987). Stakeholder Participation in Evaluation Design: Is it Worth the Effort?, pp. 379-394.

This report reviews the design and planning phase of two case study evaluations in which a participatory design process is operational within a utilization rationale. Two programs, a youth employment service and a childcare information and referral service, were chosen for these two-year reviews. Stakeholders were identified with the help of agency staff and included funders, program staff, administrative staff, board members, program clients and users, and community representatives. An evaluation team comprised a select group of these stakeholders and evolved into a self-contained decision making body. In keeping with the utilization focus, stakeholders were given responsibility for content while the evaluator maintained

responsibility for process and technical content. Greene discusses the nature and meaningfulness of stakeholder participation, the roles and responsibilities of participants, and their involvement in decision making.

Greene, J. C. (1988). Stakeholder Participation and Utilization in Program Evaluation, pp. 91-106.

Greene elaborates on her earlier work (see above) to explore the linkages between participation and use in the youth employment and daycare evaluations. An excellent discussion on the meaning of stakeholder participation supplements her previous article, as Greene reveals the experiences of participation as reported by three stakeholders. In this study, Greene delves into an elaborate discussion on the links between participation and utilization, and these sections were only used to the extent that they provided information relevant to this study.

Shapiro, J. Z., & Blackwell, D. L. (1987). Large Scale Evaluations on a Limited Budget: The Partnership Experience, pp. 53-62).

Using an informal, conversational format, this article reports on the design and implementation of a partnership evaluation at Southeastern Louisiana University. Six projects were slated for review. Project director/internal evaluator (Blackwell) and external evaluator (Shapiro) proposed a strategy for sharing evaluator responsibilities between university staff and evaluator in an effort to enhance evaluator consultant time

and expertise and minimize cost. During this year-long study, each program director took responsibility for their own evaluation activities with technical assistance and guidance provided by the external evaluator. Limited to the stakeholder as client and program staff, this paper describes the external and internal perspectives on the sequence of events, as well as the meaning and implications of partnerships that emerged during the evaluation.

Whitmore, E. (1900). Empowerment in Program Evaluation, pp. 215- 229.

Whitmore explores the ways in which beneficiaries are empowered through their participation as evaluation staff of a prenatal program for single expectant mothers. Program participants were hired and trained to assist in conducting the evaluation in order to increase the validity of the data. The evaluator worked closely with an existing community-based advisory committee of stakeholders who oversaw the evaluation. Whitmore discusses the role of group cohesion on the participatory process, with particular emphasis on the program participants' perceptions of empowerment through their involvement in this year-long evaluation.

TABLE 1

## Descriptive Characteristics of Sample

Study	Evaluand	Stakeholders	Motivation	Timeframe
Alkin & Patton (1987)	Caribbean Agricultural Extension Project	Program staff, academic staff, administrators, government officials, farmers,	Utilization	Two years
Allen et al. (1994)	Mental Health System	Consumer and family groups, providers, administrative staff, legislative and governmental members	Action Research Orientation	Two years
Ayers (1987)	Guam Middle School System	School administrators, teachers, union & community representatives	Political	One year
Barrick & Cogliano (1993)	Nursing Faculty	Nursing faculty staff	Logistical	Five years
Brandon et al. (1993)	Homeless Children's Educational Problems	Homeless parents, teachers, homeless-shelter providers	Enhance Validity of Findings	N/A
Crow, Levine & Nager (1992)	Student Career Changes	Faculty advisors & students	Collaboration	One year
Faase & Pudjak (1987)	Religious Congregation	Priest (planning director) & congregation staff	Political	Six months
Gill & Zimmerman (1990)	Racial & Ethnic Bias in Court System	Judges, attorneys, court administrators, & other professionals with court experience	Utilization, Language & Content Expertise	Two years
Green (1987, 1988a)	Youth Employment Service & Child-Care Information Referral Service	Program staff, funders, administrative staff, board members, program clients, community representatives	Utilization	Two years
Shapiro & Blackwell (1987)	University: Multiple Settings	Program directors	Economic	One year
Whitmore (1990)	Prenatal Program for Single Mothers	Program participants & community advisors	Empowerment, Enhance Validity	N/A

### Sample Composition

Nine of the selected documents were written or co-authored by evaluation researchers with the exception of one co-authored with a priest. Of these, three co-authors were also the evaluation clients. Two of these nine studies were written by the same author (Greene, 1988a, 1987) who reported on different aspects of the same data. The additional three documents were written by multiple authors with one authored by a sociologist, anthropologist, and developmental psychologist; another written by three University staff (professions not indicated); and another by six authors, five of whom are university faculty representing various departments (two from psychosocial nursing, two from social work, one from psychiatry), with the remaining author from a legislative committee. The selected documents were published between 1987 and 1994, with five of the documents published in 1987.

All of the articles are case studies of collaborative research attempts, however, some provide a very formal retrospective review while others are written more as an informal review and dialogue of specific case examples.

The evaluations were conducted in strikingly different settings and contexts: an elementary school outside the U.S., a judicial system, a religious congregation, an employment program and childcare centre, a prenatal program for single expectant mothers, mental health services, and an overseas agricultural

project. One study evaluated homeless children's educational needs. The three sites that were university based included evaluations within a faculty of nursing, a faculty of education, and a diversity of departmental settings within one university including electronic learning, development foundation, counselling, business education, industrial technology and chemistry/physics. All of the evaluations were initiated by evaluators or agencies--none were citizen or consumer initiated.

The studies offer a variety of stakeholder participants from program funders, staff, and professionals, to beneficiaries and citizens, with each of these stakeholders interacting in a variety of roles. In all but four studies, stakeholders participated substantially in almost all facets of the evaluation. Stakeholders shared responsibilities with researchers for formulating questions, designing instruments, data collection and data analysis. Within these studies, roles and areas for responsibility varied. For example, in one study, the evaluator had sole responsibility for data analysis while the stakeholder wrote the final report; in another, these roles were reversed; and in yet another, these roles were shared. In the remaining four studies, stakeholder participation was limited to areas including problem formulation, data collection, and analysis; and in two of these studies, stakeholder participation within these stages was either somewhat restricted or was very structured.

Motivations for stakeholder involvement varied for each evaluation. They included rationales of utilization, budget restrictions, need for professional expertise, shared decision making (collaboration), enhanced credibility and validity of data, and empowerment. Some studies espoused more than one motivation.

#### Method of Data Analysis

This exploratory descriptive research paper employs content analysis to examine the qualitative data. "Content analysis is a way of transforming qualitative material into quantitative data. It consists primarily of coding and tabulating the occurrences of certain forms of content that are being communicated" (Rubin & Babbie, 1989, p. 370). Content analysis requires the researcher to label and code the data into primary patterns, classifying them according to some conceptual framework (Patton, 1990). Categorizing or classifying the data assists the researcher to distinguish the substantive themes within the data.

In this study, select passages relating specifically to the research focus of participatory operational dimensions and relational dynamics were studied in depth and in detail. Some passages were analyzed line by line, others were analyzed sentence by sentence. Each "thought" or "idea" as captured in a line or sentence was coded by the researcher. Patton (1990) describes the qualitative experience as one of "illumination, understanding, and extrapolation" (p. 424). Data were not



constrained by the researcher through predetermined categories. Important analytical dimensions were allowed to emerge freely from the data without any advance presuppositions of what those dimensions would be (Patton, 1990).

Although the data espouse a wide array of stakeholder roles and responsibilities within a variety of evaluation contexts, the analysis attempted to locate commonalities and themes within evaluator's participatory attempts. "In vivo" codes were used (Strauss, 1987) to define themes, as were codes prescribed by the researcher. Passages of data in which authors summarized current literature or thought on stakeholders (usually found in the beginning of articles or sections) were not included for analysis. The primary focus was on the authors' own experiences or their reporting of stakeholders' experiences.

Memos, as introduced to the researcher through Strauss (1987), were used by the researcher to organize the data by grouping and labelling the emerging patterns and codes into related categories and themes--the basis for content analysis (Patton, 1990). The researcher used memos to record any reactions to the data that might prove useful. Ideas about codes and their relationships to each other were conveniently captured in a memo through a comment, questions, or series of questions while the data analysis was still ongoing.

Miles & Huberman (1984) suggest that "memoing helps the analyst move easily from data to a conceptual level, refining and expanding codes further, developing key categories and showing

their relationships" (p. 71). Memos assisted the researcher to conceptually organize the patterns found in the data and focus emerging themes, allowing for further exploration of the data at a more indepth and intense level.

Several main themes emerged and provided a framework for conveying the substantive issues yielded from the data. These are discussed in the subsequent chapter.

### Chapter 3

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The participation of stakeholders in evaluation research has increasingly gained acceptance as a way to increase utilization, accurately represent the decision making process, and facilitate empowerment. However, evaluator understanding of the operational dynamics of participation is limited. The focus of this exploratory study is to identify the dynamics and operational dimensions which contribute to effective stakeholder participation. Special consideration is given to the nature of the interactions between researcher and stakeholder and the contextual factors affecting participation.

To facilitate readability of the report, only the first author's name is used as a reference in studies with more than one author. References to Greene's two articles are distinguished as Greene/a (1987) and Greene/b (1988).

The content analysis revealed four major themes related to stakeholder participation:

1. The participatory process should reinforce the genuineness of stakeholder participation. Stakeholder participation is legitimized through interactive communication, iteratively structured feedback, evidence of participation, and shared decision making.

2. Participation is enabled by attention to group process. The role of researcher as facilitator of the evaluation and of the group process is essential.
3. A successful participatory process cultivates a sense of ownership. Ownership is fostered by "hands-on" participation and by stakeholders' perception of the evaluation as an "inside job" and as "tailor-made."
4. The participatory process creates a readiness for use. There is a natural progression from participatory evaluation to utilization which is enhanced by ongoing access to evaluation results, an increase in program knowledge, and the relationship between researcher and stakeholder.

Each of these themes and subthemes, reproduced in Table 2, is addressed with special consideration paid to the nature of the roles and relationships between researcher and stakeholder.

#### Reinforcing the Genuineness of Participation

##### Interactive Communication

A key element in legitimizing participation for stakeholders was identified as a process which promotes frequent and ongoing communication with stakeholders. The use of multiple communication vehicles to maintain this continuity of contact was recommended.

Table 2

## Main Themes and Subthemes

Main Themes	Subthemes
1. The participatory process should reinforce the genuineness of stakeholder participation.	1. Stakeholder participation is legitimized through: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>interactive communication</li> <li>iteratively structured feedback</li> <li>evidence of participation</li> <li>shared decision making.</li> </ol>
2. Participation is enabled by attention to group process.	2. The role of researcher as facilitator of the evaluation and of the group process is essential.
3. A successful participatory process cultivates a sense of ownership.	3. Ownership is fostered by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"hands-on" participation</li> <li>perceptions of the evaluation as an "inside job"</li> <li>perceptions of the evaluation as "tailor-made."</li> </ol>
4. The participatory process creates a readiness for use.	4. There is a natural progression from participatory evaluation to utilization which is enhanced by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ongoing access to evaluation results</li> <li>an increase in program knowledge</li> <li>the relationship between researcher and stakeholder.</li> </ol>

Communication between the researcher and stakeholder (and among stakeholders) was essential to soliciting and facilitating participation. Communication included a) personal contact through interviews, meetings and phone calls, b) written mail contacts through questionnaires and written reports, c) group meetings through both verbal presentations and written reports.

A central component was that communication be interactive. Written reports and questionnaires included space for feedback or comments by the stakeholder. Communication further assisted evaluators to establish deadlines by incorporating a timeframe for response.

Further, ongoing communication during the evaluation process enhanced participation by recognizing stakeholders as partners and providing them with access to all of the information available to the evaluator, thereby validating their participation. Communication also served to promulgate the evaluator's interest, energy, and commitment to the task.

Ongoing and interactive communication helped to sustain stakeholder interest and validate their value as participants. Participation is enhanced by communication efforts which are responsiveness to individual stakeholders communication styles and needs. Evaluators recount stakeholder perceptions of continuity of contact:

She [stakeholder] commented that the updates were especially useful in keeping her informed of the evaluation's progress, in making the information collected open and accessible to all, and in reinforcing the genuineness of her participation, thereby contributing to the trust and cooperative spirit of the venture. (Greene/b: 104)

In recounting their participatory experiences, many stakeholders...highlighted the value of the multiple opportunities afforded for discussion, reflection, and creative analysis of substantive program issues. (Greene/b: 107)

Receiving these communications regularly "inspired a deal of confidence that the project wouldn't just peter out," said Tim [stakeholder]. More importantly, Tim observed, these communications made him feel important and valued, reinforced his feeling that "what I wrote really counted" and helped him

to feel involved even when he did not participate....(Greene/b: 105)

Evaluators reflect:

Instead of asking questions prepared in advance, we initiated topics for discussion and then, using students' own language, encouraged them to expand on their responses (Crow: 748)

The content of this [ongoing] communication was comprehensive, giving stakeholders full access to and potential control over all information generated in the evaluations. Vehicles for this communication comprised both personal and written contacts. Jointly, these vehicles afforded multiple opportunities for stakeholder engagement with key program issues, were responsive to stakeholder differences in learning and communication styles, and emphasized the importance of dialogue as a key vehicle for generating meaning and planning action. (Greene/b: 102-103)

In both the interviews and survey, we did not standardize the procedures but tailored them to suit the groups...For example, to keep the interviews as nonthreatening as possible, some homeless parents were interviewed in groups, and to ensure that all parents' pair-comparison questionnaires were properly completed, we administered them in person, lessening problems due to unfamiliarity with the pair-comparison procedure. Teachers and shelter providers, however, who were more familiar with survey instruments, completed the questionnaires by mail. (Brandon: 289)

All stakeholders were given equal access to the evaluation findings and were provided with equal chances to speak in the meeting. (Brandon: 291)

Stakeholders seemed to prefer personal contact. Greene found that mailed questionnaires were not well-received. Stakeholders found them to be too wordy and hard to understand. Personal contact and interaction, however, provided opportunities for clarification and discussion prior to providing feedback. The importance of personal interaction with the researcher is identified as an important ingredient in solidifying and enhancing participation. Evaluators discuss the importance of personal contacts with both individuals and groups:

The personal contacts--the divergent phase interviews and the day care council analysis phase meeting--received nearly universal acclaim. Reasons cited include the importance of the personal connection and the value of group interaction for considerations of important issues. (Greene/a: 388)

The interviews were confirming, reaffirming, and helped facilitate [Tim's] own investment in the process. "I didn't get lost in a crowd...[participation] was personal, one on one." (Greene/b: 105)

The strengths of the evaluation came from an array of needs and cues about the client that emerged out of many conversations. (Faase: 80)

The heart of the partnership infrastructure was developed during the series of individual planning meetings. (Shapiro: 55)

Partners were encouraged to call the external partner and to ask questions and supply information about their projects. (Shapiro: 57)

Tom's involvement in the New Orleans meeting....established his commitment to the evaluation. He saw its scope and knew the people whom you were going to be interviewing. I could see that he was developing a sense of commitment to the evaluation as he looked over the interview questions and made suggestions for a few changes. The process of reviewing the instrumentation with Tom helped increase the extent to which those were Tom's questions. (Alkin: 27).

This problem ultimately was resolved as progressive contact between client and evaluator brought assurances that important sensitivities could and would be honoured in contacts with these stakeholders. The evaluation could not have begun without shared understanding and trust. (Faase: 76)

Group interaction and communication were found to promote a collegial and supportive environment. Stakeholders enjoyed interacting with other stakeholders and learned from their views and perspectives. Stakeholders valued different perspectives and desired access to their views on evaluation issues. Evaluators relate the importance of these group interactions:

Individual Task Force members brought a variety of different issues to the group based on their own curiosity and their



individual perception and experience of racial/ethnic and gender bias. (Gill: 105)

Repeated group discussions...not only provide the direct experience of contributing to a decision, but also the personal connections and the sharing of substantive analysis and reflection that further enhance the process. (Greene/a: 390)

Pam [stakeholder] particularly valued the stakeholder group meetings, which she perceived as fruitful and creative dialogues among people with differing views and perspectives about important program issues. "I liked hearing what other people are thinking." Pam only wished that there had been more such meetings and that some additional program constituencies had been better represented within the group (like low-income parents). (Greene/b: 104)

Communication and interaction with stakeholders reflected the collaborative goals of the participatory process. Vehicles for communication strengthened the genuineness of participation by reinforcing stakeholders as partners in the evaluation. Crow reveals difficulties when their communication with these stakeholders had not promoted a collaborative environment:

A review of our own notes and messages to advisors reveals a clear "us and them" orientation. We appear repeatedly as the "researchers"; they are being asked to provide data to help us "test our findings." (Crow: 745)

Stakeholder communication was found to not only be marked by frequent and close contact, it involved stakeholders early in the evaluation process. Timing was a factor in Crow, above, and was also introduced by two other evaluators who reveal that lack of initial contact and stakeholder involvement resulted in problems. They report:

Weakness of the evaluation plan were that neither the plan nor the instruments were pilot tested and both were developed without significant involvement of the faculty. This issues would later plague the program evaluation committee's implementation of the evaluation plan for years. (Barrick: 34)

The short time frames required submission of a fairly detailed research plan that didn't evolve from input by multiple stakeholder....Unfortunately [the panel] was only constituted after the original proposal was funded, and thus wasn't involved in some crucial, early design decisions. (Allen: 50)

### Iteratively Structured Feedback

Regardless of which tasks stakeholders are involved in, the participatory process requires continual solicitation of feedback from stakeholders. This was a central theme to reinforcing the authenticity of stakeholder participation and involves several factors.

Stakeholder feedback provided direction to the evaluator. Feedback was either written or verbal and involved activities such as ranking, prioritizing, supporting, providing critical reflection, and/or giving advice. Continual and repetitive opportunities for feedback seemed essential.

Within this process, the evaluator seems to make deliberate attempts to communicate to stakeholders that their input is both welcome and necessary. For example, evaluators labelled written communication and reports as drafts or preliminary reports. This seemed to transfer respect for stakeholder contributions and allowed opportunities for stakeholders to be involved in tasks which may be primarily the responsibility of the evaluator.

Evaluators recount their efforts to promote feedback:

Reports were shared with all stakeholders and then discussed in meetings with the evaluation team and/or the larger stakeholder group. Agendas for these meetings comprised stakeholder sharing of (a) reflections on and interpretations

of the results, and (b) further questions generated by the results, which could be addressed in additional analyses and/or future data collection activities. These substantive discussions contributed to ongoing data-collection decisions; they also represented stakeholder's evolving understanding of key program concerns and possible ways to address them. (Greene/b: 94)

First drafts of reports were prepared and labelled as such and distributed to all members of meeting....Then a meeting was held to review major findings, to identify gaps in the reports or in the participants' understanding of the documents, and to plan for utilization of the information by the Task Forces. (Gill: 107)

All instruments developed by the external evaluator were treated as draft forms. The directors had the final authority to determine questions, coding procedures, length and other characteristics. (Shapiro: 56)

The first report was preliminary....It permitted the staff to put questions to the evaluator for additional or subsequent analysis. (Faase: 79)

These reports were nontechnical narratives that presented the full set of descriptive results and selected relational results, but no conclusions or recommendations. Rather, the reports were shared with all stakeholders and then discussed in meetings with the evaluation team and/or the larger stakeholder group (Greene/b: 94)

Soliciting feedback incorporated a process of mutual exchange between researcher and stakeholder. Evaluators are not merely receivers of feedback. They are active participants engaged in lively interaction and the mutual exchange of ideas. This process involves interdirectional written or verbal dialogue concerning issues affecting the study, difficulties in understanding or in process, and observations and impressions. Mutual accommodation is presented as an essential component in this process. Evaluators describe this sharing of roles:

Stakeholders were viewed not as advisors or consultants, but as active, engaged "collaborators in inquiry"...., with

primary responsibility for determining the substance or content of the evaluations. (Greene/b: 101)

In the design process, the client told the evaluator what he wanted, and the evaluator outlined procedures that might bring it about. In questionnaire construction, the evaluator told the client what he was trying to do, and the client helped arrive at the expression of it that would be best understood by the rank-and-file membership. (Faase:78)

The approach to evaluation design on my part required flexibility and reaction, rather than proaction, because the activity director initially was to determine the course and goals of the evaluation research project. (Shapiro: 55)

It is essential that this process of soliciting feedback occur within an iterative structure. This iterative process was characterized by evaluators as: "second go-around," "recirculated," "several rounds of," "continual interplay," "ongoing," "reciprocal," "series," "back and forth," "number of junctures," and "repeated."

Multiple opportunities for participation is enhanced by repetition. Constant and recurring feedback provided continual updates of information and ensured that evaluators were accurately synthesizing material and interpreting the stakeholder's original intention. This appeared to serve as a safeguard--a kind of guarantee of the credibility and integrity of the evaluation. Iterative feedback resulted in a continually expanding and evolving process, whereby material was discussed by various constituent groups. At times, suggestions of a larger stakeholding group were incorporated into the evaluation material before being disseminated to a different stakeholding group. Iteration also served to enhance clarity. Evaluators illustrate the nature of this iterative process:

Pam also liked the multiple, ongoing, and varied opportunities provided for her participation, commenting, "I had plenty of opportunities to have a say". (Greene/b: 104)

In writing the report, we outlined what we wanted to say as a group, I drafted it in written form, and then we made revisions together. Again, this was an iterative process of many redrafts until we felt the results were clear and comprehensible. (Whitmore: 221)

After each discussion, implications and recommendations generated by that group were incorporated into the summary before it was shared with the next audience. A pluralistic and continually expanding set of program implications and specific ideas for change evolved from this process. (Greene/b: 94)

This translation and delimitation was a thoroughgoing negotiation. Five to six hours of planning and subsequent review, for instance, went into the construction of a single item on one scale. (Faase: 78)

[Evaluators] translated the Task Force's list of important content areas into a list of questionnaire items that would generate the data to answer their questions....the draft was circulated to the Design Subcommittee for comments. A phone call follow-up yielded helpful comments and suggestions for almost all of the Subcommittee members....Following the incorporation of feedback from the Design Subcommittee, [evaluators] met with the Subcommittee and reviewed the revised draft. (Gill: 106)

Stakeholder feedback and input is credited with providing insider knowledge and valuable information regarding local contexts which was central to the evaluation process.

From the beginning, the client sensed the kinds of factors, dilemmas, and so forth that the membership was beset by...the client had greater familiarity with this particular group; he knew who would respond to the question and how they might react to the choice of a word or a twist of a phrase. (Faase: 78)

Their [research assistants] experience and understanding of life in their community was profound; they knew intuitively what would work and what would not....their instincts about what would work and what would not in approaching the respondents were sound. (Whitmore: 220 & 223)

We wanted...help analyzing the data to balance our own blind spots and frame interpretations in a larger context of what was happening in the state. (Allen: 50)

The process represents an excellent vehicle for the evaluator to learn about the evaluand--its people, activities, context, and politics. The indepth information gained from repeated interactions with stakeholders far exceeds that available from documents, records, or only a few such interactions. (Greene/a: 391)

Stakeholder knowledge contributed to decisions regarding technical factors, enhanced data collection and analysis, and helped to increase the response rate. Their contributions impacted the clarity of the language and content of the data collection instruments, uniquely shaping the instruments to the audience being surveyed and ensuring relevance to the issues at hand. This insider knowledge was regarded as a critical element by evaluators. They report:

Their familiarity with the women they had interviewed helped enormously in filling in the context and understanding the full meaning of what people had said. (Whitmore: 220)

The client and the audience for the evaluation spoke a technical, professional language (i.e., legal terminology) which was essential for the operating language of data collection instruments.... The Task Force members....were able to identify language and questions that did not "ring true" based on their experience. (Gill: 104 & 106)

I met regularly with a subcommittee of the local advisory committee, whose members contributed a knowledge of the community and of the program over time. Members not only helped me to reflect on the process as I kept them up to date, but also offered invaluable advice on the design of questionnaires sent to advisory committee members and community professionals....Working so closely with this group also enhanced the trustworthiness of the data by contributing ideas to the process and specifically by critiquing questionnaire design in light of the local context. (Whitmore: 219/220)

The Advisory Panel provided similar vital advice concerning which Regional Service Network to include in the sample as

well as which providers or subproviders to make sure we covered. As initial results were reported, they both raised questions about further analyses that would clarify interpretation...and on situation factors that influenced results. (Allen: 50)

Consideration of stakeholder feedback in Crow's study on career changes led evaluators to unanticipated data when their interpretation of data was reacted to negatively by stakeholders.

Crow reports:

Some students reacted negatively to the use of the phrase career change, insisting that earlier work experiences had not been careers and that teaching represented their only real career....the students' reaction to our preliminary findings led us to investigate their concepts of career and the ways in which these concepts differed from conventional notions of career. (Crow: 746)

Feedback was also found to create difficulties. Crow was confronted with faculty advisors who did not agree with the original intent and purpose and were critical of the evaluation design. As this disagreement evolved around issues central to their study and were not reconcilable, Crow chose to limit their collaboration with advisors. Crow admits that the confusion was the result of role conflict and may have been impacted by communication which did not treat advisors as partners.

### Visible Results

It was important to stakeholders that there was tangible evidence or visible results of their participation. When their own voice was heard and reflected in the evaluation, they felt

that their participation was valued and that they had contributed. Evaluators report:

Within this view, nearly all stakeholders felt their opinion had been heard and it counted, typically citing as evidence (a) recognition of their own concern on a questionnaire, (b) space for comments on all written communications, (c) "[just being asked] made me feel I had something worth listening to (client stakeholder)". (Green/a: 388)

She [stakeholder] felt that her views were genuinely sought and used throughout the process, her voice was clearly heard, and her contributions definitely counted. (Greene/b: 103)

Representatives of both Task Forces were included in the Design Subcommittee to insure that concerns about gender and racial/ethnic bias would be included in the survey instruments....The content priorities of each Task Force member were given equal consideration for inclusion in the draft instrument which resulted from the meeting. (Gill: 105)

They were assured that their input was important and that it would be reflected in the methodology. For example, before any instruments for data collection were developed, much time was spent discussing the desired outcomes, the most cost-effective way of obtaining the data, and the need to eliminate items that appeared politically inappropriate because of timing or of the organizational issues. (Shapiro: 57)

The evaluation summary and these program/policy areas were iteratively discussed by various constituent groups, with each group's ideas incorporated into the summary before it was shared with the next group. This process again culminated in a final report, which included a complete listing of all program recommendations generated by stakeholding groups, as well as a highlighted set of the most important recommendations for change as viewed by both the stakeholders and the evaluator. (Greene/b: 98)

The client participated actively in a pervasive revision of a first draft of the final report....The client brought to the writing fine editorial and clarifying skills. More than a few flourishes were eliminated and some inconsistencies were obviated. (Faase: 79/80)

Stakeholder feedback also served to refine or "fine tune" materials, including data collection instruments. Reflections of their contributions of technical knowledge or an understanding of



the evaluand's local context in the evaluation contributed to the genuineness of stakeholder participation.

#### Shared Decision Making

Collaboration with stakeholders requires shared decision making on substantive evaluation issues. Shared decision making legitimizes the role of stakeholders in the evaluation process, recognizes their input as authentic and valid, and genuinely acts on their input.

Evaluators revealed that soliciting feedback often required action on the part of stakeholder. There appeared to be an essential step of stakeholder verification in this process. Drafts and final drafts were presented not only for information but for direction, the next "go ahead"--implying an endorsement by the stakeholder. In one instance when the researchers did not receive a response after mailing a final evaluation design draft, they "finalized the design" with a confirmatory letter to all stakeholders before moving on to the next phase. It was as if they could not proceed without some kind of confirmation and did not want to err in assuming that no response meant acceptance of the design. The iterative structure of the participatory process impacted opportunities for decision making and the level of control felt by stakeholders. Evaluators report:

After the revised questionnaires were recirculated to the Subcommittee members and they agreed to the changes, the survey instruments were ready to be piloted. (Gill: 106)

The staging is what allowed [stakeholder group] to feel that they were maintaining some control over this process, which they were. (Alkin: 26)

Evaluators report several contexts in which the partnership was reinforced through shared decision making. They share:

Moreover, given the stakeholders' genuine decision making role, these [group] discussions were oriented toward some concrete decision or action. That is, stakeholder action not just reaction was sought. (Greene/b: 109)

Differences among the stakeholder groups' scaled questionnaire results were reconciled in a meeting of stakeholders. The task of the meeting was to decide democratically about the final prioritization of the educational problems of homeless children....After the discussion, stakeholders completed secret ballots showing their final ranks for problems. (Brandon: 290/291)

To eliminate inequity that might be due to lengthy decision-making, we kept meetings brief and the stakeholders made decisions by plurality, not consensus....Thus, the power of the teachers, whom we might have expected to wield strong leadership in group decision-making, did not diminish the parents' influence. (Brandon: 291)

For some, but not all decisions, these stakeholders were asked to contribute their views, which were then summarized by the evaluator as majority opinions. Sometimes these majority opinions constituted decisions; other times they were shared with the evaluation team for further discussion. (Green/a: 388)

The process was viewed as a consensual democratic one, in which the evaluators provided the desired guidance and stakeholders, particularly the team, made the decisions about the content. (Greene/a: 389)

In Brandon's study, differences in communication practices among stakeholders was shown to impact their role as decision makers. Greene reveals that because of its small size and extensive evaluator interaction, a stakeholding team that was originally intended to serve as a communication link or liaison with the larger stakeholding group evolved into a decision-making

body. She reflects on the reasons the team took on this leadership role:

The logistical ease of working with a small group of three or four stakeholders versus a larger group of 15 to 20; and...the fact that team participation was nearly always in the form of group discussion and interaction versus the singular, distant, written characterization of most stakeholder participation. (Greene/a: 388)

In most of the documents reviewed, evaluators maintained control for the technical quality while the stakeholder retained substantive control of the evaluation process, although how this was observed in practice varied to some degree. Maintaining technical quality of the evaluation required the evaluator to take responsibility for guiding the research process and establishing certain parameters. However, even under these conditions, Greene reports that the stakeholders still had the final say: "The evaluator's attempts to facilitate meaningful stakeholder consideration of technical factors in their design decisions were, on balance, unsuccessful" (Greene/a: 389).

Shapiro indicates that stakeholder input made the development of the evaluation easier to undertake, at times, because the partners had to assist in making final choices. He comments:

Knowing that the instrumentation would be subject to partnership review made the development easier to undertake. Whenever I could not come to satisfactory decisions--for example, on the best coding scheme to use for a particular instrument--I knew that the partners would be obliged to assist in making final choices. (Shapiro: 60)

The participatory process requires an evaluator who is agreeable to being accountable to stakeholders, open to being

challenged and critiqued, and willing to take direction.

Evaluators reflect on their evaluation experiences:

Even more than usual, the evaluator must develop sensitivity to the advice and criticism of partners--a crucial element of the partnership evaluation if the client is truly going to act and feel like a partner. (Shapiro: 57)

The conscious decision to engage in partnership evaluation means that the conventional power relationships will be altered, and this departure may have an unsettling effect on evaluator and client alike. (Shapiro: 60)

Collaboration can have the disagreeable result of making the evaluator feel vulnerable and uncomfortable. What was the most difficult of all (and, in an ironic way, also most gratifying), the evaluator assumed the stance of a peer, rather than that of a specialized professional. It would have been easier to rest on protocol than to be exposed in tentativeness. The evaluator would have "looked better" bringing in a printed version of a survey instrument than showing the cut-and-paste version of a survey instrument. The evaluator would have seemed so much more competent handling in a word-processed and spiral-bound final report instead of coming in with packs of handwritten pages, with revisions and corrections pencilled in and ready to undergo the awful scrutiny of the client's editorial expertise. The evaluator was vulnerable in such situations. (Faase: 81)

A cooperative working relationship is required between evaluators and stakeholders rather than an independent...[and] perhaps antagonistic relationship. (Ayers: 266)

Shapiro found that participation of stakeholders resulted in the evaluator taking the role of "evaluation educator" at a much more self-conscious level. He states:

This is true not only with respect to formal instruction (for example, the introductory workshop) but also with respect to the constant barrage of questions, comments, insights, and reflections that clients may offer while planning and carrying out individual evaluation projects. Ignorance is not bliss when the client undertakes his or her partnership obligation seriously; thus, I found myself spending much more time explaining, justifying, even defending evaluation theory, practice, and philosophy that I would have done in a conventional evaluation. (Shapiro: 60)

The stakeholder process was described by evaluators as "lengthy" because of the continual interplay of feedback and revisions, "time consuming", and in one instance, "tiresome".

Evaluators recount that:

At times the constant criticism to which my instrument drafts (approximately 15 local constructions) were subjected became tiresome, particularly because the more the partners criticize, the better they got at it. I had to keep in mind, however, that such criticism would not only improve the evaluation but also bond the partners to the evaluation process. (Shapiro: 57/58)

The sometimes lengthy gaps between steps were troublesome because of (subsequently verified) concerns that stakeholders would experience such gaps as disjointedness in the process. (Greene/a: 389)

Collaboration was also the most difficult way to do evaluation. It demanded a great deal of time....It was difficult to work with a wide array of personnel and try to reconcile the needs of all of them. Every step of the process was amended at least once. (Faase: p. 81)

Evaluators explain that stakeholders described the process as "long (cumbersome, disjointed)," "slow moving," "challenging (requiring reflection and concentration)," and "complicated".

They report some of these perspectives:

Like most stakeholders, Pam did think the overall process was too long. But, she also recognized that with a longer process, the participation demands are spread out and thus easier to meet, especially for agency staff. She observed that "as you broaden the participation, you lengthen the time; a democratic process is a slow one. (Greene/b: 104)

He also found the overall length and slow pace of the process made it more difficult for him to sustain interest and harder to participate, in that he had to refresh his memory at each step. (Greene/b: 105)

"I didn't know that doing an evaluation was so complicated. You really have to think hard about making up questions," one person blurted out at the end of a session on questionnaire design. (Whitmore: 223)

"I could do it better if I were to do it again, and I would do it again...I'd never done anything like this before, to take a bulk of information, try to draw from it, put it into categories, and develop workable solutions that were realistic. As we went through the process, it became more simple." (Ayers: 266)

### Enabling Participation

#### Facilitating the Evaluation

It appears that a major task of the researcher is that of enabling the participatory processes. This requires attention to evaluation tasks and that participatory process and attention to group process needs. This section discusses the facilitator role as related to evaluation tasks and participation. The subsequent section addresses group process needs.

Evaluators regarded their role as facilitator to be important to group process. The facilitator ensured that the groups functioned well, that it was efficient, productive, and flowed smoothly. This process required the evaluator to be involved in presenting options, translating, and synthesizing information. These activities were described by evaluators as: "divides tasks," "packages," "step by step," "carefully structured sequence of tasks," and "break down the evaluation process." For example, in Greene's study, decisions about method selection were guided by criteria provided by the researcher to assist stakeholders in judging the most appropriate method. Whitmore reported using a sequence of tasks to break down the evaluation

process, helping stakeholders understand what to do and how to do it. One evaluator explains:

Throughout the process, the client was substantively in control but needed to be procedurally counselled. For example, the client knew the organization and what was wanted from its members, but the evaluator suggested how to go about getting desired information....The working paper was presented to a planning team and began with informal lessons in evaluation research and step-by-step mapping of considerations, options, and decisions. (Faase: 77)

Further, the evaluator is required to synthesize material previously received from stakeholders and circulate this back to them to ensure that the translation is correct. Through this interplay of activities, the researcher facilitates involvement and ensures that involvement was meaningful.

The evaluator was also responsible for "hands-on" evaluation work. Movement from one evaluation phase to the next was often the responsibility of the researcher through the provision of drafts for review. Certain activities, then, were intentional and planned due to the researcher's responsibility for infusing technical quality or for ensuring that the flow of the evaluation was maintained and timeliness were established. Regardless, evaluator's preparation and hands-on work resulted in making the evaluation process more manageable for some stakeholders.

Evaluators report stakeholder reflections:

One key element of the process for Pam was the evaluator's role in conducting all of the "nitty-gritty" work. "The evaluation wouldn't have been done otherwise," Pam said, noting that staff do not have time for such work. The evaluator's responsibility for process, including planning and follow-up, also made it "easy" for Pam to participate. (Greene/b: 104)

The evaluation design showed a high degree of organization and competence, which added to the team's credibility, but also added to the design's validity and integrity. It also communicated to me [client] and to the staff that we weren't going to have to worry about making the evaluation happen. (Alkin: 24)

You [the evaluators] set the framework, like you said in the beginning you could only focus on one evaluation question. But within that framework, it was democratic. You listened and combined questions sometimes. But the process was still open. People could have input at any time....Too much involvement would have been oppressive....We wanted you to do this for us [e.g., combine questions]. We trusted you to do these kinds of administrative things. If we didn't trust you, we would have wanted to do these ourselves (staff). (Greene/a: 389)

Evaluator attention to establishing the participatory process facilitates the interaction between researcher and stakeholder. Participation that was voluntary and open and not conditional or contingent on prior response is identified as essential.

Some evaluators felt that stakeholders must be allowed to find their own level of participation without impositions or expectations. Evaluators assume that, if given the opportunity, stakeholders will participate when they want to and are able to. They report:

The designation of stakeholder participants continued to change throughout the design process. For example, one additional youth bureau participant was identified via snowball sampling invoked in all divergent phase interviews, and two additional day care council staff members identified themselves by voluntarily responding to the convergent phase questionnaire. (Greene/a: 386)

The day care council team valued the process's repeated emphasis on utilization and non-judgemental options for participation, that is, it allowed people to find their own level of participation and be comfortable with it. (Greene/a: 388)

Tim viewed his "somewhat involved person" participatory role as contributing his own views and opinions to a long



evaluation process, when he had the time or when the task was particularly interesting or important. (Greene/b: 105)

"Making it OK that I could do as much or as little [as I wanted] was really important" (Board stakeholder).  
(Greene/a: 388)

Attendance [by stakeholders] varied with the issues to be discussed. (Allen: 50)

However, whether or not the evaluator takes an active role in pursuing stakeholder participation was in dispute. Some evaluators felt that stakeholders needed to take risks and that, at times, evaluators must hold stakeholders accountable for their participation. Others attempted to structure participation to ensure an equitable and valid process. Evaluators report:

A partnership evaluation produces beneficial data when everyone is a true partner who wants to be involved for the purpose of obtaining information. Each partner must be willing to take a risk, patient about what he or she will get for the time and effort invested, and willing to provide information as input data. (Shapiro: 61)

The assignment of tasks and assurance that each member "pulls their own weight" is likely to be the responsibility of the evaluator, in conjunction with the group chairperson. (Ayers: 270)

Full "ownership" of the study implies contributions of work by every member, not just by a few committed individuals; assigning responsibility for a distinct task or part of the study to each member or small subgroup is likely to enhance members' perception of ownership. (Ayers: 270)

In our study, we strove to involve program beneficiaries equitably, thus helping them increase their power and avoiding a bias in favor of teachers and shelter providers. (Brandon: 292)

Participation was also impacted by whether or not clear roles and guidelines were established for the collaborative process. Most evaluators established the parameters of participation from their rationale for stakeholder involvement such as evaluation

utilization or enhanced validity of data. To help provide clarity, Whitmore and her paid beneficiary assistants jointly drew up a contract outlining the terms of reference for participation. Reporting on the importance of establishing clear goals, evaluators said:

The processes used to guide and facilitate stakeholder collaboration were self-consciously open and pluralistic. Views and opinions from each member of the deliberately diverse groups of stakeholder participants were actively sought and openly valued. (Greene/b: 101)

That meeting laid out Henderson's [stakeholder] clear control of access to all the people with whom the evaluators were going to talk. It also clearly established all that he would have to do to make sure that the team's site visits occurred properly and efficiently. (Alkin: 27)

Crow presented a vague invitation to students to participate as stakeholders and later regretted that these roles and stakeholder functions had not been clarified. They admit that their own definition of collaboration was not clearly determined until they began working together and until they experienced reluctance by the faculty advisors to participate in providing data. They recount:

Our initial lack of clarity about the research role of students became an obstacle in establishing and maintaining parity and reciprocity with them. We discovered the difficulty of inviting student participation in a game with evolving rules. (Crow: 748)

Although the students remained in the study, their role was not as extensive as we had initially envisioned....we are also aware of missed opportunities. (Crow: 753)

Specific role-related concerns created differences in perspective and emphasis. For example, our colleagues, in their advisement roles, were concerned that the research process might preempt topics or developmental issues with students. This concern led them to oppose specific research questions and methodologies. Anticipating the importance or

these role perspectives and the ways they can conflict with research roles is essential to the success of collaborative research. (Crow: 752)

Clarification of both the goals for collaboration and the roles and responsibilities of evaluator and stakeholder facilitate the development of participation.

Some stakeholders in Greene shared difficulties in participation arising from a lack of program information. This outcome was perceived to have important implications for the selection and recruitment of stakeholders, as prior attention to these factors by the researcher might have avoided such a problem. She reports:

Ann's perceived lack of program knowledge was a major obstacle to her participation. Because of it, she felt "shut out" from participation. She commented that perhaps the stakeholder group had been spread too far to include people, like herself, with only marginal involvement in the program. (Greene/b, 106)

#### Facilitating the Group Process

The evaluator must be responsive to group process and attend to group dynamics and stakeholder needs for validation and affirmation. Although this is regarded as primarily the evaluator's responsibility, it can extend to stakeholding group members as well. Attention to individual and group process needs enables the participatory process by building trust and group credibility. Evaluators discuss this role and its effect on stakeholders:

Throughout the process, but especially at the beginning, we spent considerable time building group trust, for the key to

their continued participation was motivation....This process consisted of some structured exercises, checking in at the beginning of each session and reflecting on our interaction at the end, and being in touch by telephone between meetings when necessary. (Whitmore: 221)

The importance of personal feelings of worth and value within the evaluation process were underscored, especially by somewhat-involved-person stakeholders in the...evaluations. (Greene/b: 109)

At times, the external evaluator takes on a sort of mentorship role in working with clients on their own evaluations. (Shapiro: 60)

The internal advocate must be in a position to understand the networking among those involved in the evaluation. He or she must maintain frequent contact and open communication with all staff and must hone negotiating skills so as to cultivate the development of a true partnership. Throughout the evaluation, the internal advocate must serve as liaison, both to the staff and to the external partner, never forgetting to assure staff that their input is needed and that no one is going to "do it to them." (Shapiro: 61/62)

Attention to group process by the evaluator facilitated mutual support and encouragement among stakeholders in the studies reviewed. Stakeholders' interaction with other stakeholders was also important to facilitating the participation, as the process should promote respect and attention to others' experiences and views. The creation of a safe environment in which stakeholders could share and feel they had a sense of belonging assisted stakeholder participation. Informal sharing amongst each other was also seen as important to building group relationships and establishing trust. Evaluators reflect:

The coffee break midway through each meeting was an important time for personal sharing and exchange of information, especially around their own experience as single mothers. (Whitmore: 221)

An initial introductory meeting of all stakeholders was planned, and, with hindsight, was needed. This meeting would

serve to introduce the evaluation process and rationale to the stakeholders and to introduce the stakeholders to each other...many stakeholders had no information on what to expect or on the number and roles of the other participants. (Greene/a: 389)

The evaluators played the role of neutral facilitators making sure that the ideas of Task Force members...were heard by all members of the Design Subcommittee. (Gill: 105)

So the team emerged as a credible unit, but the individuality of team members--and what each brought to the team--was never forgotten. (Alkin: 21)

As the partnership developed, trust was built, so that all partners began to feel that they could open up and share, without fear of being hurt. No longer was there an idea that the external evaluator would "do it all." (Shapiro: 57)

Many evaluators identified a noticeable change in the relational dynamics during the course of the evaluation. There was a sense of credibility and integrity, of working together as a team. Whitmore noticed that her staff were more confident and interacted more with others in the program, and Faase refers to a "chemistry" that developed over the course of the study.

Attention to group process also required the researcher to validate and support stakeholders in their participation. This strategy seemed especially important when working with stakeholders who lacked confidence and did not have the education or experience of other stakeholder groups. Whitmore discusses this aspect at length in her work with program beneficiaries as paid research staff. Her description of her activities revealed that she took on the role of nurturer with stakeholders. She reports:

They also had limited confidence in their ability to do complex intellectual tasks and responded positively to praise and my high expectations of them. (Whitmore: 224)

Once they realized that their own experiences and ideas were respected and listened to [by the advisory committee], the participants got quite involved in talking enthusiastically about what they were doing. In the process, they gained considerable confidence in themselves and their ability to speak to others about the project. (Whitmore: 225)

The group process reinforced their sense of dignity and legitimacy as they encouraged one another to stand up for their rights. (Whitmore: 225)

In a study on homelessness, stakeholders were provided with a small remuneration for their participation. This served as a vehicle for motivating full participation and, in a sense, showed appreciation for their contributions.

Cultivating group process allowed the researcher access to "insider information" which was important to understanding stakeholder participation in the evaluation process. Evaluator awareness of these factors was important because it could (in)directly influence the success of the evaluation. Evaluators discuss these external factors:

It was important for the external partner (no longer "the evaluator") to know that the atmosphere at the university was changing. New vice-president had been hired, merit pay was a topic of major concern, and promotion and tenure policies were being rewritten. All these issues affected the staff's motivation for participation in an evaluation. These issues could be discussed within the partnership, but an external evaluator under contract might never have learned or been interested in learning about them. (Shapiro: 57)

Under the time pressure of completing a complex task with significant political and funding consequences, conflicts and misunderstandings arose with some frequency and required time to resolve. (Allen: 48)

Two or the three advisors...were new to the university. In our view, their lack of experience in advising students and the university's new challenge of preparing career changers to teach may have made faculty participation in an unfamiliar mode of inquiry highly problematic (Crow: 745)

Previous experience had made the membership wary and uncooperative. There was a real resistance to the issues presented by the evaluation....The preliminary report...calmed some fears on the part of staff people who were involved in planning the chapter. (Faase: 78)

Gill reveals that the external pressures of working in a complex, politically sensitive system led evaluators to involve stakeholders in the evaluation process in the first place.

Attention to group process required flexibility. Because external demands can influence stakeholder's ability to participate, evaluators had to be sensitive to outside pressures and adjust the research process accordingly. For some evaluators this meant creating new opportunities for involvement.

Stakeholders's needs were addressed by making changes and providing choices for participation. Evaluators describe:

It was apparent that the amount of data requested of the faculty was excessive, considering the small number of faculty, their time constraints, and their limited secretarial support....One of the first strategies adopted by the committee was to change the time frames for the reporting of evaluation data. Reports, whose due dates had previously been staggered throughout the academic year, were now due during one designated "Evaluation Week," which was at the end of the academic year when classes and final grades had been completed. All other activities, such as committee meetings were suspended....The intent of this strategy was to structure available time for busy faculty. Evaluation forms were revised to checklist type enabling a much faster completion time. (Barrick: 34/35)

As the academic year progressed, it became increasingly difficult to involve all of the students as collaborators in inquiry. Student interest remained high, as evidenced by their continued attendance and participation in meetings. However, time pressure prevented them from engaging as fully as we had hoped....We sought to extend option on participation by indicating that different roles and levels of participation were possible. (Crow: 747)

To help maintain the stakeholders' motivation to participate fully and actively, the study was designed to limit demands on their time. (Brandon: 290)

Furthermore, the way in which the executive summary was written was helpful in facilitating [stakeholder review] within a tight timeline. The evaluator's commitment to summarizing findings in two pages and to raising a set of particular questions very much helped. (Alkin: 29)

In two of the evaluations, an internal evaluator or advocate played an important role in attending to the group process. Because the internal advocate usually entered the evaluation process with built-in trust and credibility with the larger stakeholding body, they served as a liaison until trust and credibility could develop between the stakeholders and the primary evaluator. Evaluators report:

This was a project that could not have been carried out unless an external evaluator had provided technical assistance and an internal advocate had been not only sensitive to university politics but also able to hold the project together until the external partner's relationships with individual activity directors had been solidified.....The partnership had to be brokered by the internal advocate, and so first there was a central partnership between myself and him, concurrent with his initial partnership with activity directors. Eventually I developed partnerships with activity directors. (Shapiro: 61)

The project director continuously stressed the competence of the team and the representativeness of its selection....."We surely did have some initial credibility but it was extended by your [internal evaluator] actions". (Alkin: 20)

In the overseas agricultural study by Alkin, the evaluators ability to develop relationships was hampered by distance and the travel required for personal contacts. As such, written communication was fundamental. The evaluator reports:

Given these constraints, one of the ways that the evaluators tried to build confidence in the evaluation was to make sure that all of the steps leading to the conduct of the evaluation



were well defined and that a clear relationship between steps existed. (Alkin: 24)

The program director's personal involvement, supplemented by a clear evaluation document, facilitated the evaluator/stakeholder relationship.

In one study a trained group facilitator conducted stakeholder group meetings using a technique designed to help lessen differences in group participation due to status, domineering behaviour, and/or stakeholder unfamiliarity with group decision-making. Group size was also limited in an effort to decrease the likelihood that the meeting would be intimidating for beneficiaries, and, in some stages of the decision-making process, private ranking and secret ballots were used. They report:

The participating homeless parents in our study were unfamiliar with program evaluation rationales or methods and might have been intimidated by formal decision-making settings and procedures. Therefore, equity of participation was particularly important in the stakeholder meeting and steps were taken to use technically adequate procedures for beneficiary involvement. (Brandon: 291)

Attending to group process also meant confronting issues as they came up. Negative group dynamics hampered participation in some studies. Evaluators reveal:

Perhaps the biggest obstacle was the underlying lack of trust. The women simply did not trust each others and were quick to assume the worst whenever something happened.... Though their strong commitment to the task allowed them to work productively together, there was always an underlying tension which occasionally rose to the surface; we then had to spend time dealing with the resulting hostility and hurt. The group dynamics were sometimes difficult to handle, and one of the original four, feeling caught in the middle, did drop out. (Whitmore: 226)

While the meetings proved a challenge to manage due to the strongly held positions of forceful individuals, they largely served the purposes for which they were intended. (Allen: 50)

Difficulties in group dynamics that were present in one advisement group may have intensified advisor's discomfort about additional disclosure. (Crow: 745)

In this latter context, a faculty member attacked the researchers integrity and challenged the grounds on which the researchers were proceeding with the study. Crow's situation was somewhat unique because the research team was attempting a first-time interdisciplinary research approach. They conclude:

We believe it is extremely difficult to simultaneously establish internal interdisciplinary collaboration and two additional kinds of external collaboration. (Crow: 753)

The complexity of our effort to create and develop parity and reciprocity within the interdisciplinary team assumed priority (Crow: 748)

Awareness of these factors by Allen, who was also establishing a first-time collaborative research effort between two agencies, resulted in hiring an extremely strong project director to facilitate the evaluation team. Evaluators report:

These normal differences [of opinion] were amplified by the problem of a complex study which both depended upon timely completion of tasks and yet lacked a line-relationship among participants. (Allen: 50)

### Successful Participation Cultivates Ownership

Ownership was an important theme emerging from the data. It was a central concept which seemed to be interwoven with the themes of reinforcing the genuineness of participation and facilitating interaction between researcher and stakeholder.

Initially it was a difficult theme to conceptualize, however, a number of factors contribute to ownership of the evaluation by stakeholders. These factors are discussed as follows.

### "Hands On" Participation

Participation which is "hands on" contributed to a sense of ownership by stakeholders. Evaluators reveal:

The process of reviewing the instrumentation with Tom helped increase the extent to which those were Tom's questions....The more people who can review it, the more ownership there is--it makes it their questions. Even though we sent it out to all of these other stakeholders to get their review, it was not as effective as if someone was there to hand-hold and take them through the details. (Alkin: 27)

The time devoted to the collaboration process heightened the investment of all concerned and strongly fostered the province's appropriation of the evaluation as its own. (Faase: 77)

The evaluators maintained involvement of the client group throughout the project. This insured that the most important questions were addressed, increased a sense of ownership in the process and products, maintained a high level of interest of the course of a long project (one year), and created an investment in the project as a whole. (Gill: 108)

Full "ownership" of the study implies contributions of work by every member, not just by a few committed individuals; assigning responsibility for a distinct task or part of the study to each member or small subgroup is likely to enhance members' perception of ownership. (Ayers: 270)

Stakeholder ownership was enhanced by a sense of control of the process, due to their ongoing involvement and input.

The staging [of the evaluation] is what allowed [stakeholder group] to feel that they were maintaining some control also co-opted them into having to take the thing more seriously, because they were approving it all along the way. (Alkin: 26)

An essential component of ownership appeared to be that stakeholders needed to take advantage of opportunities for participation. Stakeholders have a responsibility to ensure that the evaluation accurately reflects the direction and feedback they have provided. Stakeholders must take an active role in this process--they cannot passively sit by and assume that their views will be incorporated. A client stakeholder reports:

The evaluator should help the client formulate the focus, but the client has to be sure that the questions are his own and that they address his own issues. The more the client understands and can take ownership for what went into the "front end" of the project, the more likely it is that he will comprehend and accept the results. (Faase: 82)

#### Stakeholder Perceptions of an "Inside Job"

Ownership is fostered when the evaluation is seen as an "inside job" and not as something done to them by outsiders. Evaluators reveal their sensitivity of this factor when they used such phrases as: "so they wouldn't feel it was my set up," "it was their project," "never had the sense of being 'snowed,'" "no one is going to 'do it to them.'" Evaluators illustrate how stakeholder perceptions influenced ownership:

The products of the studies were not viewed as simply the research of an independent, outside investigator. Members worked hard to understand the findings well enough so that they could report the findings as their own. (Gill: 107)

Stakeholders characterized the design process as...open and valid (credible, broad-based, coming from within rather than from the top or outside). (Greene/a: 388)

Faculty need to be involved in projects to obtain their input and to foster their sense of ownership. (Barrick: 36)

As a result of the interactive feedback and multiple opportunities for participation, even those tasks completed by the researcher were perceived to be owned by stakeholders. One evaluator reveals:

Indicative of their sense of ownership in the project, Task Force members talked as if they had produced the findings and the report. (Gill: 107)

Another evaluator reveals how the closeness of the relationship which developed between one stakeholder and researcher enhanced stakeholder perception of the evaluation being an inside job:

The reception of the oral presentation of the evaluation results and recommendations evidenced an extension of the "chemistry" that had gone into the collaboration of client and researcher. The report had a compelling presence in the [religious] chapter due to shared understanding. (Faase: 80)

Further, the presence of representative stakeholders as participants contributed to this sense of ownership and inside control, even for stakeholders not directly involved as evaluation participants. Evaluators report:

They had recommended only one member of the evaluation team [Jerry]. He was their only protection, or guarantee or independent judgement....His agreement to the plan added a piece of credibility to it, that the teaming was working out. Certainly if it hadn't worked Jerry would have let them [stakeholding group] know. If he had any concerns about you or the team or the process at the design stage, I think they expected he would let them know. (Alkin: 26)

Marlene, a UWI faculty member, represented the Caribbean perspective and, in ideological terms, her perspective was necessary to make the whole process credible to UWI staff. Her presence was an assurance that the evaluation wasn't something that was being controlled by the outside, because she was an "inside" Caribbean person. That was important to the team makeup and its wider acceptability. (Alkin: 21)

Without this "insider" or "partnership" designation, evaluation efforts could be thwarted by uncooperative insiders. For example, one evaluator reports the ironic occurrence of staff protecting the internal director from the evaluation. It was not until the internal director visibly came on board as a partner in the evaluation that "insiders" were willing to respond. They explain this development:

Ironically, the staff tried to protect me [internal advocate] from the evaluation process. When the survey of my performance as grant director went out to a sample of faculty and staff, with a cover letter bearing only the external evaluator's signature, several people came to assure me not to worry; they were not going to send the survey in and would not provide information regarding a colleague to an outsider. I had to inform them that the survey was my idea and that I wanted them to respond. I realized that the problem could have been avoided if the cover letter had carried my name on it as well as Dr. Shapiro's. This would have demonstrated that our partnership was important and provided compelling evidence that we really wanted sound information. (Shapiro: 61)

The insider/outsider issue also hindered Crow's collaboration efforts. However, in their situation, the fact that they were insiders presented a threat to other stakeholders. They report:

The fact that we were faculty members in the same college as the advisors and students presented an insider/outsider issues that also threatened the collaboration. As the research moved into teacher education areas, the vulnerability for advisors was heightened, and we were perceived as outsiders in regard to access to data. Although there are benefits to in-house research...a perceived threat for others involved in the research may weaken the collaborative nature of the design. (Crow: 752)

Ownership is also a consideration for those outside the participatory process--whether they perceive the evaluation as being an inside job has implications for the evaluation. The visible participation of stakeholders who are members from the

local community can provide an inside connection. Whitmore reveals that she hired four program participants as her assistants in order to provide a link with women who took the program. She reports that, in the eyes of community members, they had credibility:

They interviewed program participants, a hard-to-reach population who do not tend to cooperate with outsiders, let alone outside evaluators. The evaluation assistants were part of the community, knew the culture, and understood intuitively how to approach their peers in a way no outsider could match. (Whitmore: 219)

Because the evaluation was viewed as an inside job, their peers trusted that their "stake" would be safe with them.

In another instance, because of the weighty and sensitive issues explored, the evaluation required a researcher who was an outsider and could be viewed as an objective participant. This approach was necessary to ensure the success of the joint venture because of a previous research experience that had proved inadequate. As a result, stakeholders were wary of the evaluation. Evaluators report:

The evaluator was able to enter into and understand the uniqueness of the religious community without thereby shedding the "outsider" perspective and "objectivity" he was expected to bring to the project. (Faase: 77)

Evaluators are technical advisors and service providers, and their perceived objectivity and political neutrality may be critical to the study's acceptance and the group's perception of ownership. (Ayers: 270)

### Tailor-Made Evaluation

Creating an evaluation that is specific to the needs and desires of participating stakeholders heightens ownership because the evaluation is seen as "tailor made." This perception adds another dimension to the theme of ownership.

In the studies reviewed, stakeholders perceived that the evaluation was designed specifically for them and for their program, thus it was specific to their needs and relevant to their local context. In fact, not only was it made for them, it was made by them. Evaluators reveal:

By involving the client group as consultants throughout the evaluation process, the resulting information was highly specific to the client's needs. (Gill: 108)

Word spread that the evaluation under way was grounded in and well attuned to the concerns of the membership....Tailor making the evaluation research design built confidence. Relevance seemed ensured. (Faase: 79/80)

Evaluators reveal the discrepancy between participatory evaluation and the imposition of preconceived notions for what the evaluation should be:

One cannot impose a research design, a statistical technique a locally constructed instrument, or even a "good idea" when the prescribed ground rules give substantial responsibility and authority to the client. (Shapiro: 57)

If you had come in with predispositions about what to evaluate, based upon conceptions and understandings from "the literature" on what agricultural extension is supposed to do, there would have been problems. If you had spent your time feeling that you had to test out some kind of adult-learning model or institutional change model out of the literature, that would have been difficult. And you might have derived from such a model a bunch of variables identified as important to look at, and maybe some instrumentation. That would not have gone well. (Alkin: 22)



This is confirmed by a client stakeholder:

Any evaluator who intends to meet the needs of a client has to be carefully attuned to the uniqueness of the client's particular group.....wholesale transposition of one environment to another, without necessary and appropriate adjustments, ill serves any client. (Faase: 81)

### Creating a Readiness for Use

There seems to be a natural progression for stakeholders of moving from active evaluation participation to follow through of the evaluation recommendations. Varied aspects of the participatory process prepare the groundwork for utilization by stakeholders. Stakeholder awareness and familiarity of the evaluation, access to ongoing information and progress reports, and anticipation of its results, all contribute to evaluation use. Evaluators report:

User commitment is reflected in stakeholder willingness to allocate substantial time to the evaluation and its follow through. Commenting that it was time to "shift from an evaluation mode to a planning mode" the youth employment coordinator willingly assisted the evaluator in advocating for use....the agency board and especially program committee stakeholders assigned themselves the task of monitoring the following through on evaluation findings, most clearly represented in the intensive agency planning effort they helped to initiate (Greene/b: 113)

The important stakeholders "bought into" the final results because the sequence was so clear and they had reviewed and approved it at a number of junctures along the way. (Alkin: 24)

As one [stakeholder] stated, "By doing an evaluation themselves, people are more likely to see why they should change. (The usual report) would get stuck on a shelf; people would laugh about it." (Ayers: 266)

"I [stakeholder] don't think everything in the report will be implemented, especially right away--they are recommendations to shoot for--but since the ideas came from teachers, the union will read it, and others will read it." (Ayers: 269)

The key people who were going to have to act on immediate utilization were involved and were prepared to hear answers, because they knew what the questions were. (Alkin: 28)

Because the resulting evaluation information was highly relevant to stakeholder needs and reflected their concerns and their questions, utilization was enhanced. In addition, the involvement of stakeholder representatives in the participatory process ensured that the evaluation was responsive to their local situation and political contexts. Evaluators reflect:

By involving the client group as consultants throughout the evaluation process, the resulting information was highly specific to the client's needs and, therefore, increased the likelihood that the information would be used. (Gill: 108)

A definite strength of the report was that it was prepared for the entire membership of the province [religious group], after 90 percent of the membership had responded to the sensitive inquiry. Candid and relevant information was conveyed with the sense that it would have impact on everyone concerned. (Faase: 80)

Representative membership, with a broad spectrum of different viewpoints characteristic of the various stakeholder groups, is likely to provide better information and political acceptance. (Ayers: 270)

[Stakeholder] recommendations substantially improved the quality of the information and successfully anticipated questions that might have undermined the reception of the evaluation. (Allen: 50)

We could have done some external studies of our own choosing, which the staff would have had less of a vested interest in, and the evaluation results might not have been so relevant or readily accepted at the end. (Alkin: 22)

Evaluators also reveal the importance of the close relationships which developed between researcher and stakeholders to utilization of results:

Tom's involvement in the New Orleans meeting was of significant importance with respect to future impact because getting to know us in an informal way added to the credibility that each of the members of the evaluation team had as individuals--they were real people....He was getting excited about hearing what the ministers of agriculture were going to say about the project....As he looked at the questions, I could see that he shared my interest in knowing what was going to happen. (Alkin: 27)

The close collaboration between client and evaluator had the effect of eliciting strong administrative support from the leaders of the province for every phase of the research....Furthermore, something enlivening and gratifying in the "chemistry" that developed between client and evaluator fuelled a passion for the success of the project, which left its mark on the final written report and on the report to the chapter. (Faase: 78/81)

Evaluators reveal that the benefit of greater understanding of the program, of the evaluation, and of its results for stakeholders was found to impact use. Greene reveals:

These substantive discussions contributed to ongoing data-collection decisions; they also represented stakeholder's evolving understanding of key program concerns and possible ways to address them. (Greene/b: 94)

Members of this committee, along with many other stakeholders both in and outside the agency, observed that the evaluation results helped to increase program understanding, to confirm and document intuitions about program effects, and to validate important directions for program development. (Greene/b: 99)

Stakeholders reported two major benefits of their participation in the evaluation process: (a) learning more about the program and the agency, and (b) learning more about and developing more favorable attitudes toward evaluation. (Greene/b: 110/111)

Immediate access to the data produced by the evaluation helped provide momentum for utilization. Evaluators report:

One staff stakeholder observed, "We really learned a lot about putting together an evaluation, and at every step of the process we got new insights into directions the program might take." (Greene/b: 111)

Tom knowing what was going to be asked and getting excited about it...set up the utilization that would occur out of immediate feedback to our field staff. We were anxious to get evaluation answers in their informal, casual content, as soon as you gathered the data, while it was fresh and Tom was set up and prepared, as I was, to hear the answers to those questions and to begin acting on them right away. (Alkin: 27/28)

The staff made decisions about modifying and changing programs based upon the initial data that were presented. These decisions were made all along, so that the actual evaluation process had continual impact. (Alkin: 28)

The presence of influential stakeholders in the evaluation can also propel use. Not only is this impacted by soliciting their involvement early in the process, their actual presence in and/or endorsement of the evaluation can help stimulate use by other stakeholders.

Investigators met with several state senators, representatives, and their staff to get their perspectives on what constituted a policy-relevant research report and hear any concerns they had about the proposal. As a result of these contacts, we had positive working relationships throughout the study...and when LBC received formal responses to the report, these were very constructive. (Allen: 50)

[Stakeholder group's] participation as an advisory group to the project was not as a primary user, but rather as a strong and interested constituency (a political stakeholder, if you will). Thus, [their] participation helped to convince...(the funder) that the process should be taken seriously and the evaluation results used. (Alkin: 28)

By involving the more powerful board members and funders, this participatory element also "stirred up interest in" and generated attention to the program and the issues being investigated. (Greene/b: 110)

### Summary

This study was guided by the general purpose of exploring the nature of the participatory dynamics which enable effective stakeholder participation. This exploration considered participatory operational mechanisms, the roles and relationships of researcher and stakeholder, and the contextual factors which benefit or limit participation.

The analysis reveals that the participatory process should reinforce the genuineness of stakeholder participation, that participation is enabled by attention to the evaluation process and group process needs, and that successful participation cultivates a sense of ownership, and that participation creates a readiness for use.

Data reveal, first, that the genuineness of stakeholder participation is legitimized through interactive communication, iterative feedback, visible results, and shared decision making. Communication between researcher and stakeholder is essential in establishing a collaborative relationship. It must be continual and frequent, provide equal and open access to information, be responsive to individual communication styles, and treat the stakeholder as a partner in collaboration. The literature reveals the importance of ongoing communication and equal access for stakeholder participants in evaluation research (Deutsch & Malmburg, 1986; Donmoyer, 1990; Tovar, 1989).

Personal communication is preferred by stakeholders. Communication vehicles facilitate multiple and repetitive opportunities for stakeholder feedback. An iterative process of feedback and interaction conveys respect for stakeholder contributions and allows them to be involved in multiple facets of the evaluation process. Stakeholders provide direction and contribute valuable information relevant to local contexts through iterative feedback mechanisms, thereby enhancing the credibility of the evaluation and strengthening evaluation tools. The value of stakeholder knowledge of the local conditions and organizational contexts for participatory evaluations is underscored in the literature (Tovar, 1989; Wagner, 1991; Owston, 1986).

The genuineness of participation is reinforced through tangible and visible results of stakeholder participation in the evaluation and through shared decision making in substantive evaluation issues. Although a variety of decision making models were represented and stakeholders' decision making responsibilities varied among studies, the data reveal that evaluators must be willing to genuinely act on the feedback and direction provided by stakeholders. As Greene (1988a) indicates, "stakeholder action not just reaction was sought" (p. 109). This factor is reinforced in the literature, which recommends open-ended, two-way dialogue with stakeholders in which evaluation findings are explored and discussed, not just presented (Patton, 1986; Greene, 1988b). Maclure (1990) and Carey & Smith (1992)

confirm that systems of genuinely shared control should be in place for effective stakeholder participation.

Because of the suggested link between decision-making and action, participation that does not lead to action may result in participation that is not authentic. Therefore, decisions and actions are a direct result or consequence of the genuineness of participation.

Although it is not necessary to have each of these four components present in a study in order for participation to occur, the participation of stakeholders is legitimized by the inclusion of each of these facets into the evaluation process.

Second, the data demonstrate that the participatory process is enabled by the role of researcher as facilitator of the evaluation and of the group process. Facilitating the evaluation requires attention to group tasks and the evaluation needs of stakeholders or, as Faase put it, "procedural counselling". Patton (1987) verifies the critical role of evaluator as facilitator. This role requires such tasks as synthesizing information and presenting options. This preparatory work enables stakeholder participation by making the evaluation more manageable and more meaningful. Careful and thorough planning and preparation is promoted by Malekoff (1994) as essential to a successful participatory process.

Facilitating stakeholder participation requires clear goals and guidelines for participation and a voluntary and open process. This finding is supported by Rudd & Associates (1993)

who found that participation was limited when the mechanisms and objectives for collaboration were not defined or articulated early in the process. Researchers have recognized the need for clearly defined purposes and methods of stakeholder involvement prior to embarking on participatory approaches (Mark & Shotland, 1985; Weiss, 1983b).

Attention to group process builds trust and group credibility. The importance of attention to group process is recognized by Patton (1987) as a prerequisite to experiencing mutual respect and integrity within evaluation. Building rapport and mutual understanding enables participants to experience a level of mutual respect that is often lost in more formal or rigid roles (Malekoff, 1994). Rudd & Associates (1993) found that "attention to group process is essential for the establishment of a true collegial atmosphere" (p. 250). The use of a trained facilitator to facilitate stakeholder group decision-making is supported by Greene (1988b).

The role of nurturer in the personal development of stakeholders was seen as especially important in an evaluation conducted with beneficiaries and operating within an empowerment rationale. Gutiérrez and Ortega (1991) affirm the vital role of the evaluator in facilitating intra-group interaction and group cohesion with beneficiaries. Donmoyer (1990) reports the importance of providing support and legitimation for beneficiary input and reveals how this was found to be reassuring for beneficiaries.



Attention to group process allows the evaluator access to valuable insider information concerning external pressures or contextual factors which could affect the success of an evaluation. At times, the evaluator may need to be flexible and willing to adjust the evaluation accordingly. An internal evaluator or advocate can enhance the relationship between the evaluator and stakeholders.

Third, the data reveal that successful participation cultivates ownership. When participation is "hands on" and when the evaluation is perceived by stakeholders as an "inside job" and as "tailor made", ownership is fostered. Ownership is enhanced by stakeholders active participation in evaluation activities. These findings are consistent with those of Malekoff (1994) and Patton (1986) who found that active stakeholder involvement in projects stimulates a sense of ownership. Reineke (1991) affirms the importance of reassuring stakeholders that evaluations are being done with them and for them, and Tovar (1989) reveals how stakeholder perceptions of evaluation evolved "from something 'others do to them' to something they can help create" (p. 55).

Evaluation which is perceived as an "inside job" can both benefit or hinder collaborative efforts, depending on whether or not a partnership is perceived between the researcher and stakeholders. Tailor made evaluations are responsive to local needs and do not impose preconceived designs or methodologies from other settings without considerable adjustments. The

literature concurs that reflecting local contexts increases the relevancy of the evaluation and the support it receives (Tovar, 1989).

Finally, the data reveal that the participatory process creates ready-for-use conditions among stakeholders. There seems to be a natural progression from active evaluation participation to follow through for stakeholders. This is amplified by their ongoing awareness of the evaluation, access to information, anticipation of evaluation results, and through the close relationships which may develop between researcher and stakeholder. Researchers confirm that an acceleration of evaluation use is linked with: active participation (Dawson & D'Amico, 1985), access to and relevancy of information (Kennedy, 1984; Leviton & Hughes, 1981), anticipation of results (Tovar, 1989), direct and ongoing communication between researchers and users (Rudd & Associates, 1993; Leviton & Hughes, 1981), and the intensive interaction between researcher and stakeholders (Huberman, 1990; Trochim & Linton, 1986). Stakeholder participation in evaluation is linked to documented uses of the evaluation (Greene, 1988b).

Evaluation utilization was also propelled by an increase in program knowledge by participants, by stakeholder's immediate access to the data, and by the involvement of influential or powerful stakeholders. The literature reveals that evaluations can yield a greater understanding of an organization or program and create a focus on process, thereby enabling stakeholders to

think more about the meanings of findings and evaluation utilization (Huberman, 1993; Trochim & Linton, 1986; Tovar, 1989; Barkdoll, 1983). Some authors conclude that the ongoing learning and assimilation of information in and of itself constitutes use (Cronbach & Associates, 1980; Greene, 1988b; Cousins & Leithwood, 1986).

## CHAPTER 4

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND CONCLUSIONS

## Implications for Evaluation Practice

The results from this study have important implications for stakeholder involvement in evaluation practice. A number of selected implications are addressed. As with chapter three, references to the data of this study are indicated by the first name only of the authors.

A Strategy for Partnership

The data clearly illustrate that if stakeholder participation is taken seriously by evaluators, stakeholders must be involved as true partners in collaboration. Implementation of the four elements presented: ongoing communication, iteratively structured feedback, visible results, and shared decision making, reinforce the commitment of evaluators to treat stakeholders as genuine participants in the evaluation process. Evaluators who are motivated to participate and who include stakeholders as partners are more likely to experience successful collaboration (Cousins & Earl, 1992). Successful participation is linked to stakeholder ownership in the data.

Two of the studies reveal difficulties that can arise when one or more of these elements is missing. In Crow and in Brandon, stakeholders were involved in very structured activities. Revisiting this first-time attempt at collaboration, Crow regrets missed opportunities with stakeholders due to unclear goals for collaboration, noncollaborative communication, and, possibly, lack of initial involvement with the study. Although this latter element also affected Allen somewhat, stakeholder participation within Allen's study was much more substantive and appeared to compensate for the lack of initial input by stakeholders.

In Brandon's study, although stakeholder participation was shown to increase validity, evaluators did not allude to a sense of stakeholder ownership. Unlike the other studies, stakeholder participation was not ongoing. Stakeholders were invited to participate on a one-time basis at certain junctures in the evaluation process and, within these activities, their participation was very structured. To Brandon's credit, however, some of this structure was a deliberate attempt to ensure equitable participation through the use of an expert group facilitator, special attention to group process, and the format and organization of information presented. Although the study incorporated each element necessary to reinforce genuine participation within each juncture, the lack of ongoing participation among stakeholders did not seem to create a sense of ownership by stakeholders as in other studies.

An important inference that can be drawn is that continuity may be a significant factor in legitimizing stakeholder participation. Efforts to structure activities equitably did not seem to have the same effect for participants as ongoing participation had in other studies. Bunker (1978) suggests that the "continuity of relationships permit the establishment of familiarity and mutual trust necessary to override the adversary relationship and defensiveness which so often block mutual influence and learning" (p. 132). Not only must stakeholder involvement be continuous, the elements of reinforcing authentic participation must operate continuously and iteratively throughout the evaluation process.

#### Organizational Support

A commitment to the involvement of multiple stakeholders also requires unequivocal support on the part of agencies hosting evaluations. With greater acceptance and occurrence of stakeholder participation in evaluation research, organizations planning or hosting evaluations need to be cognizant of the additional needs of participant stakeholders. Agencies must not only provide the time and resources required, but they must attend to the additional demands on staff time, in particular. It is vital that they sufficiently free staff from routine tasks in order for them to participate meaningfully in the evaluation process (Cousins & Early, 1992). The data reveal that

stakeholders were "appreciative of any tangible assistance received from the administration in the form of extra help with their regular job duties which allowed them adequate time for the evaluation study" (Ayers: 270). Consideration of these factors will impact meaningful participation for stakeholders.

Organizations may also be required to advocate on behalf of stakeholders from other organizations or agencies to promulgate the importance of the study and the fundamental need for multiple stakeholder participation. Tangible assistance provided by the hosting organization to their own stakeholders would serve as a hallmark to other organizations and reveal their commitment to the evaluation. Tovar (1989) reveals that institutional support for evaluations which is only partial can limit the involvement of key stakeholders and reduce the effectiveness of evaluations.

#### The Role of the Expert Evaluator

An intriguing by-product of the authentic participatory process is that even activities completed by the researcher are perceived to be "owned" by the stakeholders. Ongoing communication and early participation lays the groundwork for this outcome by informing stakeholders of the evaluation as it proceeds and ensuring that the evaluation is relevant and credible. Once the participatory elements are entrenched, it appears that researchers can choose to be involved more exclusively in the technical research tasks such as the creation

of data collection instruments, data collection, or data analysis without compromising genuine collaboration.

Collaboration and shared decision making do not necessarily imply that stakeholders have to be involved tangibly in each and every phase of the evaluation. Genuine partnership can occur with shared tasks and shared expertise and still result in definite stakeholder ownership. Although the data indicate that stakeholders need to be involved substantively, the expertise and leadership role provided by evaluators was shown to be important to the evaluation process and was even appreciated by stakeholders. As stakeholders indicated, they did not always have the time, training, or desire to be involved in some of the "nitty gritty" work. The data reveal that these various tasks do not have to be restricted to researchers, however, it may be reassuring for some researchers to know that they can be responsible for such tasks without hindering the participation process. This may be especially important for studies in which technical integrity is essential or desired.

#### Group Process Skills

Routledge (1993) indicates that one of the most overlooked aspects in participatory approaches is the "importance of facilitators having a theoretical understanding of groupwork process and well-honed practical skills in working with groups" (p. 107). The data reveals the vital role of evaluators as



facilitators of the group process in working with stakeholders. Group process skills are essential to insuring adequate communication among participants. Donmoyer (1990) reports that the quality of group processes and who participates are key factors in successful collaborative approaches, stating that "an evaluator's group process skills are clearly as important as his or her technical expertise" (p. 277).

It is likely that many researchers have only minimal training in the area of group process and facilitation. This would appear to be an important consideration for evaluators wishing to incorporate a participatory approach to evaluation. Although some evaluators may be skilled communicators and listeners, group facilitation may require additional skills and strategies especially when considering different learning styles or when working with stakeholders with varied or unique needs, such as beneficiaries. Church and Reville (1990) reveal that beneficiaries:

who are beginning to speak out often have no exposure to the rules for speech and behavior which characterize professional/agency meetings....Facilitating the participation of people who do not usually speak out requires someone no more deferential to professionals and family members than to service recipients. (p. 80)

Insufficient researcher skills may hinder the collaboration process by limiting the evaluation process and the meaningfulness of participation for stakeholders, thereby risking the validity and reliability of the evaluation results. Evaluators may wish to bring in trained group facilitators to generate effective and efficient discussion and feedback, especially in their first

attempts with stakeholder collaboration. Greene (1988b) regrets not hiring an experienced professional to facilitate group decision making. In the future, it may not be uncommon to find evaluators teaming up with group facilitators to conduct participatory approach evaluations. Ideally, educators should incorporate group process skills training into educational programs for researchers and evaluators who wish to pursue participatory approaches.

#### Responsiveness of Communication

Making the evaluation information responsive to stakeholders' needs may result in evaluators taking on new roles and learning innovative communication skills. Although many researchers consider these factors in the dissemination of results phase to increase utilization (Patton, 1987; Greene, 1988b; Weiss, 1988b; Cronbach et al., 1980), the data reveals that evaluators need to promote responsiveness in their ongoing communication with stakeholders throughout the evaluation process.

The data discuss the use of lay terms and nontechnical language in drafts and progress reports to stakeholders and the need to be sensitive to various learning and communication styles of stakeholders. Greene (1988b) addresses this topic further in a later discussion of her two stakeholder studies. She reveals that generating an engaging narrative or story to present

information is much more easily understood by stakeholders than tables or graphs. In a situation where detailed and colour-coded tables and graphs were presented to stakeholders, she reports that the resulting discussion was disjointed and not very illuminating. Reineke (1991) discloses that communication based in content familiar to stakeholders can help to keep dialogues focused. Case studies and oral reports are more readily comprehended by stakeholders (Lincoln, 1990). The idea of using narratives is further sanctioned by Cronbach & Associates (1980) who encourage the use of anecdotal stories to present data and results.

It would seem that this process requires creative evaluators who are sensitive to stakeholder learning needs. In their review of participatory approaches, Cousins & Earl (1992) conclude that evaluators "must be sensitive to principles of adult learning and ought to have the appropriate interpersonal and communication skills" (p. 413). Such responsiveness may require the incorporation of an array of communication mediums such as props, poster-board presentations, slides, charts, and figures. Incorporation of varied communication strategies would serve to increase stakeholder understanding and possibly heighten their interest in the evaluation (Greene, 1988b).

Researchers who work in academic settings may need to pay special attention to individual learning styles in their communication and dialogue with nonacademic stakeholder groups. This may involve additional training for some evaluators and/or

consultation prior to or during evaluations. Ideally, this subject could be addressed in academic settings so that evaluation students would be able to identify different learning styles and be trained to respond to these needs prior to engaging in evaluation practice.

Lincoln (1990) offers a somewhat elementary solution to the responsiveness of results dissemination which could be used by evaluators in all facets of the participatory process: "Perhaps it would be useful if we would ask stakeholders how they think they would like to use information and in what form they would find it most usable" (p. 3).

#### Limitations of Stakeholder Participation in Evaluation

##### Extensive Preparation and Planning

The data reveal that collaboration with stakeholders can be an arduous task and places heavy demands on evaluators. The most significant of these tasks may be the preparation and planning required of researchers who work with stakeholders. The data suggest that the researcher's preparedness impacts how meaningful and manageable the participatory experience is for stakeholders.

Malekoff (1994) has underscored the importance of careful and thorough preparation and planning when working with multiple stakeholders in evaluation. However, not only does this seem time consuming, but it would also require extensive

organizational skills on the part of the researcher. Activities such as presenting options and synthesizing information should not be taken lightly. They require a solid knowledge base for evaluators in evaluation research, group process, and varied learning styles, as well as exceptional communication and writing skills.

Planning also has implications for facilitating effective group processes. Kurland (1978) identifies planning as the neglected component of group development. She reveals that when working with groups, "the price for lack of thorough and thoughtful planning is high" (p. 173). Lack of planning can result in sporadic or irregular attendance and dissatisfied group members who feel that their needs have not been met. Kurland argues that pregroup planning enhances opportunities for self-determination and increases the client's ability to make clear and informed decisions regarding their participation. Planning not only entails the functional and administrative tasks surrounding group meetings but also includes decisions on group purpose, group composition, and the suitability of meeting space for stakeholder needs.

#### Collaboration with Beneficiaries

The role of the researcher when working with beneficiary stakeholders is ambiguous. Both Whitmore and Brandon paid considerable attention to group dynamics, each for different

reasons. Whitmore, to facilitate empowerment among beneficiaries, and Brandon to ensure equitable involvement for beneficiaries. It is unclear, however, whether their shared focus is due to the uniqueness of their studies or to a lack of reporting by other authors of this dynamic.

Both studies, however, reveal distinctive characteristics of working with beneficiary groups who are both poor and powerless: uneducated single mothers on social assistance, and homeless parents. They identify that these stakeholders came to the evaluation process with a difficulty trusting others, a sense of isolation and possible loneliness, and a probable intimidation by formal decision-making processes. Donmoyer (1990) confirms the need for the evaluator to validate and legitimate beneficiary input, especially in evaluations where a disparity in status or power is evident.

Although both studies involved stakeholders to enhance validity and both paid special or extra attention to group dynamics, the results were drastically different. Brandon took a much more structured approach to ensure equitable group involvement, focusing on situational adjustments to ensure equity: hiring a trained group facilitator, taking secret ballots, providing equal chances to speak, limiting group discussion, and decision making by plurality versus consensus. Although equity of participation was achieved, Brandon does not reveal any additional benefits to any of the stakeholding groups with this process.

Whitmore's role took a different twist because of her empowerment focus and because of the continuity of participation which was not present in Brandon's study. It is unclear how, and if, the age of participants (all young mothers) may have impacted her role with this group of beneficiaries. Whitmore focused on building personal relationships, taking on the role of nurturer and working hard to develop group cohesiveness and trust among the stakeholders. She reports that both the group process and the evaluation process empowered stakeholders.

Whitmore's study reveals that, with the help of a trained and sensitive evaluator, ordinary community people are capable of producing knowledge that is important and valid. Empowerment and validity outcomes with beneficiary participation are supported in the literature (Malekoff, 1994; Wagner, 1991; Routledge, 1993; Gutiérrez & Ortega, 1991). The importance indicated in these studies of intra-group interaction and critical dialogue to empowerment are consistent with the data.

One wonders whether empowerment would have resulted if Whitmore's stakeholding group had consisted of a variety of stakeholders and included program staff and administrators. Certainly, Brandon's more sterile and hands-off approach to equitable participation among multiple stakeholders did not facilitate such results. This factor would seem to have important implications for studies that employ an empowerment rationale.

There are further implications for evaluators working solely with beneficiaries. The data reveals the value in multiple perspectives and interactive sharing which led to a greater awareness of the diversity and complexity of a program's activities and responsibilities. Barkdoll (1983) reveals the value of this mutual exchange, indicating that especially for constituents with a strong, single focus, participation resulted in stakeholders "recognizing and willing to share the burden of allocating scarce resources to important but competing demands" (p. 37). In their discussion of evaluation use, Cronbach & Associates (1980) indicate that "stimulating a discussion that leads to gradual change in prevailing views is very likely the most important effect of evaluation research" (p. 193).

Decisions about multiple group participation may be especially important when working with highly sensitive or political issues. Because the exclusion of certain stakeholder views or perceptions does not facilitate such mutual exchange, it would be important to consider the effects this might have within an empowerment focus and whether the benefits of working with single beneficiary groups outweigh the opportunities for mutual exchange of perspectives.

#### Inadequate Representation of Beneficiaries

Another significant element revealed in the data was that beneficiaries were often under-represented in multiple



stakeholder evaluations. Greene reveals that nonbeneficiary stakeholders valued the involvement of program participants and regretted that they were not more involved. Brandon agrees with Lincoln's (1990) assertion that evaluators are not very effective at locating stakeholders.

Church & Reville (1990) attest that lack of initiation by staff to locate or personally invite stakeholders can inhibit consumer involvement. For example, invitations sent by mail or through ads in newspapers may not be very successful to locate beneficiaries with no fixed address or who might be illiterate. Barriers of class, culture, and unfamiliar social contexts and settings are also identified as issues affecting participation and representation of certain stakeholders (Aronson, 1993; Croft & Beresford, 1989; Church & Reville, 1989, 1990). Lincoln (1990) indicates that "the very argument used not to find [stakeholders]--that it costs time and resources--is the very reason we need to find them: When scarce resources are at stake, every interested party should be consulted" (p. 3).

It is significant that, in almost all of the studies, beneficiary stakeholders were not selected as representatives by beneficiary groups. As Brandon reports:

A possible weakness in the technical quality, and thus the validity, of our study was the process for selecting stakeholder representatives for the meeting....we asked shelter providers and elementary school teachers to recommend representatives for all three stakeholder groups....We did not systematically canvass the stakeholder groups for suggestions about representativeness. (Brandon: 291)

The data reveals the value in having stakeholders recommend their own representatives, claiming the sense of ownership and credibility this provided--a "guarantee of independent judgement."

This strategy, however, may be especially difficult with groups who are unorganized such as the homeless. Although there may have been a locally organized group of homeless parents with whom Brandon's evaluators could have consulted, their inclusion could present a risk of skewing results by having more militant or one-sided views represented. House (1993) reveals that stakeholder representatives do not always properly represent the interests of disadvantaged groups.

These factors would seem to operate much easier in a local program in which the stakeholder groups are possibly better organized or at least visible. However, even when this was the situation in the data, stakeholders were usually chosen by the evaluator or the sponsoring agency. Having the ability to select their own representatives could have important implications for stakeholder groups and is not limited just to beneficiary groups.

The under-representedness of beneficiaries was also reported within the evaluation process. In Greene's study, the responsibility for selecting an "evaluation team" to serve as a liaison between the researcher and the larger stakeholding body was given to the agencies sponsoring the evaluations. She reports that:

while we viewed such a team as representative of this larger group [of stakeholders], the self-identified teams in both

agencies comprised only the director, the staff person in charge of the evaluand, and one to three other agency staff. (Greene/a: 381)

This came to be very significant when the team unexpectedly emerged as the major decision-making body for stakeholders. Although Greene reports that the results were not biased, she reveals an uncertainty among the larger stakeholding body on how evaluation decisions were made.

These factors would appear to be especially important in studies where the beneficiaries have the most stake in the evaluation. It may be that evaluators need to determine, if possible, the level of stake for different groups and mould group composition on that basis. Some evaluators might argue that disadvantaged groups should be over-represented, to compensate for their lack of power. Regardless, evaluators need to conscientiously make decisions regarding group composition prior to recruitment and selection of stakeholders. Consideration of these factors requires evaluators to be clear and open about their value judgements and the rationales used for the inclusion of stakeholding groups. Lack of attention to these matters can result in under-representation of key stakeholders.

#### Access to Information

The importance of stakeholders having access to all information available to the evaluator is addressed in the data. However, what was not clearly stated was how this is

accomplished. The data reveal that researchers have a significant role in presenting options and in translating and synthesizing information. These tasks can place a profound responsibility on the evaluator to ensure full access. It seems clear that access to information does not merely imply access to hard copies of agency records, data, evaluation reports, etc. It requires an openness and willingness to communicate with stakeholders and provide assistance in interpreting evaluation information throughout the evaluation.

Stakeholders who lack the appropriate knowledge base may be unable to understand the information provided, even if there is full access. There may also be inconsistencies in the knowledge base among stakeholders or stakeholding groups. Potter (1988) reports that "the imbalance in the amount of information possessed by providers and consumers is often so wide" (p. 153).

It is unclear to what extent the researcher is responsible for ensuring adequate understanding of these matters or for ensuring equity of access among stakeholders. Can some of these factors be addressed without creating such a structured environment such as Brandon did in their study? These questions are not addressed adequately in this study.

#### Equity of Participation

Issues of access to information also have implications for equitable participation. Some evaluators assume that dialogue

establishes a certain equality among participants (Reineke, 1991). Others may assume that equal access to information and equal opportunities for involvement result in equal participation.

However, evaluators report that "those persons who control the sources of information and who can manipulate its meaning typically wield substantial influence" (Kelly, 1987, p. 293) and that "to an administrator information is a source of power" (Palumbo, 1987, p. 24). Although substantial information about programs can confer real power (Potter, 1988; Kelly, 1987; Lincoln & Guba, 1986), diffusion of information to groups who are unequal in status or power should not presume equal diffusion of power.

Brandon ensured that these important issues were addressed in their study with the thorough and careful precautions taken to facilitate equitable participation, including hiring a trained group facilitator, limiting discussion, and making decisions by plurality and secret ballots. Their attempts at equality of participation recognized a discrepancy in status and power among participants and an unfamiliarity with group decision making, all factors which can affect the balance of participation. Aronson (1993) remarks that consumer participation processes are often insubstantial because "they do not, typically, alter the distribution of power and influence among consumers, providers, planners and policy makers" (p. 375).

Donmoyer (1990) reveals that attempts to minimize status at a personal level by validating or legitimizing stakeholder's input were largely unsuccessful because of a fixed agenda and because of the prevalent attitudes of professional stakeholders towards uneducated stakeholders. He reports:

The tragedy here was that this particular parent's ideas were often quite sophisticated, even if she did not always express them in a sophisticated way....The school staff would have benefitted from at least considering this parent's point of view. (pp. 282-283)

House (1993), who urges evaluators to attend to the plight of the disadvantaged, indicates that "making certain the interests of the disadvantaged are represented in the evaluation process is not being biased, but rather is correcting the biases that already exist" (p. 123). Some of these issues might also extend to groups of stakeholders who are not normally considered poor and powerless but have a significant stake in evaluations, such as program staff or citizens. Aronson (1993) suggests that it will be important to consider how lack of power or resources among certain stakeholders will limit their ability to participate.

Assuming that equal access and opportunities for involvement result in equality of participation provides a disservice to stakeholders. Careful and thoughtful consideration of these issues, within the context of the program being evaluated, must be factored into the participatory process by evaluators.

### Use of Stakeholder Feedback

Another limitation of the study relates to how researchers use stakeholder feedback. Crow reports that: "how this feedback should be used is a concern for both problem formulation and interpretation in qualitative research" (Crow: 747). They discuss this as an implication of the collaborative model. It appears that these evaluators were unsure about whether or not to use stakeholder feedback and how such feedback would be used.

Although one might assume that decisions about feedback are built into the participatory process, it is a factor worthy of consideration. If an evaluator enters a collaborative arrangement (a goal in Crow's study), does she or he have the option of choosing whether or not to use stakeholder feedback? Or does collaboration assume that stakeholder feedback will be used and incorporated into the evaluation process? The data suggest that shared decision making is an essential component to reinforcing the genuineness of participation, however, this can create ethical problems for evaluators.

Smith (1985) reveals potential moral problems faced by researchers if clients wish to censor information researchers have produced. The participatory process which cultivates ownership may carry the implication that stakeholders "own" the information concerning them. Smith reveals the risk that a strong reaction to a draft report may cause an evaluator to

revise a report and avoid the "string of moral problems" that might ensue. He concludes that:

evaluators have been trained primarily as researchers, have little formal preparation for or experience in dealing with problems of competing values or in deciding which actions are morally justified and which are not. (p. 5)

House (1994) reveals that a further dilemma of stakeholders owning the evaluation is that disclosure of results can be entirely in their hands. Administrators who are pressured to legitimate their activities will threaten the autonomy of evaluators (House, 1993). Palumbo (1987) reveals a situation in which an agency director asked him to correct what the director perceived to be an incorrect evaluation finding. When Palumbo refused, the administrator followed through on his threat to limit the dissemination of the findings. Tronya & Foster (1988) question whether collaboration implies that the researcher should "abandon her/his principles to the vagaries of the marketplace?" (p. 297).

Such considerations can create difficulties for evaluators working closely with stakeholders. In some instances, collaboration goals may need to be sacrificed in favour of the evaluator's ethical principles or interests. In other situations, working with multiple stakeholders who have multiple stakes might help circumvent these problems.



### Creating Structure

Another limitation of the participatory approach is how much structure should be imposed in the evaluation process by the researcher. Several authors and stakeholders reveal a potential risk of the evaluator taking too much power. The data reveal the vital role of the researcher to demonstrate evaluation expertise and introduce certain activities that are intentional and planned. Researchers who are explicit about the value judgements made regarding what information gets introduced and when it gets introduced are less likely to find themselves faced with this risk. As well, it would appear that the elements indicated to reinforce participation would (and did) provide a constant source of accountability for the evaluator and help to lessen these risks.

### Vulnerability of Researcher

Both Faase and Shapiro talk about the vulnerability of the researcher in the stakeholder setting. Faase implies that the collaboration process can make a researcher feel uneasy: "It would have been easier to rest on protocol than to be exposed in tentativeness" (Faase: 81). He also discusses the vulnerability he felt coming in with stacks of handwritten pages which were cut-and-paste versions and how this made him feel uncomfortable and possibly, unprofessional and incompetent. Shapiro reveals

that he learned a great deal about "the hidden agenda, the unquestioned assumptions, and the accepted roles and relationships adopted by evaluators and clients in more traditional evaluation arrangements" (Shapiro: 60). He concludes that there can be an unsettling effect for evaluators because of the altered power relationships. These effects are supported in the literature. In their early insights into collaboration, Krause & Howard (1976) reveal that evaluators enter a realm of uncertainty with participatory approaches because the research is continually subject to renegotiation and change. The realignment of relationships with stakeholders in collaborative approaches can cause evaluators to experience a reduced sense of control (Reineke, 1991) and a "role strain" (Church & Reville, 1989).

These reactions reveal the emphasis placed on evaluators to be the "specialized professional" and "expert." Collaborative evaluation may result in the loss of researcher status. In many cases, traditional roles and power structures are drastically altered within the participatory process. Breton (1991) advises that researchers cannot be defensive about professional or organizational turfs when involved in collaboration with stakeholders. Researchers may need time to adjust to these new roles and relationships within the participatory process. Evaluators who are used to experiencing a certain level of control and status need to be aware of their personal reactions to this loss and how that might affect the participatory process.

### Implications for Policy

There are a number of significant policy implications that arise from this document study. House (1993) indicates that because evaluations are often involved with government programs, evaluation has an established link with ideological and political issues. Many evaluators have begun to advocate for the use of stakeholders and beneficiaries in the planning and negotiations that determine policies, programs, and evaluations (Aronson, 1992; Morrison, 1988, Church & Reville, 1989; Croft and Beresford, 1989). They feel that stakeholders must be offered real input into policy settings in order for them to have real impact. Potter (1988) recommends a "fundamental shift in perspective that places the interests of consumers and the wider public at the heart of the way services are planned, delivered and evaluated" (p. 162).

These advocates reveal that structural reorganization or shifts in managerial practices do not ensure substantive changes in decision making and power (Croft & Beresford, 1989; Aronson, 1992; Hambleton, 1988; House, 1993). They argue that issues of meaningful stakeholder participation and impact cannot be adequately addressed through program evaluation. Stakeholder participation in social program evaluation will rarely turn citizens into partners who actively shape programs (Potter, 1988). These advocates distinguish between stakeholder participation and stakeholder influence and are unequivocal in

their assertions that those affected by social and economic policies should have the right to contribute to their development and implementation. As such, stakeholders must enter the political arena and be engaged in all stages of decision making in planning and service structures. "It is a matter of offering people a real sense of involvement so that they can begin to experience a closer relationship between their needs and services" (Beresford, 1987, p. 48).

A prerequisite to consumer impact in policy is regarded as the adoption of principles which reflect the rights of stakeholders to guide and reform the development of policies and programs. The ideological foundations of consumer-led strategies must be explicit (Jones, 1987). A philosophy of service and overall policy must be based on a philosophy which supports and respects the rights of stakeholders to participate.

The use of stakeholders in evaluation research provides a starting point for enabling stakeholder influence in policy settings. As stakeholders are shown to provide valid and relevant information, and as their participation is valued and legitimized, the participation of stakeholders in policy making and decisions will be impacted. Evaluators can assist policy makers to develop guidelines and statements of principles which reflect the rights of consumers to participate meaningfully.

The practice of evaluation is part of the authority structure of society, and evaluation as an aid to public decision making involves concepts of democracy and social justice, although often these ideas are implicit. Public evaluation should be an institution for democratizing public decision making, for making decisions, programs, and

policies more open to public scrutiny and deliberation.  
(House, 1993, p. 127)

The development of principles which reflect the rights to citizen participation may help to shift the prevailing attitudes of many professionals and political representatives regarding consumer input.

McGrath (1989) identifies that there is a conflict between belief in consumerism and professional values. Many planners do not feel that constituent groups can contribute meaningfully to the "reasoned deliberations" that such a process requires. However, Barkdoll (1983) reveals that it is individual consumers, consumer organizations, and other stakeholding groups who are often the source of the "hard data" used by planners and policy makers to make their intense deliberations.

Professional and political public service managers need to consider what value they place on users, citizens, and members of the public. Potter (1988) argues that professionals have the most to lose from consumer-oriented policy and practice. He recommends a searching review of relationships between providers and consumers, due to the fact that many professionals are unwilling to consider opinions from uninformed and uneducated sources. Full commitment by policy makers is essential to insure that influence is not just confined to minor issues. Explicit ideological principles for participation would enhance this process.

How can we ensure that consumers, or consumer groups, influence service planning for the future? We must question how well our policy making processes hear the consumer at

that stage. How often is our response either bureaucratic, or token? (White, 1987, p. 9)

In order for participation to be successful, issues of power must be addressed. Consumers of services are almost always less powerful than providers (House 1990a). Church & Reville (1989) believe that "the growth of user involvement in Canada is inextricably bound up with how quickly (or how slowly) the power relationships....change" (p. 24). Aronson (1992) concurs that enhancing consumer power:

cannot be realized without addressing the disparity in power between providers and user. If the bolder, more democratizing aims of participation are to be realized, it is evident that professionals and administrators in service and planning organizations will be required to share power and control that has, typically, been concentrated within fairly hierarchical structures. (p. 375)

Jones (1987) indicates that we must critically examine whether there is sufficient backing within the political and professional forums to begin to renegotiate the balance of power and command with consumers. She intimates that structural changes might be more challenging for professionals than they would be for clients.

#### Legitimizing Participation

When consumers are granted the right to be involved in policy decisions which affect them, the genuineness of their participation must be reinforced. Aronson (1992) reveals that initiatives to seek consumer perspectives need to move beyond retrospective responses to the receipt of services or resources

to a more active role. She reveals that, all too often, contributions are sought only after irreversible policy directions have already been established, thereby limiting participation to invitations regarding questions of implementation.

In order for consumer input to be legitimized, formal systems must accommodate stakeholder involvement and create a local policy environment in which participation is enhanced. McGrath (1989) and McGrath and Grant (1992) identify that consumers must be offered multiple opportunities for participation. This process entails similar elements as identified in the data including: attention to group process; consideration of venues and group size; clear guidelines and parameters for planning groups including attention to the group function and the range of group authority; practical assistance such as travelling expenses and childcare; consideration of psychological barriers to attending group meetings; effective and open communication systems, both internally and externally; comprehensive access to information; and direct, personal contact. Responsive communication and the importance of creating settings which are familiar and comfortable to consumers are emphasized.

Church & Reville (1990) and Gutiérrez & Ortega (1991) also address the importance of settings which are consumer friendly especially to encourage the involvement of marginalized groups in policy consultations and planning. Consultation with some groups

may be more effective in small familiar groups taking place where people live and including issues which concern them (Church & Reville, 1990; Croft & Beresford, 1990). Clashes in vocabulary, unfamiliar social contexts and settings, and barriers of class and culture can hinder the consultation process and need to be addressed (Aronson, 1992; Croft & Beresford, 1989; Church & Reville, 1989, 1990).

Several evaluators have recognized the valuable link that front-line professionals will provide between consumers and planning systems (McGrath & Grant, 1992; Tower, 1994; McGrath, 1989; Aronson, 1983; Beresford, 1988; Morrison, 1988). The use of development workers and community activists is encouraged to engage consumers, assure them of the importance of their involvement, and prepare them to work toward the changes they want. In fact, evaluators regard professional help and support as a significant factor in developing structures which ensure maximum participation and real influence by consumers (McGrath, 1989, Croft & Beresford, 1989).

Training is regarded as essential for staff to sensitize them to consumer needs and to teach them techniques which foster rather than discourage participation. The importance of this intermediary role is crucial because the involvement of local people is not an experience with which beneficiaries or consumers are familiar or comfortable. Often the development of citizens in civil rights and responsibilities is not encouraged (Croft & Beresford, 1989).



The implications...are significant since they imply a very different style from that most traditionally found in local government. It implies a confident relationship style and one which is unafraid of being criticised or challenged.... It implies an approach which goes to the very heart of training our staff since it implies that we will need to teach people how to innovate, how to communicate in a different way, and how to be unafraid of client influence. (White, 1987. p. 10)

Proponents recognize the challenge this presents in some settings and wonder how far the process could extend in situations where control versus care is a major element, such as child abuse or delinquency (McGrath, 1989).

Jones (1987) suggests that in order to ensure that consumer response permeates the planning, management and delivery of services at every level, five elements need to be pursued: the development of local consumer consultant groups; building on decentralization; building political support; working in partnership with trade unions; and training (p. 60-61).

Consumerism in personal social services is self-evidently a 'good thing'. It commands a broad political consensus and offers the possibility of a new vision for the weary and embattled personal social services. (Jones, 1987, p. 53)

### Social Service Practice

Collaboration with consumers of services in evaluation and policy settings has significant implications for social service practice. Not only will the foundations of social work practice be impacted by consumer-led services, voluntary social service organizations which tend to be smaller and more flexible could substantially impact the role of consumers in policy settings by

providing opportunities to direct policy making and planning (Jones, 1987).

Social work practice is influenced when clients are viewed as resources and when individuals redefine their role from that of client to that of consumer. "The historical notion of consumer as a passive recipient of a service no longer holds true" (McGrath & Grant, 1992, p. 75). Tower (1994) endorses adopting a consumer-centered approach to practice. She reveals that social workers who serve even the most vulnerable clients "are finding that the consumers themselves can be their own greatest resources" (p. 191). When beneficiaries (or consumers) are viewed as resources, they are able to take active involvement in their own treatment. Church and Reville (1990) describe mental health self-help groups as an example of consumer-controlled activity.

Social workers must assist clients to develop the skills and confidence necessary to move from a passive role of service recipient to a more active role which allows them greater say in the services they use. This shift entails a greater responsibility for social workers in the areas of advocacy and includes teaching clients strategies for effective communication and "coaching" them through the maze of bureaucracy (Tower, 1994). In some areas of social work practice this may involve advocating the use of brokers to allow consumers to purchase needed services using vouchers (Church & Reville, 1989; Potter, 1988). It is suggested that "by deciding how and where to use

vouchers, consumers can have greater impact on the services that are provided" (Morrison, 1988). In essence, consumer "spending" will determine demand and supply, and the social service system will be redefined by greater consumer control.

Providers who seek to engage and enable consumers in policy development and service delivery must expect conflict. Transferring power relationships and authority is unsettling. Social workers who advocate for the interests of marginalized groups in society will find themselves in conflict with other stakeholder groups, especially those in political forums who see themselves as representing the interests of all groups in society (Breton, 1991). Conflict is identified as a by-product of consumer-oriented practice (Tower, 1994).

The process will not be tidy, it will not be orderly, but if we succeed in surrendering some of our professional monopoly for determining the outcome of our consumers' lives, we will have helped create some space for them to come alongside us in the mainstream of society. (Jones, 1987, p. 61)

### Limitations of the Study

Identifying the operational mechanisms of stakeholder participation through retrospective studies is tenuous at best. The validity of this study is impacted by a number of factors.

Evaluator reporting and recollections of the participatory events may be inaccurate or incomplete. Evaluators, faced with academic pressures to publish might have misrepresented the actual proceedings of the participatory process, presenting their

evaluations in the best light. Although the fact that several of the studies were co-authored with stakeholders might enhance the validity of evaluator findings, stakeholders may have felt they should be positive in their comments and support the evaluator's conclusions. Further, the focus of some authors on a particular evaluation rationale may have impacted the types of information included in the documents. Relevant material or participatory dynamics which did not necessarily relate to the evaluation's rationale for stakeholder inclusion may have been excluded.

The studies were published over a limited period of time and the researcher may have not comprehensively searched the literature for all of the available studies. As well, the researcher is aware of some studies which may have proved useful but were unavailable because they were unpublished.

Because documents are first-hand accounts, they lend themselves to more rigorous checks on face validity (Bailey, 1994), however, it is not known whether the coding and memoing was comprehensive and reliable. Some areas may not have been explored in sufficient breadth or depth by the researcher, and other important issues may have been inadvertently overlooked.

The research method chosen illuminates the issues but it necessarily restricts the ability to generalize beyond the data. Further, the qualitative design operating within the single data source of published documents limits the rigor of the data and the depth and breadth of the information produced.

The sample size is too small for confident or rigorous generalizations and limits the ability to postulate beyond the documents studied. Although the sample included an assortment of milieus and participatory mechanisms and negative cases were not excluded, the perspectives represented in the data cannot be generalized to all evaluations. Further, the limited number of some rationales, i.e., empowerment, cannot be regarded as representative of all empowerment evaluations. Although there is value in selecting information-rich cases, a large random sample of participatory approaches would increase the reliability of the results and might permit reasonable extrapolation.

At best, the study can serve to shed some light on the phenomenon of stakeholder participation and how the roles and relationships between researcher and stakeholder impact the participatory process. The exploratory design is an appropriate approach to attempt to begin the process of understanding the central concepts and relational dynamics of stakeholder participation in evaluation research and provides insights into areas for further study.

#### Future Research Possibilities

This research project examines the dynamics of stakeholder participation in evaluation research with special consideration of roles and relationships and contextual factors. Because of its exploratory focus, this study raised many more questions than

it answered. Replication studies would increase the validity and reliability of the study and reveal further insights into the dynamics of stakeholder participation in evaluation research.

Triangulation of qualitative data sources (Patton, 1990) by cross-checking the consistency of information across several data sources would enhance the integrity of the data and the analysis. Conducting a cross-section of case studies of participatory approaches, both within the same rationales and compared across rationales, would add weight to the study and provide an illumination of the substantive issues of participation which were not addressed through this preliminary investigation. Comparing evaluator perceptions against those of participants would further enhance validity (House, 1980). Retrospective accounts by stakeholders, irrespective of evaluator input or direction, could be studied in and of themselves or cross-checked with retrospective reviews written by evaluators or other stakeholders. Comparing stakeholder perceptions across status or power differences would further impact the validity and reliability of the data.

Other questions emanate from the limitations of the study. Does continuity of participation effect the genuineness of participation? What is the researcher's role in ensuring equity of access for participants? What factors contribute to over-representation of some stakeholders? Are researchers more likely to collaborate with regard to some stakeholders but not others? What are the effects of ownership for participants, for programs,

and for utilization? How much participation constitutes ownership? Does a lack of power or resources among stakeholders limit their sense of ownership? How does ownership effect the ongoing operations of the programs studied? Although there has been considerable study on linkages between use and participation (Greene, 1990, 1988b; Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Leviton & Hughes, 1981), there is limited understanding of the concept of ownership and its links to participation.

Finally, the inclusion of beneficiary stakeholders appears to present unique challenges to evaluation research and further investigation should ensue both with beneficiaries working together as a unit and working among multiple stakeholders. The data provide clues about some of these issues but are generally weak in illuminating these issues.

### Conclusions

The inclusion of stakeholders in evaluation research is a complex and arduous task. However, the potential for evaluation research is significant. The data reveal that a participatory process which reinforces the genuineness of participation through interactive communication, iterative feedback, evidence of participation, and shared decision making, legitimizes stakeholder participation. The involvement of multiple stakeholders generated evaluation tools which were sensitive to

local contexts and increased the validity and utilization of the evaluation.

The elements of a legitimate participatory process which operated continuously and iteratively throughout the evaluation process cultivated a sense of ownership and ready-for use conditions among participants. When these same participatory elements were present within mutually exclusive evaluation phases, this dynamic was not observed. Effective participation may also be impacted by the continuity of stakeholder involvement throughout the evaluation process.

Collaboration with stakeholders requires extensive preparation and planning. The preparedness of the researcher impacts meaningful and manageable participation for stakeholders. Proficient preparation and planning assist the evaluator to facilitate effective group processes, thereby enabling stakeholder participation. These dynamics, however, may require a shift for some evaluators operating in unfamiliar territories of group processes and diverse learning needs. Advanced training for evaluators and/or collaboration with trained group facilitators may become prevalent practice in evaluation research. If, as Donmoyer (1990) suggests, group process skills are as important as the technical expertise of evaluators, this would significantly impact evaluation training.

When participation is legitimized, the data reveal that researchers can be involved more exclusively in the technical evaluation tasks without compromising collaboration. This



ensures an important role for expert evaluators in program evaluation. In fact, the role of the evaluator is even more significant in participatory approaches due to the critical need for facilitators who are both knowledgeable in research methodology and evaluation tasks and who can ensure meaningful participation of participants.

Understanding of the unique challenges of beneficiary inclusion in evaluation is limited due to the scope of the evaluation. Considerable attention to group process appears to be essential, especially when working with groups who are poor and powerless. Responding to group process and learning needs, however, seems rudimentary in comparison to determining how evaluators should attend to equal access and equity of participation. It is likely that significant problems will arise when there are glaring discrepancies in knowledge bases, power, and status among stakeholders. How and when these differences are determined is ambiguous. Although differences in status may be apparent, differences in power or knowledge bases may be more difficult to detect. It is not clear how the participatory process is affected when these differences surface or what the evaluator's role is in determining how and/or if these differences are addressed. Further, the researcher's interference in such factors may have significant implications on the group dynamics and the participatory process. These are significant concerns that pose complications for evaluation researchers interested in social justice issues.

The benefits of stakeholder involvement for policy and social service practice are considerable. Providing opportunities for stakeholder input opens up possibilities for their involvement in program planning and development and for substantial input and say in their own treatment. Social workers are entering an era where they are redefining their roles and their skills by developing constructive relationships with consumers or service recipients to enable them to have a say. This restructuring provides an opportunity to further social work goals for social change (Wagner, 1991).

It is apparent that the inclusion of stakeholders in evaluation is a formidable task which requires considerable attention to various aspects of participatory processes. Although stakeholder participation shows considerable promise, much remains to be understood before reliable participatory elements can be recommended for consistent implementation in current evaluation practices. The need for continued and expedient research is evident.

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