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The Politics and Consequences of Stakeholder Participation in International Development Evaluation

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THE POLITICS AND CONSEQUENCES OF
STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
EVALUATION

by

Anne Cullen

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation
Advisor: Chris Coryn, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
December 2009
Participatory approaches to evaluation have long been vogue in the international development evaluation community. However, despite their widespread use, there is a dearth of research on the impact of stakeholder participation in international development evaluations. Although proponents of participatory approaches to international development evaluation assert many advantages of their use, the evidence to support these claims is largely anecdotal. Similarly, critics of participatory approaches do not have empirical data on which to base their assertions. Further confusing the matter are multiple and conflicting definitions of stakeholder and participation. Some interpret stakeholders to mean funders while others view stakeholders as those who are impacted by a program. Similarly, some view participation as any type of consultation with stakeholders, while others only deem side-by-side collaboration to be participation.

Without systematic scrutiny, it is difficult to repudiate or substantiate any of these claims. In this dissertation the primary aim is to investigate this matter by undertaking a study that documents current practices and international development evaluators’ perceived consequences of stakeholder participation in development evaluation. The following research questions are addressed: Why are participatory
approaches used in international development evaluations? How do evaluators and those who commission them decide which stakeholders should participate and the nature of their participation? What is the impact of participation on (i) validity and credibility, (ii) the usefulness and use of findings, (iii) implementation of the evaluation, (iv) fairness, (v) time and financial resources, (vi) social change, (vii) stakeholders' technical research skills, and (viii) empowerment of stakeholders?

The findings suggest that participatory evaluation approaches are interpreted and practiced in widely differing ways. Despite criticisms that participatory evaluation approaches sacrifice objectivity and validity via the inclusion of stakeholders, the results of this study provide evidence that evaluators typically maintain control of the evaluation process. Donor dominance of the evaluation process is another important finding of this study. These findings underscore the importance of clarity and the need for details when discussing participatory evaluation approaches. Implications for evaluation practice and future research are discussed.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work would not have been possible without the assistance and support of many individuals. First and foremost, I would like to thank the members of my doctoral committee for their guidance, suggestions, and critical feedback. Their individual and collective contributions have greatly improved this dissertation. Dr. Chris Coryn, my major professor and committee chair, has been invaluable throughout the entire dissertation process. His evaluation and methodological expertise helped shape this research. Most importantly, he gave me much needed encouragement that I had the capability to undertake and complete this research. Dr. Jim Sanders, my committee member, challenged me to do disciplined inquiry. His probing questions were instrumental in improving the caliber and quality of this research. Finally, Mr. Jim Rugh, my committee member, graciously agreed to serve on my committee when it became clear that I needed the expert of a seasoned international development evaluator. He provided valuable insight on real world evaluations, participatory approaches, and current happenings. My most sincere gratitude extends to all three committee members.

I would also like to thank the members of my program committee: Dr. Chris Coryn, Dr. Gary Miron, and Dr. Mohzdeh Bruss. Dr. Coryn served as a mentor and taught me all there is to know about evaluation. Dr. Miron hired me at The Evaluation Center and encouraged me to enroll in the Ph.D. program. He also helped me develop my dissertation topic and provided initial work on my dissertation. Dr. Bruss taught me about evaluating health and nutrition programs, both through coursework and actual project experience.
Acknowledgments—continued

Staff at The Evaluation Center helped me in countless ways throughout my time in the Ph.D. program. Specifically, I would like to thank Dr. Steven Magura, Sally Veeder, Mary Ramlow, Joseph Fee, Christine Ramlow, and Patti Negrevski. Student researchers at The Evaluation Center provided help in aspects of this research. My gratitude extends to: Kelsey Nimmo, Kim Knopf, Pam Ward, and Michael Fombang.

My fellow colleagues in the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Program in Evaluation were extremely helpful in terms of providing advice and moral support. I would like to say thank you to all current and former students. In particular, my dear friend Daniela Schröter helped me in many aspects of this research, from instrument design to troubleshooting obstacles to helping me prepare for my defense. Lori Wingate was a tremendous support through both the comprehensive exams as well as dissertation process. It was of great help to be able to call on her to answer questions or brainstorm on challenges. Amy Gullickson was another key member of my support system and helped me keep the dissertation research in perspective. Stephanie Evergreen provided me with excellent advice on qualitative methods and helped answer questions. Tererai Trent was very helpful in helping me develop my instrument and provided me with a great deal of encouragement and support. Finally, Ryoh Sasaki generously provided me with copies of international development reports. His contribution greatly facilitated my research.

There were many other individuals at Western Michigan University who contributed to this dissertation. Victoria Janson provided timely guidance and feedback on the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board process. Dr. Jessaca Spybrook provided me with a statistics overview, methodological advice, and, most importantly, sound advice and support.
Acknowledgments—continued

Many thanks go to Brad Cousins, whose work has helped lead the field of participatory evaluation, with whom I met in the early stages of this research. He provided me with greatly needed advice and counsel about the direction of this study. He also gave me materials from some of his earlier work that helped serve as the basis of my research. I am also indebted to Michael Scriven who met with me on several occasions to advise me on the design of my study.

I also would like to thank friends and colleagues who helped pilot the online questionnaire. Your time and feedback are appreciated and helped to vastly improve the questionnaire. Thank you to everyone who took part in the questionnaire and interviews. This research would not have been possible without you.

My family and friends provided unwavering support and encouragement. My mother was a tireless servant who made it possible for me to work on my dissertation unencumbered for days at a time. My father, brother, and in-laws were my greatest cheerleaders who constantly pushed me to keep going.

Finally, I have to thank my husband Gustavo who is my unwavering champion. He held my hand through my master’s program, Ph.D. coursework, and now dissertation. He is the love of my life and without his help, this work would have not have been possible. Muchisimas gracias, mi amor. Te amo!

Anne Cullen
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Participatory approaches to evaluation of international development programs as a legitimate form of evaluative inquiry first came to prominence in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a direct response to international development programs that were seemingly mismatched to the needs of their intended impactees (Chambers, 1992; Townsley, 1996). Including various stakeholder groups in the planning and evaluation process was thought to create development programs that were better suited to these groups' needs and that would be more effective at affecting change (Young, 1992). Thus, stakeholders were no longer merely viewed as sources of evaluation data but also collaborators in the evaluation process. Adopting participatory evaluation methods in international development represented a clear shift from an almost exclusive focus on donor's priorities to an expanded focus that included intended program impactees.

Participatory evaluation approaches quickly flourished, and donors, international nongovernmental agencies, and international aid organizations such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), United Nations (UN), World Bank (WB), Peace Corps (PC), Heifer Project International (HPI), and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) advocated for and adopted their use.1 Indeed, many of these same organizations developed manuals for evaluators detailing how to implement participatory evaluation approaches and strategies (Aaaker & Shumaker, 1994; Aubel, 1994; Chambers, 1992, 1994; Hall, 1981; Rugh, 1986; Park,

1 All acronyms appearing in this dissertation can be found in Appendix A.
1992; Scrimshaw & Gleason, 1992; Stoecker & Bonacich, 1992; Townsley, 1996; World
Bank, 1996). Participatory rural appraisal, participatory action research, community-
based participatory research, and asset-based community development are but a few
participatory approaches that were developed to evaluate international development
programs.

To this day, participatory approaches are still widely used in international
development evaluations (Cracknell, 2000). Despite their prevalence, however, there
have been few empirical studies documenting the consequences of including
stakeholders in international development evaluations (Scrimshaw & Gleason, 1992).
Even so, there have been a number of studies on participatory evaluation approaches,
but the majority have been limited in scope to North America and have dealt primarily
with education programs (Brandon, 1998; Cousins, Donohue, & Bloom, 1996).
Participatory evaluation approaches are not without debate, and supporters and
detractors have widely differing opinions about their merits. Therefore, there is a clear
need for research on participatory approaches to international development evaluations
to either justify or repudiate their use or recommend ways for them to be more effective.

One of the pertinent issues surrounding participatory approaches to international
development evaluations is the politics of their use. Just as the programs they are
assessing, evaluations are influenced by numerous political decisions (Weiss, 1993). In
other words, from the moment they are proposed, funded, and implemented, evaluations
are influenced by politics. These political forces influence the selection of the evaluator,
evaluation questions, design, approach, implementation, and dissemination of results.
With regards to participatory approaches to international development evaluation, it is
important to understand how political forces influence (i) the choice of a participatory
approach; (ii) which stakeholders are selected; (iii) at what level stakeholders participate;
(iv) in which stage of the evaluation stakeholders participate; and (v) who is responsible for evaluation decision-making. Ultimately, understanding the influence of politics of participatory approaches to international development evaluations will help evaluators plan for and mitigate their impact on issues such as i) validity and credibility, (ii) the usefulness and use of findings, (iii) implementation of evaluation, (iv) fairness, (v) time and financial resources, (vi) social change, (vii) stakeholders' technical research skills, and (viii) empowerment of stakeholders.

Perhaps the most serious issue related to participatory approaches to international development evaluations is the lack of research on the consequences of their use. Without empirical research, there is no way to substantiate the various claims as to their consequences. Given the great disparity in opinion on participatory approaches to international development evaluations, there is a clear need to determine their impact.

Advocates of stakeholder participation in evaluation argue that the inclusion of stakeholders increases both evidential and consequential validity (Brandon, 1989). That is, if stakeholders are included in the evaluation process, the probability of valid findings increases as stakeholders are intimately familiar with program elements and will help focus the evaluation. As a result of their participation, stakeholders will have a better understanding of the evaluation, develop their evaluation and analytical skills (Mathie & Greene, 1997; Ridde & Shakir, 2005; USAID, 1996), have greater buy-in in the evaluation process, and will thus be more likely to use evaluation findings (Brisolara, 1998; Butterfoss, Francisco, & Capwell, 2001), and make more sound actions as a result of the evaluation (Brisolara, 1998). Furthermore, bottom-up development projects require corresponding evaluation approaches in which stakeholders collaborate in the evaluation process (Patton, 2008).
On the other hand, critics of stakeholder participation believe that including stakeholders in evaluations could potentially decrease validity due to stakeholders' bias (Chelimsky, 2008). They further argue that stakeholders might not be qualified to participate, which would present an additional complication to their inclusion. As a result of including stakeholders in the evaluation process, evaluations will require more time and financial resources. Stakeholder inclusion reduces the degree of independence in which evaluators typically operate and raises questions of reduced objectivity (Scriven, 1975). If stakeholders are included in the evaluation process for reasons of empowerment, it can no longer be considered evaluation but rather social change or development itself (Brisolara, 1998).

Further confusing the debate surrounding participatory methods are multiple and conflicting interpretations and definitions of stakeholders and participation. In general, an evaluation is considered participatory if (i) a variety of stakeholders are included in the evaluation process, (ii) control of the evaluation process is shared between the evaluator and stakeholders, and (iii) stakeholders have more than a mere consultative role (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). Despite this framework, it is not always clear nor easy to determine if an evaluation is participatory. Confusion arises when evaluators do not explicitly state how they operationalize stakeholders and participation. Without knowing which stakeholders are included and how they participate, it is impossible to determine if an evaluation could justifiably be identified as “participatory.” And, ultimately, differing interpretations of key terminology makes it difficult to assess and evaluate the impact and consequences of these approaches.

Most definitions of stakeholders include a wide range of individuals connected to a program from donors to program managers to those impacted by the program. Stakeholders refer to all individuals connected to a program including those who funded,
designed, implemented, and were impacted by (both positively and negatively) the program. For example, many widely cited and used definitions of stakeholders include the following:

I interpret the term stakeholders to mean either the members of groups that are palpably affected by the program and who therefore will conceivably be affected by evaluative conclusions about the program or the members of the groups that make decisions about the future of the program, such as decisions to continue or discontinue funding or alter modes of program operation. (Weiss, 1983, p. 84)

Stakeholders are those affected by the outcome—negatively or positively—or those who can affect the outcome of a proposed intervention. (World Bank, 1996, p. 125)

A stakeholder is any person or group with an interest in the project being evaluated or in the results of the evaluation. Stakeholders include: funders, project staff and administrators, project participants or customers, community leaders, collaborating agencies, and others with a direct, or even indirect, interest in program effectiveness. (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, n.d., ¶2)

The term stakeholder is commonly used to refer to those who should be involved in or may be affected by a program evaluation. Stakeholders include clients and others who will use the evaluation to make decisions, such as school, university, and hospital boards, state boards of education, and advisory committees; individual administrators; legislators; instructional and training staffs; and the large group of consumers who purchase the goods and services being assessed. Furthermore, typical stakeholders include the individuals and groups whose work is being studied, those who will be affected by the results, community organizations, and the general public. (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994, p. 25)

Oftentimes, however, in practice evaluators refer to stakeholders and their role in the evaluation process without specifically detailing which stakeholders were included. This raises a number of more or less serious problems because without knowing which stakeholders were included (i.e., donors and program staff or targeted and untargeted impactees), it is virtually impossible to determine whether an evaluation approach is
participatory. In most cases, the categories of stakeholders that are included in evaluations are much more limited than in the definitions listed above. Indeed, participatory evaluation approaches arose precisely because they expanded upon traditional evaluation models, which almost always only included donors and program staff. Thus, having clear explanations of which stakeholders were included in the evaluation process is a critical component for determining if an evaluation approach is in fact participatory.

However, knowing which stakeholders were included in the evaluation process is necessary but not sufficient in determining whether an approach is participatory. Indeed, Jean King has asserted that, “[t]o a certain extent all program evaluation is participatory—evaluators must, after all, talk to someone when framing a study” (2007, p. 83). Cousins and Whitmore (1998), on the other hand, propose that in addition to including a range of stakeholders, participatory evaluation methods give stakeholders more control and greater involvement in the evaluation process. To determine whether an evaluation approach is participatory, the depth of participation of stakeholders and control of decision-making must be assessed. Therefore, it is important that evaluators clearly state in what capacity stakeholders are included in the evaluation process. This is particularly true as many evaluators view participation as any type of consultation with stakeholders while others only deem side-by-side collaboration participation.

In this dissertation, a definition of participatory evaluation is used that is based on both Cousins and Earl's (1992) definition: “applied social research that involves a partnership between trained and practice-based decision makers, organization members with program responsibility, or people with a vital interest in the program” (p. 399) and Rebien (1996) “a problem-solving process in which intervention stakeholders systematically collect and analyse data on the project through joint effort, and use that
information to change implementation accordingly” (p.70. Participatory evaluation is an evaluation in which one or more stakeholder groups play an active role in one or all phases of the evaluation. At the minimum, stakeholders must be included in a capacity greater than that of a mere data source.

Statement of Problem

Despite their wide-spread use, there is a dearth of research on the impact of participatory approaches in international development evaluations on issues such as validity and credibility, the usefulness and use of findings, implementation of evaluation, fairness, time and financial resources, social change, stakeholders’ technical research skills, and empowerment of stakeholders. Although proponents of participatory approaches to international development evaluation assert many advantages of their use, the evidence to support these claims is largely anecdotal. Similarly, critics of participatory approaches do not have empirical data on which to base their assertions. Without systematic scrutiny, it is difficult to repudiate or substantiate any of these claims. In this dissertation the primary aim is to investigate this matter by undertaking a systematic study that documents current practices and international development evaluators’ perceived consequences of stakeholder participation in development evaluation.

The first research question is what are the politics of stakeholder participation in international development evaluation? Specifically, who (i.e., which stakeholders) participates in international development evaluations? How do stakeholders participate (i.e., in what capacity and in what stage of the evaluation do they participate)? Why are participatory evaluation approaches used (i.e., are they selected because of political pressure by donors or even development community norms) and in what circumstances do they work best?
The second research question is what are the consequences of stakeholder participation in international development evaluation? In other words, what are the perceived impacts of participation on (i) validity and credibility, (ii) the usefulness and use of findings, (iii) implementation of evaluation, (iv) fairness, (v) time and financial resources, (vi) social change, (vii) stakeholders’ technical research skills, and (viii) empowerment of stakeholders? Finally, what are the challenges associated with the use of participatory evaluation approaches?

**Aim and Scope of the Dissertation**

In short, the specific questions investigated in this dissertation will contribute to the evaluation field by providing an empirical study on participatory approaches to international development evaluation to (i) better understand current trends and practice; (ii) describe the perceived impacts of participatory evaluation; and (iii) help improve future evaluation practice. As part of this research, a lexicon and catalogue of current practices in stakeholder participation in development evaluation will be created. This will serve as a resource to evaluators who wish to have a greater understanding of how participatory methods are implemented by various evaluators in a multitude of contexts and manners. Specific attention will also be given to the great complexity of the term “stakeholders.” It will examine how consistent most evaluations are when considering stakeholders. Finally, and most importantly, the research presented in this dissertation will contribute to empirical knowledge on evaluation practice, particularly as it relates to stakeholder participation.
Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. In the current chapter, the nature of the problem and the specific aim and scope of the dissertation were presented. In the second chapter, the review of the literature, the contextual background for this study is provided. First, general evaluation concepts as they relate to this study are presented and explained. In this section, terms used within this dissertation such as value, stakeholder, participation, and evaluation phase are clearly delineated. Because one of the biggest problems surrounding participatory evaluation is multiple interpretations of terminology, it is critical that the definitions of these concepts be clearly detailed. Research on participatory evaluation including the range of methods and approaches, frameworks for categorizing approaches, and advantages and disadvantages of their use are presented next. In the last section of the second chapter current trends in international development evaluation are presented. Included in this section is a discussion of who commissions evaluations; international development standards; and evaluation methods and approaches typically used in international development evaluations.

In Chapter III the methodology used to study the politics and consequences of participation in development evaluation is presented. This includes the presentation of the specific aims and objectives of the study, its guiding research questions, study design, procedure, and method of data collection for a systematic review of international development reports, survey sample of international development evaluators, and interviews with international development evaluators. Issues related to the strategies used to recruit participants and mechanisms for their protection are also presented.

Chapter IV is dedicated to presenting the results of the study. The chapter begins with a summary of the characteristics of the units of analysis for each of the three data collections methods. Next, findings related to the key study questions on politics (i.e.,
who: which stakeholders are included in participatory evaluation approaches, how: in what capacity do they participate, why: why are participatory evaluation approaches used and in what circumstances do they work best) and consequences (what: what are the perceived impacts of participatory evaluation approaches and what are the challenges associated with their use) are triangulated based on data from different respondent groups and different data collection methods and presented. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of key findings.

In Chapter V all preceding chapters are incorporated and the conclusions of this study are presented. The implications of these conclusions for international development evaluations are discussed. Finally, suggestions for future empirical research in this area are offered.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, the findings are presented from a literature review conducted to place this dissertation into context. This study draws heavily on the works of others, which helped frame and situate the research questions, methodology, and design. Thus, it is necessary to present the work on which this research is based. Although this study purports to make new contributions to the field, it has been enriched greatly and guided by numerous other evaluators, theorists, and practitioners. Without consideration and study of these works, this present research cannot be properly contextualized and understood.

Another purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of key concepts in evaluation as they relate to this study. It is important to note that the purpose of this chapter is neither to instruct nor inform readers on evaluation. Rather, this chapter purports to detail clearly how evaluation related topics and concepts are used in this study. Because evaluation is operationalized in widely varying formats in different disciplines, it is important that the meanings of the concepts and terms used in this research be clearly defined and explained.

This chapter begins with an overview of key concepts in evaluation as they relate to this study. Next, an overview of international development evaluation is provided. Finally, the history and evaluation of participatory methods in evaluation are presented and examined.
Key Concepts in Evaluation as They Relate to This Study

Evaluation is the systematic and objective determination of the merit, worth, and significance of something (Scriven, 2007). More simply put, when one evaluates they are looking at questions of quality, value in terms of cost and benefit, and overall importance. Although there are a wide range of things that can be evaluated (products, proposals, personnel, portfolios, performances, policies), this study deals with the evaluation of programs.

The Logic of Evaluation

Even though evaluation methodologies and approaches can be very complicated and involve a multitude of components, all evaluations are composed of four basic steps (Coryn, 2007). The first step in any evaluation is to establish criteria of merit, worth, and significance. In other words, the specific dimensions (e.g., cost effectiveness, sustainability, fidelity) on which the program will be evaluated are specified. Next, standards for each of the criteria are determined. These are precise standards that determine at what level a program must perform in order to be considered poor, adequate, or good. The third step is to compare the program’s performance to these standards. The final step in all evaluations is to synthesize all of this information into an overall evaluative conclusion.

The four steps outlined above are called the logic of evaluation (Scriven, 1991). Even though evaluations are complicated endeavors comprised of myriad activities, they are essentially just extensions of these four basic steps. It has been argued that it is the fourth step that differentiates evaluation from other forms of inquiry (Scriven, 2007). If research is interested in answering the question “What’s so?” then evaluation is concerned with determining “So what?” (Davidson, 2005; Scriven, 2007).
Values and Criteria

One often heard criticism of evaluation is that it is not a rigorous science because of the use of values. It is true that many evaluators refer to the value of a program. By doing so they are referring to the relative merit, worth, or significance of a program. In other words, they are discussing the criteria by which the program is or will be evaluated. They are not, as is mistakenly inferred, using their own personal values to determine the merit, worth, or significance of a program. Although evaluators, as are all social scientists, are influenced and shaped by their personal values and perspectives (Greene, 2009), an evaluator should never exclusively use his/her own personal values or beliefs when evaluating a program. This would represent a clear violation of the objectivity tenant on which the entire discipline is based. Rather, the criteria and standards by which a program is to evaluated should be demonstrably defensible (Coryn, 2007; Youker, 2006). In order to avoid this confusion and possible discreditle, it is advisable to avoid using the word values when describing how a program will be evaluated. As values in this context are synonymous for criteria, this latter term will be used throughout this dissertation.

Evaluation Phases

Not to be confused with the logic of evaluation, the phases of the evaluation are the distinct processes of the overall evaluation. Although the timing, duration, and sequencing may vary, most evaluations are composed of these phases. The primary purpose of detailing these phases in this section is to clearly state how these terms will be used in this dissertation. The importance of having a common definition and interpretation of key evaluation concepts and terms is critical to contextualizing this research.
The first phase of any evaluation is to design how it will be developed and implemented. It is necessary to determine the evaluation questions or, in other words, what program elements the evaluation will be examining. In some evaluations, specific questions will be developed; in others, the evaluation will be specified in terms objectives or purposes. Also included in this phase is identifying the criteria of merit, worth, and significance (sometimes called valuing). The dimensions on which the program will be evaluated are identified and corresponding standards are established. Finally, in this phase the methodology to be used in the evaluation is developed including what approach will be used, data collection methods, forms of analysis, etc. The second phase of an evaluation is where data are collected. In the third and fourth phases of an evaluation data are analyzed, reported and disseminated.

Formative and Summative Evaluation

There are two main purposes for conducting evaluations. Formative evaluation is usually conducted during the development of a program or a product and is done with the intent to improve (Scriven, 1991). In contrast, summative evaluation is conducted at the end or near the end of a program for judgment and decision-making purposes (i.e., whether the program/product was good and should be continued) (adapted from Scriven, 1991). Both formative and summative evaluations address issues of design, implementation, and outcomes. What differentiates formative and summative evaluations is not what areas they address but why the evaluation is being conducted (i.e., for improvement purposes versus an overall judgment on the program including whether or not it should be continued).
Internal Versus External Evaluation

As a general rule, evaluations that are conducted by program staff are considered \textit{internal} evaluations while evaluations conducted by nonprogram staff are classified as \textit{external} evaluations. Interestingly, it is not always easy to differentiate between these two types of evaluation. Using the case of the Farmer-to-Farmer (FtF) program, which provides volunteer technical assistance to farmers and agribusinesses in developing countries, the ambiguity related to the internal versus external becomes readily apparent. The FtF program is funded by USAID and implemented by partner organizations. Because it receives federal government monies, the FtF program is subject to mandatory evaluations. In fact, the FtF program is periodically subject to multiple evaluations commissioned by the FtF headquarters office, the USAID Office of Economic Growth Agriculture and Trade, and the local USAID mission offices. While it might be tempting to say that all of these evaluations are internal evaluations as they are all commissioned by USAID, the funding organization of the FtF program, determining whether or not an evaluation is external or internal is dependent upon who is conducting the evaluation. For example, if the FtF headquarters office commissions external consultants to conduct the evaluation this would be considered an \textit{external} evaluation. Conversely, if USAID evaluation staff were to conduct the evaluation, this would clearly be an \textit{internal} evaluation.

In general practice, formative evaluations are often conducted internally while summative evaluations are often done externally. Internal formative evaluations are seen by some to have more credibility than external formative evaluations because the internal evaluators have access to more contextual, inside information. On the other hand, external summative evaluations tend to be viewed as having more credibility than internal evaluations as the threat of bias and subjectivity is thought to be reduced
In other words, if evaluators do not have direct ties to the program that is being evaluated, there is supposedly a diminished likelihood that findings will be impartial.

The consequences of summative evaluations (deciding to continue or terminate programs) tend to be greater than for formative evaluations. For this reason, it is widely believed that summative evaluations should be conducted by external evaluators. However, the threat of subjectivity is not entirely removed with the use of external evaluators. Many international development organizations retain over multiple years the same evaluators to conduct evaluations. In order to secure future evaluation contracts, there is a risk that evaluation consultants will minimize reporting on shortcomings and/or deficiencies. In such instances, the bias of external evaluators could potentially outweigh those of internal evaluators. This is not to say that external evaluators working on multi-year evaluation contracts is a bad model to follow. Ideally, the evaluator/client relationship should be such that the evaluator has no fear of losing contracts as the result of negative evaluation findings.

The question now remains of where participatory evaluations fall on the internal/external evaluation spectrum. Participatory evaluations could potentially be classified as either internal (individuals who are invested in or related to the program included in the evaluation) or external (the evaluation is being facilitated or controlled by an evaluator external to the program but includes gaining the perspectives of persons who should have benefited by the program). Ultimately, the internal/external evaluation issue is not simply a question of who conducts the evaluation: evaluator versus stakeholder. As is shown in the section on participatory evaluation approaches below, stakeholders can be included in many different manners in an evaluation. Indeed, there isn’t even consensus on who is meant by the term stakeholder.
Stakeholders

Generally speaking, stakeholders are “people who have a stake or vested interested in the program, policy, or product being evaluated and therefore also have a stake in the evaluation (Greene, 2005).” All too often, discussions of stakeholders are limited to program staff and intended program recipients. Such a focus is too narrow and excludes numerous other categories. Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004, pg. 54) take a more expansive approach to stakeholders which they define as “individuals and groups who have a direct interest in and may be affected by the program being evaluated or the evaluation’s results.” They operationalize stakeholders to include policy makers, administrators or managers, practitioners, primary consumers, and secondary consumers.

In the Encyclopedia of Evaluation, Greene (2005) identifies four types of stakeholders: (i) people who have authority over the program (policy makers, funders, and advisory boards); (ii) people who have direct responsibility for the program (program developers, administrators, program managers, and program staff); (iii) intended program beneficiaries and their families and communities; and (iv) and those disadvantaged by the program (those who lost funding). Scriven’s (1991) notion of stakeholders expands on this definition by including taxpayers and stockholders (who may never even have heard of the program yet hold company shares) in Greene’s first category; “inventors, instigators, or supporters of the program” in the second category; and includes a separate “opponents” category which, in certain circumstances, is to be included in the fourth category.

There is certain logic to collapsing categories three and four into a program impactee category. This category would include both targeted and untargeted impactees as well as direct and indirect impactees. Each of these categories could then be further divided into benevolent and malevolent impactee categories. Note that the word impactee is preferable
to the often used term *beneficiary*. The latter term infers that the impact was positive while in many cases that impact is in fact negative. For this reason, the use of *impactee* reduces imposed bias as to the true outcome of the program. In the Key Evaluation Checklist, Scriven (2004) refers to upstream impactees (funding agency, taxpayers, and political supporters), midstream impactees (program staff), downstream impactees (recipients/users of the services/products), and alternative impactees (those who could have been impacted as well as those who can have been protected from impact).

Targeted impactees are those individuals whom the program is intending to impact (intended beneficiaries). For example, participants in technical assistance training, micro-finance loan recipients, and recipients of polio vaccines would all be examples of targeted impactees. A targeted benevolent impactee is someone whom the program intended to impact *and* who was positively impacted by the program (e.g., someone whose yield increased as a result of new knowledge learned through technical training or increased revenue resulting from a new business made possible from a loan). A targeted malevolent impactee is someone whom the program intended to impact but who was negatively impacted by the program (e.g., someone who had an adverse reaction to the polio vaccine or and HIV/AIDS patient whose health deteriorated due to exertion after receiving a cow through program participation).

Conversely, untargeted impactees are those individuals who are impacted by a program but whom the program is not specifically intending to impact. For example, input suppliers of new business owners who received a micro-finance loan as part of a program are cases of untargeted impactees. An untargeted benevolent impactee is an individual positively impacted by a program but who was not someone whom the program intended to impact (e.g., the neighbor in the example above whose revenue increases as a result of increased yield and subsequent sales). An untargeted malevolent
impactee is an individual who is negatively impacted by a program but who was not someone whom the program intended to impact. Examples of untargeted malevolent impactees include a privately operated bank who loses business as a result of a micro-finance program, a dairy processor who faces lower market prices due to the formation of a new dairy cooperative, and a fertilizer supplier who loses sales due to farmers who switched to organic farming methods can source their own fertilizer after technical training.

A direct impactee is “someone who uses a product, receives a service, participates in a program, or is directly affected by a policy” (Davidson, 2005). Examples of these are the individuals who participate in integrated pest management training, receive vaccinations, and who are impacted by a government mandated tariff reduction. A benevolent direct impactee is an individual who has a direct and positive impact from a program. For example, as a result of access to a solar powered computer an individual is able to identify and access a scholarship to a post-secondary degree. A malevolent direct impactee is an individual who has a direct and negative impact from a program. For example, a farmer who struggles to maintain competitiveness due to a reduced government import tariff is an example of a malevolent direct impactee.

An indirect impactee is someone who did not participate directly in a program but who was impacted via a “ripple effect” (Scriven, 2004). For example, neighbors of program participants who observe and subsequently adopt improved crop rotation techniques are indirect impactees. A benevolent indirect impactee is someone who did not participate directly but nonetheless was positively impacted by it (e.g., an individual who experiences fewer gastro-intestinal problems after observing and adopting his wife’s [a program participant] practice of washing her hands with soap). A malevolent indirect impactee is someone who did not participate directly in a program but who was
negatively impacted by it. An individual who was passed up for promotion because his
coworker participated in a job skills training is an example of a malevolent indirect
impactee.

Although the differences between these categories of impactees seem clear,
depending on the context they can be difficult to differentiate. For example, at first
glance targeted and direct impactees appear be the same. In fact, in many circumstances
an impactee could be both targeted and direct. For example, any individual who was
specifically targeted by a program (say all children under the age of 8 in village X) receive
a program service (a polio vaccination). However, it is possible to be both an untargeted
and direct impactee. A dairy producer who faces dramatically reduced prices as a result
of market flooding due to a food monetization program is an example of an individual
who was directly impacted by a program but who was not targeted.

The discussion above demonstrates how understanding what is meant by

**stakeholder** is not always readily apparent. Many evaluation reports will state that

**stakeholders** were included in the evaluation process. However, this tells little about who

exactly participated as a wide range of individuals can be considered stakeholders.

Identifying all relevant stakeholders can be difficult as certain groups might be repressed
or difficult to reach (Norchi & Chibber, 2003). Ultimately, this discussion serves as an

important reminder of the need for clarity when discussing evaluation stakeholders. As

will be seen in the following section on participatory methods in evaluation, there is a
great deal of ambiguity as who people are referring to when discussing stakeholders.

Perhaps more troubling, perspectives on stakeholders tend to be narrow in that many
key players are excluded from consideration. In this dissertation, to avoid confusion,
stakeholders will be explicitly described using Scriven's aforementioned categories:
upstream, midstream, downstream, and alternative stakeholders.
Overview of International Development Evaluation

International development assistance (aid hereafter) began after the Second World War with the formation of organizations such as the United Nations (1942), Oxfam (1944), and CARE (1944), and the launching of the Marshall Plan (Hjertholm & White, 2000). Specifically, “aid interventions are deliberate and intentional attempts on the part of a public or private body—the aid agency—to introduce development to a recipient organization, whether the latter be public, private or a group of interventions” (Rebien, 1996, p. 2). Since its initial inception, aid has grown substantially, both in terms of financial and personnel investments. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in 2007 official development assistance (ODA) totaled US $103.5 billion.

Phases in Aid Evaluation

Although there has always been some sort of evaluation of aid activities, systematic monitoring and evaluation of aid did not begin until the late 1970s and early 1980s (Rebien, 1996). According to the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee’s Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance, the main purposes of evaluation are “to improve future aid policy, programmes and projects through feedback of lessons learned and to provide a basis for accountability, including the provision of information to the public” (1991, p. 5). However, evaluation not only influences future aid policy but is also influenced by current aid policy. As such, there have been considerable changes in evaluation approaches and efforts over the years. In this section, two schemas for analyzing trends in aid evaluation are presented.

Expanding upon Hjertholm and White’s (2000) classification of developments in aid from the 1940s to the early 2000s, Sasaki (2007) traced trends in aid evaluation from
the 1960s to the early 2000s. Aid evaluation commenced with a focus on determining a program's worth in terms of its economic rate of return. Most of the evaluations conducted in the 1960s included the use of cost-benefit analysis and economic rate of return (ERR). These methods assume that a program's outputs can be monetized and measured (Valdez & Bamberger, 1994). ERR's were not always seen as sufficient for determining a program's success or merit and some authors argued for the development of more informative means of evaluating programs (Hirschman, 1967).

In the 1970s, USAID developed the logical framework approach to guide program design and evaluation (Cracknell, 2000; Dearden & Kowalski, 2001; Rebien, 1996; Valdez & Bamberger, 1994). Most often called logframes, this framework “translates program theory into a series of monitorable indicators so that progress can be tracked and factors determining achievement of outputs and impacts can be assessed” (Bamberger, Rugh, & Mabry, 2006, p. 182). This period saw a remarkable increase in the sophistication of economic cost-benefit analyses, particularly with the use of shadow pricing (Little & Mirrlees, 1994; Sasaki, 2007). Ultimately, while ERRs are seen as useful in terms of the contribution of a development program, they should not be considered as the sole criterion of a program’s merits (Cassen, 1994).

The 1980s saw a shift towards participatory evaluation and empowerment approaches (Chambers, 1994, 2007). During this decade, there was an increased focus on overall aid effectiveness as a result of Cassen’s (1986) landmark study Does Aid Work? Cassen’s comprehensive study assessed the impact of aid at the country- and cross-country level and yielded largely inconclusive findings (Riddell, 2007). This sparked great interest and debate in the development community over whether aid was having its intended impact. This period was also marked by a shift towards the importance and

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1 Note. A discussion on participatory evaluation approaches is covered thoroughly in the following section.
value of learning from local insights (Salmen & Keller, 2006).

In the 1990s, the DAC developed five criteria for evaluating international development programs: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. These criteria were developed with the intent of improving aid effectiveness and have since been widely adopted and used by bilateral, multilateral, and international non-government agencies (Chianca, 2007). The DAC evaluation criteria also represented a clear shift away from a focus on judging aid’s impact by ERRs alone. Sasaki argues that another pivotal development during the 1990s was the introduction of results based management (RBM) through strategic planning and performance measurement. With the advent of aid’s focus on sector-wide programs came a call for the development of appropriate evaluation frameworks and methodologies. The 2000s have seen an emergence of the promotion of evidence-based evaluation practices with a particular emphasis on experimental designs (Ridden, 2007; Sasaki, 2007). Some authors have advocated for the inclusion of participatory approaches to improve experimental designs (Jones, Jones, Steer, & Datta, 2009).

In the United States, there has been a recent push towards developing an independent M&E unit that would oversee the evaluation systems, policies, and practices for all foreign assistance (i.e., USAID, MCC, Department of State). This center would “play a strong role in capacity building including developing common M&E standards and requirements across all foreign assistance agencies, developing career incentives to support a learning culture, mentor and support agencies’ M&E offices, strengthening training and providing leadership in building host country capacity to monitor and evaluate their own development (Blue, Clapp-Wincek, & Benner, pg. iv-v, 2009).”

Other authors have analyzed changes in aid evaluation according to theme or phases. Cracknell (2000) suggests that there have been four distinct phases of aid
evaluation: phase one (from the late 1960s to 1978), phase two (from 1979 to 1984), phase three (from 1985 to 1988), and phase four (1988 to present). Phase one comprised the early development in the field, when evaluation first began to be included in the project lifecycle. The introduction of logical frameworks helped incorporate evaluation into the planning phases. However, during this period, evaluation was still second fiddle to economic analysis. Cracknell pinpoints the start of phase two to cuts in program budgets that required identifying and supporting only the best programs. This, Cracknell argues, spurred great interest in evaluation and, subsequently, an increase in financial and personnel investment. Internal monitoring and evaluation units were established and multi-lateral organizations began to coordinate evaluation efforts. Cracknell’s third phase comes after the publication of two highly influential evaluation reports on the effectiveness of international development activities. During this period great changes took place in how international aid was administered and subsequently evaluated. Cracknell’s fourth phase comprises a shift towards participatory evaluation approaches with an emphasis on developing impactees’ capacity to participate and conduct evaluations.

Participatory Methods in Evaluation

There is perhaps even less consensus on what is meant by participatory evaluation than there is on the topic of stakeholders. Indeed, the range of methods that is classified as participatory is widely varying. For some, participatory evaluation methods are those involving any type of consultation with stakeholders. For others, an evaluation is not truly participatory unless key stakeholders are actively involved in all stages of the evaluation. On a deeper level, participatory methods can be seen as both an expansion of decision making and, in some circumstances, an opportunity to shift power dynamics
and promote social change (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). Given this ambiguity, before any discussion of participatory methods in evaluation is undertaken, there is a need to define clearly participatory evaluation and state how it will be used throughout this dissertation.

Definitions of Participation

The Merriam-Webster (2003) dictionary lists two definitions for the word participate: (i) to possess some of the attributes of a person, thing, or quality and (ii) to take part and to have a part or share in something. Participation is defined simply as the "act of participating." Using the second part of the definition above, we can see that the literal definition of participation is the act of taking part.

Although this definition seems obvious and self-evident, what does it mean to take part in an evaluation? And, who (i.e., which stakeholders) is it that takes part in the evaluation? A review of the evaluation literature reveals a multitude of definitions and interpretations of participatory methods. Given the vast number of definitions of participatory evaluation, in this section we will only highlight the most prevailing and influential.

The Encyclopedia of Evaluation (2005) defines participatory evaluation as "an overarching term for any evaluation approach that involves program staff or participants actively in decision making and other activities related to the planning and implementation of evaluation studies" (p. 291). Note that this definition is very broad and could include both evaluations where stakeholders are actively involved in data collection and analysis or where stakeholders are simply given a voice in deciding the evaluation questions. This definition refers to stakeholders as program staff or participants and does not mention upstream or alternative stakeholders.
Cousins is one of the most frequently cited and prolific theorists on participatory evaluation. His definition of participatory evaluation is “applied social research that involves a partnership between trained and practice-based decision makers, organization members with program responsibility, or people with a vital interest in the program” (Cousins & Earl, 1992, p. 399). In simpler terms, participatory evaluation is merely “members of two different professional communities working in partnership” (Cousins & Earl, 1999, p. 311) or a partnership between someone who is trained in evaluation methodology and those who are not. The definition is so broad that stakeholders are neither excluded nor included because specific stakeholder groups are not mentioned nor are specific evaluation tasks detailed.

Adding to the confusion surrounding this issue, many evaluation theorists and practitioners use the terms participatory, collaborative, and sometimes even empowerment evaluation interchangeably (Cousins, 1996; Cousins, Dohohue, & Bloom, 1996; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Fetterman, 1994, 2002, 2005; O’Sullivan & D’Agostino, 2002; Weaver & Cousins, 2004). O’Sullivan and D’Agostino (2002) note that “the term collaborative evaluation often is used interchangeably with participatory and/or empowerment evaluation” (p. 373) and cite the American Evaluation Association (AEA) Collaborative/Participatory/Empowerment Evaluation Topical Interest Group (TIG) as evidence of the synonymous nature of these terms. Indeed, Cousins places participatory evaluation under the genre of collaborative evaluation (Weaver & Cousins, 2004). His definition of collaborative evaluation, “evaluators collaborating in some fashion with program practitioners and/or stakeholders (non-evaluators) to provide information to answer key evaluative questions of primary stakeholders” is virtually indistinguishable from his definition for participatory evaluation (Cousins, Donohue, & Bloom, 1996, p. 208). Participatory evaluation and collaborative evaluation have also been categorized as
inclusive evaluation approaches (Ryan, Green, Lincoln, Mathison, & Mertens, 1998). In short, in practice there is a lack of consensus of what is meant by "participatory evaluation."

Estrella and Gaventa (1998) conducted a literature review of global participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) approaches and discovered "there is great variation in the way organizations, field practitioners, researchers, etc. understand the meaning and practice of participatory monitoring and evaluation." The literature review found that there is no single, coherent conceptual definition of PM&E; rather, there is wide scope for interpretation, as PM&E may mean different things to different people" (p.4.). Estrella et. al's (2000 p. 10) later work states that while participatory forms of evaluation should include a "wider sphere of stakeholders," there is great confusion as how stakeholders is defined and often results in the exclusion of "marginalized groups, i.e., women, the poor, and non-literate."

The following passage from Cousins (2003) exemplifies the extent of the confusion surrounding participatory evaluation:

Participatory evaluation (PE) turns out to be a variably used and ill-defined approach to evaluation that, juxtaposed to more conventional forms and approaches, has generated much controversy in educational and social and human services evaluation. Despite a relatively wide array of evaluation and evaluation-related activities subsumed by the term, evaluation scholars and practitioners continue to use it freely often with only passing mention of their own conception of it. There exists much confusion in the literature as to the meaning, nature, and form of PE and therefore the conditions under which it is most appropriate and the consequences to which it might be expected to lead. (p. 245)
Frameworks for Distinguishing Among Participatory Evaluation Approaches

Given the prevalence of so many similar participatory evaluation approaches, having a means by which to distinguish approaches is necessary. Feuerstein (1986) argues that there are four categories of participation: study specimens, refusing to share results, locking up the expertise, and real partnership in development. Cousins, Donohue, & Bloom (1996) developed a widely cited framework for differentiating among types of participatory approaches which was subsequently developed by Cousins and Whitmore (1998) and refined by Weaver and Cousins (2004). According to the original framework, all forms of participatory evaluation can be divided along three dimensions: (i) control of the evaluation process, (ii) stakeholder selection for participation (i.e., which stakeholders are included in the evaluation), and (iii) depth of participation (i.e., in what capacity do stakeholders participate?). Participatory evaluation approaches fall somewhere on the continuum for each of these dimensions. As each of these dimensions is independent of each other, they are best imagined in a three-dimensional space. In the following paragraphs, each of these three dimensions are discussed separately.

Control of the evaluation process. This dimension focuses on who has the decision-making power for the evaluation. Although a variety of stakeholders may play a part in the conduct of the evaluation, who is ultimately responsible for making decisions relating to the evaluation? On one end of the continuum, decision-making rests solely with the evaluator. Stakeholders would have no control or decision-making powers in the evaluation. In some cases, stakeholders might be interviewed or consulted in order to collect background information on the program, but they would have no control or input on how the evaluation is conducted. In other cases, stakeholders would neither be consulted nor interviewed as part of the evaluation. On the other end of the continuum,
stakeholders would be responsible for making all decisions relating to the evaluation. Somewhere in the middle of the continuum, stakeholders would be consulted regarding the conduct of the evaluation and perhaps would have a voice on key evaluation issues, but ultimately the evaluator would be in control of all evaluation related decisions.

**Stakeholder selection for participation.** The next dimension in the framework concerns which stakeholders are included in the evaluation. Here, Cousins and Whitmore are somewhat vague about who is meant by stakeholders, referring to the two ends of the spectrum as primary users and all legitimate groups (1998). Primary users are described as program sponsors, managers, developers, and implementers. All legitimate users are defined as "program or project beneficiaries" (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). Cousins later describes primary users as “those with a vital stake in the program and its evaluation” (2001). The definition of all legitimate stakeholders is also expanded to include “developers, implementers, sponsors, beneficiaries, special interest group members” (Cousins, Donohue, & Bloom, 1996, p. 209).

Using Scriven's four categories of stakeholder groups defined previously in this chapter, this framework puts upstream and midstream stakeholders on one end of the spectrum and downstream stakeholders on the other. However, not all possible categories of upstream stakeholders (i.e., taxpayers and perhaps political supporters) are expressly mentioned. Additionally, there is no explicit mention of alternative stakeholders such as those who were negatively impacted or excluded altogether.

There is a need for clearly stating and defining which stakeholders were included in the evaluation process. Using the terms "primary users" and "all legitimate stakeholder groups," adds to the confusion surrounding stakeholder groups as there could be vastly differing interpretations of what is meant by each of these terms. Evaluators need to detail which stakeholders are included in participatory evaluations, how they were
selected, and who chose which stakeholders were to be included. Moreover, in some cases the rationale for including and excluding stakeholder groups should also be provided. This framework would benefit from using Scriven’s stakeholder classifications. In this way, on one end of the continuum would be upstream stakeholders. The other end of the continuum would include all four stakeholder groups (upstream, midstream, downstream, and alternative).

Depth of participation. The third and final dimension addresses the capacity to which stakeholders participate in the evaluation. The ends of the continuum are defined as “consultation with no decision-making control or responsibility to deep participation (involvement in all aspects of an evaluation from design, data collection, analysis, and reporting to decisions about dissemination of results and use)” (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). As currently defined, there seems to be some overlap between this dimension and the first dimension regarding control of the evaluation process. Indeed, using decision-making as a characteristic of this dimension renders it difficult to distinguish between what is meant by control of decision making and depth of participation.

Looking at how Cousins and Whitmore classify evaluation approaches using this framework, it becomes clear that this dimension is intended to deal primarily with the evaluation phases in which stakeholders participate. For example, the authors describe stakeholder-based evaluation as having limited depth of participation because stakeholders are consulted only in the planning and interpretation stages (1998). Democratic evaluation is classified as having moderate depth of participation because stakeholders control interpretation and reporting. Finally, empowerment evaluation is classified as having extensive depth of participation because stakeholders participate in all phases of the evaluation.
This third dimension causes confusion as it refers to decision making or responsibility. These issues are best covered under the first dimension. Instead, this dimension should deal exclusively with the stages in and the degree to which stakeholders participate. In this way, on one end of the continuum, stakeholders would participate in all phases of the evaluation: design, data collection, reporting, and disseminating. The other end of the continuum is not so easy to determine.

While it might seem that the other end of the depth of the participation spectrum should be stakeholders not participating in any phase of the evaluation, it is important to remember that this framework is for evaluating participatory evaluation approaches, not all types of evaluation. Therefore, the anchors for this dimension should be related to participatory approaches. Participatory evaluation approaches, by their very nature, have to include some sort of participation on the part of stakeholders; if not, they wouldn’t be considered participatory.

It could also be argued that there is some sort of stakeholder participation in all evaluations. Indeed, King (2007) argues that, “To a certain extent all program evaluation is participatory—evaluators must, after all, talk to someone when framing a study…” (p. 83). At the very least, stakeholders are included in some capacity in the conduct of an evaluation as they are often the ones that either request the evaluation or determine the evaluation questions. For these reasons, the other end of the spectrum for this dimension should be very limited/almost no stakeholder participation in the evaluation.

Ideally, this dimension would be divided into two. In this way, one dimension would deal with depth of participation (consultative versus deep participation) and the other dimension would deal with evaluation phase. The following example demonstrates the need for separating this dimension. In one evaluation, stakeholders have a consultative role in all phases of an evaluation. In another evaluation, stakeholders
deeply participate in the design phase of an evaluation. Where do these evaluations fall on the depth of participation continuum? If the dimension were divided in two, it would be easier to classify participatory approaches.

The framework presented above is the most cited and influential process for assessing and classifying participatory evaluation approaches. However, recognizing some of the aforementioned problems with the framework, Weavers and Cousins (2004) redeveloped the framework to address the problems with the stakeholder selection dimension by dividing it into three distinct dimensions: diversity among stakeholders selected for participation, power relations among participating stakeholders, and manageability of evaluation implementation. Each of the dimensions is rated along a Likert-type rating scale from 1 to 5 with corresponding anchors. The first dimension concerns the range of diversity of stakeholder interests among participants. Rated on a scale from limited to diverse, this dimension measures the extent to which all stakeholder perspectives are included. The second dimension assesses the range of power of stakeholder included in the evaluation. Specifically, this dimension measures, on a scale from neutral to conflicting, the relations of participating stakeholders. The final dimension measures how logistics, time, and resource challenges impact the manageability of evaluation implementation.

The redesign of the stakeholder selection dimension facilitates distinguishing between the subtleties and nuances of participatory approaches. In particular, the addition of a dimension that measures the extent to which stakeholders' hold differing perspectives assists in determining the diversity of views of stakeholders. In other words, this addition captures how homogeneous stakeholder groups are. The redesign also allows for determining how including stakeholders impede the evaluation process. However, the redesign did not address the depth of participation dimension.
Daigneault and Jacob (2009) recently amended Cousins and Whitmore’s framework and adapted it for use as a participation measurement instrument. The authors argue that the three dimensions in the Cousins and Whitmore framework are the “necessary constitutive dimensions” of participatory evaluation and that they have four advantages: they are parsimonious, have internal coherence, are distinguishable from conventional forms of evaluation, and can apply to all forms of participatory evaluation (p. 337). In terms of changes to the original framework, “depth of participation” is changed to “extent of involvement.” The measurement instrument assigns indicators with a weight of .25 to each level of the 5 point continuum for each dimension. Thus, the coding scheme for extent of involvement ranges from no involvement (weight = 0.00) to full involvement (weight= 1.00). In addition to measuring participation on each of the three continuums, Daigneault and Jacob’s framework allows for an overall participatory scale to be calculated.

Rebien’s (1996) lesser known but equally valuable framework for classifying participatory evaluation approaches is based upon three dimensions. Rebien argues that there is a degree of participation in every evaluation. In the first dimension, the role of evaluators is placed on a continuum with stakeholders as objects of an evaluation (i.e., simply a data source) on one end and stakeholders as active and empowered actors in the evaluation process of an evaluation (i.e., responsible for identifying information needs and setting standards) at the other. The threshold that determines whether an evaluation is participatory on this criterion is whether stakeholders are more than just a data source. The second dimension assesses the evaluation phases in which stakeholders participate. Here, the ends of the continuum are participation in only a few evaluation phases versus all evaluation phases. Rebien specifies that that the threshold for this dimension is if stakeholders participate in more than the design, data interpretation, and use phases of
the evaluation. Rebien’s third dimension concerns how many and which stakeholders participate in the evaluation. On one end of the spectrum only a limited number of stakeholders participate and on the other many stakeholders participate. The threshold for this dimension is the participation of beneficiaries, field staff, field management, and the donor agency.

The advantage of this framework is its specification of the thresholds for determining whether an evaluation is participatory. Having specific criteria for each of the dimensions greatly facilitates the classification of participatory approaches. Ultimately, as presented in the next section, aspects of both Cousins & Whitmore’s and Rebien’s frameworks were used in framing and conducting this dissertation.

The World Bank uses a continuum to assess levels of stakeholder participation in general, i.e., not just participation in evaluation. However, its applicability to evaluation is readily apparent (Salmen, & Kane, 2006, pp. 58-59):

- One way information sharing—this alone is not considered meaningful participation.
- Two-way consultation—information that is shared and views, opinions, concerns, and suggestions are sought in relation to such information. Consultation is carried out with a commitment to listen so managers can, for instance, modify options, prioritize activities, and take corrective actions in a project.
- Joint assessment.
- Shared decision-making.
- Collaboration—provides the means for shared decision-making. In this scheme, “community participation” is one form of collaboration.
- Empowerment.
To determine the level of stakeholder participation requires examining who participates, how they are included, and in what capacity they participate. Stakeholders are operationalized as beneficiaries and affected populations, managers in development organizations and ministries, and the social sciences (Salmen & Kane, 2006). In this framework, the last three levels (shared decision-making, collaboration, and empowerment) are considered to be the criteria of participatory approaches. The final level, empowerment, consists of stakeholders having capabilities to influence and control the formal and informal institutions that affect their lives (World Bank, 2002).

Also from the World Bank, Narayan-Parker (1993) identified six distinguishing characteristics of participatory evaluation: (i) collaboration, (ii) problem solving orientation, (iii) generating knowledge, (iv) releasing creativity, (v) using multiple methods, and (vi) involving stakeholders as facilitators. According to Narayan-Parker, participatory evaluation approaches should be considered frameworks for improving the accuracy of evaluation findings, are vehicles for empowering stakeholders, and help develop the capacity of stakeholders. Table 1 demonstrates the differences between conventional and participatory evaluation approaches according to this framework.
Table 1
Narayan-Parker's Classification of the Differences Between Conventional and Participatory Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conventional</th>
<th>Participatory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who</td>
<td>External experts</td>
<td>Community members, project staff, facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What</td>
<td>Predetermined indicators of success, principally cost and production outputs</td>
<td>People identify their own indicators of success, which may include production outputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td>Focus on 'scientific objectivity', distancing of evaluators from other participants; uniform, complex procedures; delayed, limited access to results</td>
<td>Self-evaluation; simple methods adapted to local culture; open, immediate sharing of results through local involvement in evaluation processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>Usually upon completion of project/programme; sometimes also mid-term</td>
<td>More frequent, small-scale evaluations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why</td>
<td>Accountability, usually summative, to determine if funding continues</td>
<td>To empower local people to initiate, control and take corrective action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Framework Used in this Dissertation

This dissertation uses a three dimensioned framework (Table 2) for classifying participatory approaches that examines which stakeholders participate, in what capacity (i.e., to what extent), and in which phases they participate. The first two dimensions are from Cousins and Whitmore's (1998) widely-known and used framework. Specifically, the first dimension addresses who holds technical control of the decision-making process; namely, the evaluator, stakeholders, or some combination thereof. The second dimension assesses the extent of stakeholder participation on a continuum from consultation to extensive participation. The third dimension differs from Cousins and Whitmore in that the identification of participating stakeholder groups is assessed on a matrix according to the evaluation phases in which they participate.
The adjustment to this third dimension helps improve upon some of the shortcomings of Cousins and Whitmore’s framework mentioned in the section above. Ultimately, allowing for stakeholder participant groups to be compared and matched with the corresponding evaluation phases in which they participate will help facilitate distinguishing participatory evaluation approaches.

Table 2

Participatory Evaluation Framework

Dimension 1: Technical control of the decision-making process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluator</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Dimension 2: Extent of stakeholder participation

| No participation | I | I | I | I | I | Extensive participation |
| Consultation only | I | I | I | I | I |

Dimension 3: Participation by stakeholder group and evaluation phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
<th>Evaluation design</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
<th>Developing recommendations</th>
<th>Reporting of findings</th>
<th>Dissemination of findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding agency staff</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxpayers</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political supporters</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program staff</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipients (users of the services or products)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-recipients who were positively impacted</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-recipients who were negatively impacted</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Types of Participatory Evaluation Approaches

There are many different forms of participatory evaluation approaches. Typically, participatory evaluation approaches have been classified or categorized according to their ultimate goal or objective (Smits & Champagne, 2008). Weaver and Cousins (2004) identified three overarching goals of participatory evaluation approaches: (i) pragmatic justification (i.e., problem-solving or decision making), (ii) political (i.e., promotion of fairness), and (iii) epistemological (i.e., knowledge production). In this study, there is a focus on the most commonly used participatory evaluation approaches, particularly in the international development arena.

Stakeholder-Based Model

The *Stakeholder-based Model of Evaluation* (S-BME) was developed to create support and agreement among various stakeholder groups (Cousins & Earl, 1992). It originated in the 1970s as a governmental approach to refocus evaluation to include those individuals whose lives are impacted by the program (Bryk, 1983). Broadly speaking, stakeholder-based evaluations are those that “involve stakeholder groups, other than sponsors, in the formulation of evaluation questions and in any other evaluation activities” (Mark & Shotland, 1985, p. 606). In these evaluations, evaluators coordinate evaluation activities and maintain technical control of the evaluation. While all stakeholder groups are included, they have only consultative roles during the planning and interpretation phases (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). There are three objectives of stakeholder-based models of evaluation: to increase the use of evaluation findings, to diversify the range of stakeholders having a voice of identifying evaluation questions, and to give stakeholders more control of the evaluation process (Weiss, 1983b). According to a 1996 poll of evaluators, most participatory approaches originating within North America fall under
the stakeholder-based model (Cousins, Donohue, & Bloom, 1996).

Practical Participatory Evaluation

Practical Participatory Evaluation (P-PE) is based on the belief that the inclusion of stakeholders in the evaluation process will help improve evaluation utilization and improve decision making (Brisolara, 1998). It emerged as a practical attempt to increase the utilization of evaluation results by increasing ownership of the evaluation process (King, 2005). In P-PE, trained evaluators work alongside program stakeholders to support program decision-making. The stakeholders typically involved in P-PE are program sponsors, managers, developers, and implementers who share balanced control with the evaluator and participate extensively in all phases of the evaluation (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998).

Transformative Participatory Evaluation

Transformative Participatory Evaluation (T-PE) is grounded in the belief that the evaluation process can help empower marginalized stakeholders, thereby realizing social change (Brisolara, 1998). T-PE began with evaluations of programs in Third World countries in the 1970s (Brunner & Guzman, 1989), particularly in Latin America, India, and Africa (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). Based on radical ideologies of social changes, T-PE specifically targets marginalized and oppressed groups (King, 2005). By including disenfranchised stakeholders in the evaluation process, T-PE explicitly seeks to create social change and social justice. In T-PE, evaluators and all program stakeholders including program impactees work together extensively in all phases of the evaluation (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). In some cases, evaluators serve more than a facilitator role as they provide stakeholders training on evaluation (Weaver & Cousins, 2004).
Collaborative Evaluation

Although many theorists and evaluators see Collaborative Evaluation (CE) as interchangeable with participatory evaluation, it is also viewed by some as a distinct stand alone approach. Rodriguez-Campos (2005) argues that CE is more effective than traditional evaluation approaches because of collaboration with stakeholders. As a result of collaboration, stakeholders have increased ownership of the evaluation which, it assumed, increases both the quality of information gained as well as the use of findings.

Deliberative Democratic Evaluation

Deliberative Democratic Evaluation uses the principles of democracy to assess a program’s merit and worth. This approach is concerned with rendering an unbiased evaluative assessment through the inclusion of the interests and perspectives of all legitimate stakeholder groups (House, 2005). Deliberative Democratic Evaluation is comprised of three key elements: (i) the inclusion of all relevant interests (and corresponding balancing of power issues), (ii) dialoguing with stakeholders to determine relevant issues, and (iii) deliberation on the part of the evaluator to arrive at an overall evaluative conclusion. This approach strives to include all relevant stakeholder groups, through dialogue, in all stages of an evaluation (Ryan, 2005; Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). By including a democratic aspect, this approach attempts to form valid conclusions even in instances where there are conflicting views (House & Howe, 2000). Ultimately, the evaluator holds technical control over the evaluation process as he/she weighs and considers which interests to value and give priority to.
Democratic Evaluation

Democratic Evaluation (D-E) is concerned with the “public right to know” and, as such, attempts to maximize evaluation usefulness (Ryan, 2004). As all relevant groups have a right to knowledge and are thus held equally accountable, power differentials are reduced (Ryan, 2005). In this approach, the evaluator tries to overcome power dynamics to ensure that there is a diversity of stakeholder values (MacDonald & Kushner, 2005). In democratic evaluations, a wide range of stakeholders (all legitimate groups) participate moderately, and maintain control over interpretation and reporting of evaluation findings (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). And, as the name would suggest, the evaluator and stakeholders share technical control of the evaluation process. Democratic Evaluation often takes place in the form of a case study in which the evaluator represents all stakeholder groups (Ryan, 2005).

Developmental Evaluation

In Developmental Evaluation (DE) “the evaluator becomes part of the design team, helping to monitor what’s happening, both process and outcomes, in an evolving, rapidly changing environment of constant feedback and change” (Patton, 1994, p. 313). In this way, the evaluator not only is the facilitator of the evaluation but also becomes responsible for facilitating organizational development). DE is concerned with helping organizations develop and change (Patton, 2008). In developmental evaluation, program developers and implementers work with evaluators to incorporate evaluation into the program (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). While evaluators and stakeholders share control over the evaluation process, stakeholders are mostly involved only in the design phase (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998).
Empowerment Evaluation

*Empowerment Evaluation* (EE) is designed to help empower stakeholders through evaluation and self-reflection (Fetterman, 2005). In empowerment evaluation, evaluation is an ongoing process of program improvement (Fetterman, 2001) and is focused on “helping people help themselves” (Fetterman, 1994, p. 1). An important part of EE is self-evaluation of the program as a system (Fetterman, 2005; Wandersman & Snell-John, 2005). Stakeholder groups involved in EE are usually limited to key program personnel, who maintain almost complete control of technical decision making and participate extensively in all evaluation phases (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). Patton (2008) argues that EE works best when the program that is being evaluated is geared towards helping stakeholders become self-sufficient. In that way, the goals of the program and the evaluation are one and the same.

It should be noted that EE is perhaps the most contentious of the participatory evaluation approaches. Lively debate has emerged in evaluation journals and at evaluation conferences about the legitimacy of empowerment evaluation. In August 2009, an online debate on empowerment evaluation with Fetterman, Patton, and Scriven was widely viewed and discussed. Critics of empowerment evaluation contend that it is a form of program intervention and, as such, should not be considered evaluation. In the following section, criticisms of participatory evaluation approaches, including empowerment evaluation, are presented and discussed.

Responsive Evaluation

In *Responsive Evaluation*, evaluators work with broad stakeholder groups to improve programs via evaluation. Its distinguishing characteristic is responsiveness to emerging program issues, particularly those identified by stakeholders (Stake, 2004). Indeed,
responsive evaluations are more concerned with stakeholder concerns than program objectives (Stake, 2004; Stake & Abma, 2005). Stufflebeam and Stinkfield (2007) classify Responsive Evaluation as a “Social Agenda and Advocacy Approach” or an evaluation approach that is aimed at advocating the rights of the disadvantaged and state that it strives to “promote equity and fairness, help those with little power, thwart the misuse of power, expose the huckster, unnerve the assured, reassure the insecure, and always help people see things from alternative viewpoints (p. 213).” Shadish, Cook, and Leviton (1991) offer three advantages of responsive evaluation: (i) allowing program issues to emerge, (ii) encouraging change, (iii) and increasing stakeholder control. Ultimately, a responsive evaluation is considered valid if it has increased stakeholders’ understanding of a program (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004). In its emphasis on stakeholders, the connection between responsive evaluation and participatory evaluation is readily apparent.

Utilization Focused Evaluation

Utilization Focused Evaluation (UFE) rests on the belief that a meritorous evaluation is one that maximizes the usefulness of its findings. Because evaluations are so often irrelevant to the needs of primary users and, consequently, not utilized, UFE is designed to ensure that the usefulness of findings is both planned for and facilitated (Patton, 2005). Patton (2008) argues that it is important to include only those stakeholders who are personally involved in the program in order to increase the usefulness of the evaluation findings. By its very nature, UFE is participatory in that stakeholders (at least key stakeholders) are actively involved in all phases of the evaluation.
Participatory Research

With the exception of T-PE, all of the participatory evaluation methods described above have their origins in the developed world. Participatory Research (PR), in contrast, emerged as a direct response to Western research methodologies that were deemed ineffective in developing world contexts (Chambers, 1994; Park, 1992). In the 1970s, researchers were frustrated with standard social science research methods for data collection such as survey questionnaires (Chambers, 1994; Townsley, 1996) and found that local researchers elicited better information using traditional data collection methods (Park, 1992). Criticisms of development evaluation focused on a perceived lack of understanding of the cultural context of development due to a lack of involvement of program impactees (Townsley, 1996). For development endeavors to be sustainable and effective, local voices and opinions needed to be included (Holland & Blackburn, 1998). Including local stakeholders in the evaluation process would help increase both ownership and their capability to evaluate and design the development program (World Bank, 1996).

PR is commonly defined as a process that combines research, education, and action (Hall, 1981). It has come to be an overarching umbrella term for many subsequent evaluation and research approaches in developing country contexts such as Participatory Action Research, Participatory Learning and Action, Participatory Rural Appraisal, Participatory Poverty Assessment, Poverty and Social Impact Analysis, Self-Esteem, Associative Strength, Resourcefulness, Action Planning, and Responsibility (SARAR), and Beneficiary Assessment. All told, there have been at least 29 types of participatory approaches developed since the 1970s (Holland and Blackburn, 1998). Given the prevalence of PR in the development context, greater detail is provided on its origin, implementation, and varying formats. As with the other participatory approaches
mentioned above, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between types of participatory research. Indeed, Chung (2000) argues that “there are varying degrees and qualities of participatory research, and that there is no single definition of what is truly ‘participatory’” (p. 42). In actual practice, researchers and practitioners tend to use some terms interchangeably (Scrimshaw & Gleason, 1992; Chambers, 1994; Townsley, 1996). As this study is not concerned with the fine distinctions between types of approaches, these approaches are discussed as they are most commonly envisioned.

Paolo Freire’s (1968) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is credited as the inspiration for the participatory research movement (Chambers, 1994; Park, 1992). Freire argued that the oppressed should analyze and create solutions to their own problems but can only do so through the development of their skills and education (Stoecker & Bonacich, 1992). To that end, Freire is also credited with “democratizing and radicalizing the knowledge process” (Stoecker & Bonacich, 1992, p. 8). Freire’s 1971 visit to Tanzania with frustrated development workers and social scientists is largely thought to have precipitated the use of alternative forms of research methodologies (Hall, 1992; Park, 1992). Perhaps because of its ties to Freire, participatory research is most associated with education research (Chambers, 1994).

**Participatory Action Research**

It is difficult to separate *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) from PR. Chambers (1994) states that PAR and PR are parallel and overlapping forms of research, but that the former is most closely associated with industry and agriculture. However, most literature refers to either PAR or PR; if one approach is mentioned, the other is not. In other words, it appears to come down to the author’s choice in which term to use. For example, the Encyclopedia of Evaluation (2005) does not have an entry for participatory
research but defines PAR with Hall’s definition of PR. Cousins and Whitmore (1998) present PAR as a type of PR, but while they discuss PAR in detail, they offer no definition or explanation of PR. However, in current practice and in the literature, PAR is used much more frequently than PR.

**Rapid Rural Appraisal**

*Rapid Rural Appraisal* (RRA) emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a direct response to problems with outsiders’ research in development contexts (Dart, 2005). Chambers (1994) cites three main origins of RRA: (i) dissatisfaction with the biases of urban professional toward poor and rural communities; (ii) lack of confidence and interest in large survey questionnaires; and (iii) a desire to develop more cost-effective methods of learning. It is this second origin that most closely connects PR with RRA. RRA was developed in countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe and its methodologies were disseminated by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) in London (Chambers, 1994; Salmen & Kane, 2006; Townsley, 1996). Simply put, RRA is a means of outsiders collecting information from local people in the most cost effective manner (Chambers, 1994). Although there is not one set way of conducting RRA, it usually entails involvement of multiple stakeholder groups (program impactees) in data collection (Dart, 2005). Indeed, RRA came to include a range of alternative research techniques including: Rapid Diagnostic Tools, Agro-Ecosystem Analysis, Participatory Learning and Action, Diagnosis and Design, Participatory Assessment, and Participatory Learning Methods (Townsley, 1996).
Participatory Rural Appraisal

In the late 1980s and 1990s, *Participatory Rural Appraisal* (PRA) emerged as a form of RRA. Where RRA was concerned with how researchers collect information from stakeholders, PRA focused on stakeholders collecting and *interpreting* data (Dart, 2005). Specifically, PRA was a movement towards the concerns of “insiders” versus “outsiders” in the development process (Townsley, 1996) and a shift away from top-down approaches (Bamberger, Rugh, & Mabry, 2006, Rugh, 1986). Chambers (1992) defines PRA as a semi-structured process of learning from, with and by rural people about rural conditions and says that it differs from RRA in that (i) the roles of investigator and investigated are reversed and (ii) it focuses on developing rapport with stakeholders. In addition to understanding the perceptions and opinions of local stakeholders, PRA is geared towards providing them with tools to design and evaluate projects independently (Holland & Blackburn, 1998). As compared to RRA, PRA is associated mostly with agricultural projects (Chambers, 1994).

Beneficiary Assessment

Closely related to PRA is Beneficiary Assessment (BA) which is designed to incorporate the voices of beneficiaries in program planning (Francis, 2001). According to the World Bank Participation Sourcebook (1996 p. 195), “the general purposes of a BA are to (a) undertake systematic listening, which “gives voice” to poor and other hard to reach beneficiaries, highlighting constraints to beneficiary participation, and (b) obtain feedback on interventions.” BA aims to engage intended beneficiaries into in-depth discussion and dialogue about the program so that their perspective and values can help improve the programs. By understanding the opinions of participants, program managers can make decisions that better informed and relevant to actual needs. Salmen
and Kane (2006) argue that BA is an effective way building commitment, ownership, and accountability of international development programs. Table 3 displays a comparative analysis of all of the participatory evaluation approaches described above. This table updates Cousins and Whitmore’s (1998) comparative analysis. New additions are indicated with an *

Table 3  
Comparative Analysis of Types of Participatory Evaluation Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Principal Author(s)</th>
<th>Primary Technical Goal/Functions</th>
<th>Control of Decision Making</th>
<th>Selection for Participation</th>
<th>Depth of Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practical Participatory Evaluation (P-PE)</td>
<td>Cousins and Earl; Ayers</td>
<td>Practical: support for program decision making and problem solving; evaluation utilization</td>
<td>Balanced: evaluator and participants in partnership</td>
<td>Primary Users: program sponsors, managers, developers, implementors</td>
<td>Extensive participation in all phases of the evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformative Participatory Evaluation (T-PE)</td>
<td>Tandon and Fernandes; Fals-Borda; Gaventa</td>
<td>Political: empowerment, emancipation, social justice</td>
<td>Balanced: partnership but ultimate decision-making control by participants</td>
<td>All legitimate groups: especially program or project beneficiaries</td>
<td>Extensive: participation in all phases of the evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder-Based Evaluation</td>
<td>Bryk; Mark and Shotland</td>
<td>Practical: evaluation utilization; some emphasis on political aspects of evaluation</td>
<td>Evaluator: Coordinator of activities and technical aspects of the evaluation</td>
<td>All legitimate groups: representation is the key to offsetting ill effects of program micropolitics</td>
<td>Limited: stakeholders consulted at planning and interpretation phases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-Based Evaluation</td>
<td>Nevo; Alvik</td>
<td>Practical: support for program decision making and problem solving</td>
<td>Balanced: evaluator trains school-based personnel who do their own inquiry</td>
<td>Primary users: school-based personnel, mostly program implementors</td>
<td>Extensive: participation in all phases of the evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Evaluation</td>
<td>MacDonald; McTaggart</td>
<td>Political: legitimate use of evaluation in pluralistic society</td>
<td>Balanced: evaluator and participants work in partnership</td>
<td>All legitimate groups: Representation among participants is pivotal</td>
<td>Moderate: stakeholders control interpretation and reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Evaluation</td>
<td>Patton</td>
<td>Practical: program improvement; evaluation utilization</td>
<td>Balanced: Evaluator and participants work in partnership</td>
<td>Primary users: Mostly program developers and implementors</td>
<td>Substantial: ongoing involvement and participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment Evaluation</td>
<td>Fetterman</td>
<td>Political: empowerment, illumination, self-determination</td>
<td>Participants: almost complete control, facilitated by evaluator</td>
<td>Primary users: usually key program personnel; sometimes wider groups included</td>
<td>Extensive: participation in all phases of the evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization Focused Evaluation*</td>
<td>Patton</td>
<td>Practical: evaluation utilization</td>
<td>Balanced: evaluator and participants in partnership</td>
<td>Primary users: intended users of the evaluation</td>
<td>Extensive: participation in all phases of the evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsive Evaluation*</td>
<td>Stake</td>
<td>Political/philosophical: promote equity and fairness, responsive to stakeholder concerns</td>
<td>Evaluator: maintains control and authority</td>
<td>Primary users: local/ nearby stakeholders</td>
<td>Extensive: participation in all phases of the evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Evaluation*</td>
<td>Rodriguez-Campos</td>
<td>Practical: support for program decision making, shared ownership, increased quality</td>
<td>Balanced: evaluator and collaboration members work in partnership</td>
<td>Stakeholders possessing &quot;essential characteristics&quot; that evaluator seeks</td>
<td>Extensive: collaboratio members work together in all phases of the evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3—Continued

| Participatory Action Research | Whyte; Argyris and Schon | Practical/philosophical: improve practice while simultaneously advancing scientific knowledge | Balanced: researcher and practitioner as coparticipants in research | Primary users: most often program implementors, although can be open to beneficiaries and others | Extensive: participation in all aspects of the research |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
| Emancipatory (Participatory) Action Research | Carr and Kemmis; McTaggart | Political: empowerment, emancipation, amelioration of social conditions | Practitioner: exclusive control; researcher as resource person | Unspecified: Most often stakeholders who are disenfranchised or in some way marginalized by the system | Extensive: participation in all aspects of the research |
| Cooperative Inquiry | Heron; Reason; Reason and Heron | Philosophical: root propositional research knowledge about people in their experiential and practical knowledge | Practitioner: participants are both co-researchers and co-subjects with full reciprocity | Unspecified: most often participants are members of an inquiry group with all of the problems of inclusion, influence, and intimacy | Extensive: participation in all aspects of the research |
| Rapid Rural Appraisal* | Chambers, Dart | Practical/philosophical: cost effective way of collecting information from local people | Evaluator: although beneficiaries are involved in data collection, evaluator maintains control | Primary users: most often local people and beneficiaries | Moderate: participation mostly limited to data collection |
| Participatory Rural Appraisal* | Chambers, Townsley | Political/philosophical: movement towards the concerns of “insiders” versus “outsiders” in the development process | Practitioner: roles of investigated and investigator are reversed | Unspecified: most often rural people who often don’t have a say | Extensive: stakeholders participate extensively in all aspects |
Table 3—Continued

| Beneficiary Assessment* | World Bank | Practical/philosophical: by listening to marginalized people, program managers can make better decisions | Evaluator | Unspecified: however gives voice to poor and other hard to reach beneficiaries | Moderate: evaluator spends large quantities of time getting to know stakeholder issues and concerns |

Consequences of Participatory Evaluation Approaches

When it comes to participatory evaluation approaches, there appear to be two camps: those who support them and those who do not. There are surprisingly lively debates as to their merits and deficits. Interestingly, both sides use some of the same arguments to support or repudiate their use. Morra, Imas, and Rist (p. 193, 2009) suggest that there are two primary objectives to participation and participatory approaches:

- Participation as product, where the act of participation is an objective and is one of the indicators of success
- Participation as a process by which to achieve a stated objective.

Most of the disagreement regarding participatory evaluation approaches tends to stem from evaluations with the former objective. In other words, disagreement arises when an evaluation has an objective other than merely determining the merit or worth of something. Ultimately, it is important to understand both sides of the argument surrounding participatory evaluation approaches. In this dissertation, the pros and cons of participatory evaluation approaches are operationalized as the positive and negative consequences of their use.
Positive Consequences of Participatory Approaches

Now that the various definitions of participatory evaluation approaches have been explored, the reasons or justifications for their use are presented. These justifications can also be considered as the positive consequences of the use of participatory evaluation approaches. As mentioned previously, Weaver & Cousins (2004) argue that there are three main goals (which can also be viewed as positive consequences) of participatory evaluation approaches: pragmatic (because stakeholders are included in the evaluation process, evaluation findings will be more useful), political (including stakeholders improves the fairness of an evaluation), and epistemological (stakeholders have unique perspectives and their inclusion improves the validity of an evaluation). Each of these three justifications is discussed in detail in the following section.

Some evaluators argue that the inclusion of a broader range of stakeholders in the evaluation process increases the use of evaluation findings (Brandon, 1998, 1999; Cousins, 2003; Ryan, Greene, Lincoln, Mathison, Mertens, & Ryan, 1998; Weiss, 1983a; Patton, 2008). This is due in part because upstream stakeholders are more likely to follow evaluation conclusions because their staff were actively involved in the evaluation process (Brandon, 1998) and because all stakeholders will be more committed to use findings because they have had a voice in the evaluation process (Weiss, 1983a). Weaver and Cousins (2004) argue that because stakeholders are involved in problem-solving (i.e., the evaluation process) in collaboration with evaluators, findings will be more meaningful for them and, thus, of greater use.

The second type of positive consequence of participatory evaluation approaches is increased fairness. As participatory approaches include more diverse stakeholder groups, these evaluation will include the priorities of a larger group of individuals. This, in turn, leads to a more democratic evaluation process (Weaver & Cousins, 2004; Weiss
Thus participatory evaluation approaches are considered fairer because the evaluation addresses the concerns of more stakeholder groups.

The third justification for participatory evaluation approaches, epistemological, is one of the most frequently cited reasons for their use. Namely, many evaluators believe that the use of the participatory evaluation approaches greatly enhances the validity of an evaluation. Program stakeholders are aware of issues of which evaluators are not. Therefore, by including stakeholders in the evaluation process, the evaluation is more likely to identify problems of concern (Brandon, Linberg, & Wang, 1993; Stake, & Abma, 2005). Although critics may argue that the inclusion of stakeholders in the evaluation process reduces validity, advocates contend that it is no different from any other form of inductive research (Norton et. al, 2001).

Negative Consequences of Participatory Approaches

Despite these positive consequences of participatory evaluation approaches, there are potential negative consequences that merit attention. Examples of such problems include increased time and resource demands, difficulty managing multiple stakeholders, lack of stakeholder qualifications, stakeholder bias, and intervention disguised as evaluation. Just as positive consequences of participatory approaches were discussed above, in the following section negative consequences of participatory approaches are discussed.

Including stakeholders in participatory evaluation introduces the risk that stakeholder bias may reduce the validity of the evaluation. In other words, stakeholders’ views of programs will drive the evaluation. If stakeholders have roles in the evaluation, their opinions, views, and personal motivations could influence how the evaluation is designed, implemented, reported, and disseminated. Hidden objectives on the part of stakeholders could jeopardize the validity of the evaluation. Chelimsky (2008) warns that
stakeholders can introduce “loaded evaluation questions” wherein sponsors (upstream stakeholders) try to influence the focus of the evaluation. In such cases, evaluation findings are determined even before the evaluation is undertaken, thereby reducing the validity of the evaluation. However, proponents of participatory approaches argue that bias can be mitigated through transparency as is generally accepted in qualitative research (Brisolara, 1998).

Some critics argue that participatory approaches are essentially program interventions rather than evaluations (Brisolara, 1998). Stufflebeam (2007) classifies some participatory approaches as “psuedoevaluations if they fail to produce and report valid assessments of merit or worth to all right-to-know audiences” (p. 145). He argues that certain activities are really intended to promote empowerment rather than evaluation. Stufflebeam (1994) further worries that empowerment evaluation could “cover up highly corrupt or incompetent evaluation activity” (p. 324). Thus, the key issue becomes whether the participatory activities are undertaken to promote empowerment and/or social change OR if they are undertaken in the course of the evaluation. Indeed, Brisolara (1998) purports that not all evaluators who practice participatory evaluation approaches see empowerment as a specific evaluation goal. In these cases, empowerment might occur as a result of an evaluation, but the evaluation was not conducted in order to promote empowerment.

Scriven (2005a), a vocal critic of empowerment evaluation, goes so far as to say that empowerment evaluation is “simply amateur evaluation, with the only professional involved being self-excluded from exerting any control over the conclusions drawn…” (p. 416). He further argues that empowerment evaluation does not meet validity, credibility, and ethicality standards and should be considered a form of self-evaluation, rather than a legitimate evaluation (2005b). Smith (2007) argues that empowerment
evaluation is a political ideology with the end goal not of evaluation but of social change. Overwhelmingly, critics contend that there is no evidence to substantiate that empowerment evaluation realizes its goals, namely to build ownership, develop capacity, and provide accountability (Patton, 2005c). Further exacerbating the issue is widespread variation in how empowerment evaluations are actually implemented. Miller and Cambell’s (2006) study of 47 case examples of empowerment evaluation revealed widely varying adherence to empowerment evaluation principles.

Finally, many of the criticisms lodged against participatory approaches can also be applied to more tradition evaluation approaches. For example, while it is possible that the inclusion of managing stakeholder groups might result in increased logistical problems, the same could be said for traditional evaluations which include numerous evaluation team members (i.e., non program team members). In these instances, the evaluation is hindered by “too many cooks in the kitchen” or, in other words, too many evaluation team members (program staff and non program evaluation team members) results in a personnel management problem. While some argue that participatory methods, through the inclusion of multiple stakeholder groups, cause increased time and financial burdens, others say that the evaluation is facilitated by having the input of stakeholders who know the program intimately.

Evaluators’ Perceptions of Participatory Approaches

Given the widely varying opinions on the consequences of participatory evaluation, there is surprisingly little research on evaluators’ perceptions of their use. The principal study on evaluators’ self-reported practices and opinions about participatory evaluation approaches was conducted by Cousins, Donohue, and Bloom (1996). In this study, the researchers surveyed 2,000 evaluators (actual N = 564) in North America on their
practices, views, and opinions on participatory evaluation approaches. A sub-sample of respondents reported on a specific evaluation which used a participatory approach. The researchers found that respondents believed that their primary function as participatory evaluators was to maximize evaluation use by targeting stakeholder needs. As mentioned previously in this chapter, this study found that the participatory evaluation approaches reported by respondents associate most closely with the stakeholder-based model.

Cousins, Donohue, and Bloom's (1996) study helped frame this dissertation research. Although their study provided great insight into current practice in participatory evaluation, it is limited in that (i) it took place 13 years ago and (ii) surveyed only North American evaluators. This current study uses the Cousins, Donohue, and Bloom study as a basis and expands upon the range of evaluators surveyed. For example, this current research surveys international development evaluators at the global level and complements a survey questionnaire with interviews to probe key issues. This dissertation also includes a systematic review of international development evaluation reports to triangulate data on current practice.

Conclusions

Participatory approaches to international development evaluation have been in use since the late 1970s. They have remained a popular and frequently used evaluation approach. However, despite their prevalence in the international development arena, there has been very little research on actual practice and the implications of their use. Indeed, there is a good deal of confusion about what a participatory evaluation approach should look like, particularly with regards to international development evaluations.

Clearly, there is a need to document current practice in participatory international development evaluation approaches. Before it is possible to document current practice, a
means for classifying participatory approaches must be used. This dissertation uses a combination of both Cousins and Whimore's (1998) and Rebien's (1996) frameworks for classifying participatory evaluation approaches. Ultimately, understanding how participatory evaluation approaches have been used to date, their effectiveness, and the justifications for their use will help determine how they should be used in the future.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the methodological approach used to study the current use and impact of participatory approaches in international development evaluations is presented. The research questions of this dissertation are to:

1. What are the politics of stakeholder participation in international development evaluation?
   a. Who (i.e., which stakeholders) participates in international development evaluations?
   b. How do stakeholders participate (i.e., in what capacity and in what stage of the evaluation do they participate)?
   c. Why are participatory evaluation approaches used (i.e., are they selected because of political pressure by donors or even development community norms) and in what circumstances do they work best?

2. What are the consequences of stakeholder participation in international development evaluation?
   a. What are the perceived impacts of participation on (i) validity and credibility, (ii) the usefulness and use of findings, (iii) implementation of evaluation, (iv) fairness, (v) time and financial resources, (vi) social change, (vii) stakeholders' technical research skills, and (viii) empowerment of stakeholders?
   b. What are the challenges associated with the use of participatory evaluation approaches?
Design

The design of the study is both non-experimental (i.e., research does not control subjects) and cross-sectional (i.e., data collected at one period in time) (Vogt, 2005). It is also a mixed-method investigation in that three independent methods were used to investigate the primary research questions which are both descriptive (i.e., what is) and explanatory (i.e., to give the reason for or the cause of). One argument for mixed-methods research is that by using more than one method, the biases of individual methods are reduced. The three methods used to study the politics and consequences of participation in development evaluation were:

1. A systematic review of international development evaluation reports
2. A survey sample of international development evaluators
3. Semi-structured interviews with international development evaluators

Information gathered in each phase of the data collection was used to refine and improve subsequent data collection. For example, information regarding current practices in international development evaluations was used in designing the questionnaire to a sample of international development evaluators. Similarly, semi-structured interview protocols were developed to probe pertinent issues identified by international development evaluators from the survey sample questionnaire.

In this section, a description of each of the three methods is presented, including each method’s sampling plan, instrumentation, procedure, data collection and recording, and data processing and analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study’s limitations and a summary of the chapter.
Systematic Review of a Sample of International Development Evaluation Reports

International development evaluation reports were systematically reviewed to assess the extent to which stakeholders were included in the evaluation process. The purpose of this activity was to investigate the extent to which international development evaluations and reports on them address stakeholder participation.

Sampling Plan

The evaluation reports included in the systematic review were originally identified as part of Sasaki's (2008) dissertation research. As part of that research, Sasaki identified all publically available evaluation reports in 2004 from donor countries/agencies around the world. Overall, 1,034 evaluation reports were identified from 18 countries, 19 multilateral and UN agencies, 1 regional aid agency (European Union), and joint donors. From this population, Sasaki drew a 10% sample using a stratified random sampling strategy by donor type which resulted in a sample size of 102 evaluation reports.

This study used Sasaki's sample of 102 evaluation reports to identify case examples of participatory evaluation. Specifically, the following selection criteria for inclusion in the review were used:

1. Was from the year 2004
2. Was publicly available on the internet
3. Was written in the English language

Instrumentation

A standardized data abstraction form was used to classify each evaluation report as
participatory or non-participatory. For each report, information was abstracted concerning whether or not a participatory evaluation approach was selected and who made that selection; the evaluation setting; the purpose and a description of the program or project being evaluated; how the evaluator came to be involved; the procedures described for conducting the evaluation; the stakeholders involved in the evaluation and their role; the target population of the program or project; involvement and role in the evaluation; and reported indicators of success of the evaluation (not the program or project) and the methods for determining these successes. Notes regarding special features of the case were also recorded, such as potential consequences of stakeholder participation.

Procedure

The international development reports were received from Sasaki on a CD containing all reports in .pdf and .doc format. Once the reports were obtained, they were subjected to initial review using the standardized data abstraction form. Only those reports meeting inclusion criteria were retained for the systematic review.

Data Processing and Analysis

To determine whether evaluation reports could be characterized as participatory, a checklist was developed. This checklist is based the framework developed by Cousins and Earl (1992), which is discussed extensively in Chapter II. To reiterate, this framework classifies participatory approaches based on three criteria: which stakeholders participate, depth of participation, and level of participation. In this study, an additional dimension has been included: evaluation phase in which participation occurs. The checklist used to determine whether an evaluation was deemed participatory is shown in
Table 4

Checklist for Determining Inclusion or Exclusion from Systematic Review by Degree of Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Dimensions</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders included</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding agency staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxpayers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political supporters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipients (users of the services or products)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who were not included and were positively impacted*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who were not included and were negatively impacted*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phases in which stakeholders participate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting findings*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing recommendations*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting of findings*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissemination of findings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of the evaluation process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of evaluator and stakeholder*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of stakeholder participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate participation*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive participation*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Classified as participatory if the evaluation meets this condition.
Survey Sample of International Development Evaluators

Using information gathered from the literature review and the systematic review of international development reports, a questionnaire was developed for administration to international development evaluators. The questionnaire was designed to identify the typical method of including stakeholders in development evaluations and the consequences of their involvement.

Sampling Plan

A nonprobability, purposive, snowball sampling procedure was used to sample from the target population (i.e., international development evaluators). Because a complete list of international development evaluators cannot be validly constructed, identifying a known list of units for simple random sampling or similar techniques in which each member of the target population has a known probability of inclusion is simply impossible. Therefore, it was necessary to develop sampling strategies that would maximize the likelihood that respondents would be reasonably representative and that the study's results could be extrapolated to the target population of interest.

Professional listservs dedicated to evaluation in the international development arena were identified as one method of reaching the target population. This is a convenient means of reaching evaluators who use listservs to access and share information related to international development evaluations. With one e-mail, all international development evaluators participating in the listserv can be contacted and invited to participate in the survey. However, as not all evaluators use such listservs, it was necessary to identify another means of identifying international development evaluators. Therefore, a purposive strategy of targeting evaluators who serve in international development agencies and organizations was devised.
The sampling strategy also included a snowball procedure as well. The International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE) also identified as a viable means of contacting international development evaluators. E-mails were sent to the more than 70 member associations of IOCE and asked to distribute information on the questionnaire. An additional feature of the snowball sampling strategy was to include an item in the questionnaire asking respondents to refer other evaluators to the questionnaire. In this way, the study was able to identify additional international development evaluators.

**Instrumentation**

A 33-item questionnaire (see Appendix B) was developed to investigate each international development evaluator's perception of the politics and consequences of stakeholder participation in development evaluations. The instrument consists of a mix of both open- and close-ended items, including "select all that apply" items, semantic differential scales, and dichotomous items (e.g., yes/no. A screening question probing participants' experience conducting international development evaluations commenced the questionnaire. Those respondents indicating they had never conducted international development evaluations were thanked and politely informed that they were excluded from responding to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was then divided into three main sections. The first section asked respondents (i) how stakeholders typically participate in international development evaluations, (ii) which stakeholders participate, and (iii) in what phase of the evaluation stakeholders participate. The second section of the questionnaire probed respondents on their familiarity and experience with participatory approaches to international development evaluations. Respondents with experience utilizing participatory
approaches were asked to (i) describe their experience, (ii) indicate which specific methods they utilized, (iii) detail perceived consequences of their use, (iv) identify challenges encountered, (v) present strategies for mitigating problems, and (vi) describe in which circumstances participatory approaches work best. Finally, in the third section, respondents were asked to provide demographic information on their years of evaluation experience; regional, content area, and organizational experience; and country of origin.

Although the instrument was designed to gather information about participatory approaches in international development evaluation, the introduction to the instrument did not indicate so. Instead, the introduction to the survey questionnaire stated that the purpose was to study current practice in international development evaluation. Participatory evaluation approaches were specifically omitted in the introduction so as to reduce the number of respondents who would self-select out based on their experience or lack of with participatory evaluation approaches.

Procedure

This study adhered to all protocols established by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) (see Appendix C). To that end, every effort was made to maintain and protect the rights of participants. To recruit participants for the online questionnaire, an e-mail was sent to three professional listservs targeting international development evaluators: (1) MandENEWS, (2) XCEval, and (3) IDEAS. MandENEWS is a listserv with 2,380 members that is dedicated to monitoring and evaluating the progress and outcomes of development aid programs. XCEval has 818 members and discusses issues associated with development aid programs. XCEval has 818 members and discusses issues associated with international and cross-cultural evaluation.

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1 http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/MandENEWS/
2 http://groups.yahoo.com/group/xceval/
IDEAS is a listserv with 303 recipients that serves to promote knowledge, capacity building, and networking.

The following is a copy of the e-mail that was sent to the listservs:

Dear list members:

My name is Anne Cullen and I am a doctoral candidate in the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation Program at Western Michigan University. I am writing to invite you to participate in a study on current practices in international development evaluation.

I have been on your listserv for quite a while and feel that many of you may be interested in my study as it relates to international development contexts.

If you agree to participate, I will provide you with a survey that asks questions about your international development experience and professional background. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes of your time. Your responses will be treated confidentially. If you know of any person who may be interested in this project, please forward this e-mail.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please reply favorably to my personal e-mail address: anne.cullen@wmich.edu. I will respond to you with the survey. Please indicate if you prefer taking the survey via a web-based link or a Word document in which you can save your answers.

If you decide to participate, you will receive a synthesis of the responses to the survey as well as the findings of the study.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Anne Cullen

E-mails also sent to the more than 70 evaluation professional evaluation associations/societies/networks registered on the IOCE website. Specifically, an e-mail was sent to the contact person for the evaluation association listed on the IOCE website.
The following is a copy of the e-mail that was sent to the IOCE members:

Dear IOCE member,

My name is Anne Cullen and I am a doctoral candidate in the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation Program at Western Michigan University. I am writing to invite you and your fellow evaluation association members to participate in a study on current practices in international development evaluation. Please forward this e-mail to any of your members who might be interested in sharing their experiences and perspectives on international development evaluation.

If you agree to participate, I will provide you with a survey that asks questions about your international development experience and professional background. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes of your time. Your responses will be treated confidentially.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please reply favorably to my personal e-mail address: anne.cullen@wmich.edu. I will respond to you with the survey. Please indicate if you prefer taking the survey via a web-based link or a Word document in which you can save your answers.

If you decide to participate, you will receive a synthesis of the responses to the survey as well as the findings of the study.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Anne Cullen

All respondents were required to electronically consent to participate before beginning the study. The following is a copy of the consent screen to which respondents had to agree before participating in the study:

Western Michigan University
Department of: Interdisciplinary Evaluation
Principal Investigator: Chris Coryn

Student Investigator: Anne Cullen
You have been invited to participate in a research project on current practices in international development evaluation. You will be asked to respond to a set of questions related to your experience with international development evaluations. You will also be asked to provide general information about yourself.

The survey will require approximately 30 minutes of your time. All responses will be treated confidentially. That means that your name will not appear on any papers on which this information is recorded. I will disseminate aggregated and triangulated findings via my dissertation and potential future presentations and publication.

To thank you for your time and effort involved in providing this feedback, I will provide you with a summary of key findings from the study. Others may also benefit from the knowledge gained through this study.

Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time during the study without prejudice or penalty.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact Anne Cullen at by telephone at (001)269-387-5918 or via e-mail at anne.cullen@wmich.edu.

You may also contact the chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at (001)269-387-8293 or the vice president for research at (001)269-387-8298 with any concerns that you have.

This consent document has been approved for use on __/__/2009 for one year by Western Michigan University's Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. Do not participate in this study before __/__/2009 or after __/__/2009.

By pressing the "continue" option, you indicate that you have read and understand the purpose and requirements of the study and that you agree to participate. By pressing the "decline consent" option on the top right, you will exit the survey.

Data Collection and Recording

Data were collected using Survey Monkey, a web-based survey system, and were downloaded into password protected .xls spreadsheets. The survey was confidential, but
not anonymous, in that respondents were asked to provide their contact information if interested in a follow-up interview (see Semi-Structured Interviews with International Development Evaluators, below).

**Data Processing and Analysis**

Information obtained from the survey sample questionnaire was in both qualitative (from open-ended items) and quantitative (from close-ended items) forms. Thus, the analytic procedures were different for the two types of data. Open-ended data were coded and analyzed for common themes. Close-ended data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques.

**Semi-Structured Interviews with International Development Evaluators**

The third method used in this study was interviews with international development evaluators. These interviews were designed to probe issues identified in the survey sample of international development evaluators. Specifically, the purpose of these interviews was twofold. First, these interviews helped determine the politics of stakeholder inclusion approaches, including why participatory approaches are used, which stakeholders are included, and in what stages of the evaluation process are they included. The interviews were also intended to identify the consequences of stakeholder participation in development evaluation, such as perceived impacts of participatory evaluation approaches.

**Sampling Plan**

A purposive, convenience sampling technique was used to identify interviewees. One of
the items in the survey sample questionnaire asked respondents to indicate if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview. Thus, the sampling strategy was convenient in that interviews were conducted with international development evaluators who had previously participated in the study. Interview participants were also identified based on how they answered questions. For example, if respondents provided an insightful response on an open-ended item, they were invited to participate. In this way, the sampling strategy was also purposive.

Instrumentation

A semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix D) was developed to explore themes and probe issues identified from the systematic review and survey sample of international development evaluators. While a structured interview has a formalized, limited set of questions, a semi-structured interview is flexible, allowing new questions to be raised during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says.

Procedure

As part of the survey questionnaire that was administered to international development evaluators, respondents were asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview. Respondents willing to participate in the follow-up interview were screened based on their responses to the survey questionnaire. For example, interviewees were selected based on the extent to which their responses to the questionnaire indicated that they would be able to provide insight into key issues.

E-mails were sent to interested respondents to schedule the interview. Participants were given the option of participating in the interview via e-mail or by telephone. Participants indicated their consent by replying to the following e-mail:
Western Michigan University  
Department of: Interdisciplinary Evaluation  
Principal Investigator: Chris Coryn  
Student Investigator: Anne Cullen  

May XXX, 2009

Dear <expert>:

My name is Anne Cullen and I am a doctoral candidate in the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation Program at Western Michigan University. I am writing to invite you to participate in a study on current practices in international development evaluations.

You recently indicated interest in participating in this study. If you participate in this study, you will be asked to respond to a set of questions related your experience with international development evaluations.

The survey will require approximately 30 minutes of your time. Your responses will be treated confidentially. To meet the requirements of Western Michigan University’s Institutional Review Board, the information will be retained for about three years in password protected files on my personal computer. If you feel that it is important for this research to disclose your name, you can attach a personal request in written form via e-mail.

Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time during the study without prejudice or penalty. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact me via phone or e-mail. You may also contact the chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at +1-269-387-8293 or the vice president for research at +1-269-387-8298 with any concerns that you have. This consent document has been approved for use on __/__/2009 for one year by Western Michigan University’s Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. Do not participate in this study before __/__/2009 or after __/__/2009.

If you are interested in participating in the study and willing to volunteer some of your valuable time, please reply to this e-mail with your preferred contact information. Please also indicate your preferred mode of communication (e-mail or telephone) and availability between April XX, 2009 and May XX, 2009. You can choose any dates and times.

To consent to participate in this study, please reply to this e-mail with your acceptance. By responding to this e-mail with intent to participate in
the study, you indicate that you have read and understand the purpose and requirements of the study and that you agree to participate, unless otherwise noted. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Anne Cullen

Data Collection and Recording

After consent was obtained from international development experts, data was collected via e-mail and telephone interviews, depending on the preference and availability of evaluators. For evaluators who preferred to respond via e-mail, data was collected in electronic format. For those who preferred a telephone conversation, written notes were taken during the conversation.

Data obtained via e-mail was copied into .doc format for purposes of data analysis. The written notes were transcribed into .doc formats. All data was stored in password protected electronic files.

Data Processing and Analysis

Inductive analysis and creative synthesis approaches were used for processing and analyzing interview data (Patton, 2002). The data were analyzed for themes based on a coding scheme which was developed to identify key issues. Potential linkages between themes were explored under consideration of the given area of expertise of an international development evaluator. This process was iterative. In essence, data analysis began with the first interview completed and was processed and refined until data collection concluded. Thereafter, all data were scrutinized as a complete whole.

Each interview was first coded for key characteristics related to participatory
evaluation. On the basis of the summary reviews (i.e., data abstract coding), codes were developed to characterize the modes of carrying out participatory evaluation, reasons for selecting it, stakeholder and target population involvement, and reported indicators of success and consequences of stakeholder participation. Each case was coded by a single coder. The codes assigned to each case were then reviewed and verified by the same coder after having completed initial coding of all cases.

Following coding, a series of cross-case display matrices to identify patterns in the coded data were developed. These displays compared the dominant way in which the participatory evaluation was conducted with features of the evaluation itself, such as characteristics of the program or project environment, the nature of stakeholder and target population involvement, failures and successes reported, and evidence of consequences of stakeholder participation.

Summary

In this chapter, the methodological approach used in this dissertation research was presented. Specifically, in this chapter the three methodological approaches used in this study were detailed, which included (1) a systematic review of international development evaluation reports, (2) a survey sample of international development evaluators, and (3) interviews with international development evaluators. In the remaining two chapters the findings and conclusions of this study will be presented.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

In this chapter the results of the systematic review of evaluation reports, international development evaluator questionnaire, and interviews with international development evaluators are presented. The chapter begins with a summary of the characteristics of the units of analysis for each of the three data collections methods. Next, findings related to the key study questions—what are the politics of stakeholder participation in international development evaluations (i.e., who: which stakeholders are included in participatory evaluation approaches, how: in what capacity and in which evaluation stage do they participate, why are participatory evaluation approaches used and in which circumstances do they work best) and what are the consequences of stakeholder participation in international development evaluation (i.e., what are the perceived impacts of participation and what are the challenges associated with their use) —are triangulated based on data from different respondent groups and different data collection methods and presented. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of key findings.

Reports and Respondents

Three data collection methods were used in this study: a systematic review of international development reports, a questionnaire administered to international development evaluators, and follow-up interviews with select questionnaire respondents. In this section, the characteristics of the international development evaluation reports are
reviewed and the questionnaire and interview respondents are presented. Throughout this section, the role of stakeholders in the evaluation process is highlighted and discussed.

Characteristics of Studies Included in the Systematic Review

A systematic review of 102 international development evaluation reports was conducted (Appendix E). The international development evaluation reports comprised a range of 18 countries, 19 multilateral and UN agencies, a regional aid agency (European Union), and joint donors. A full list of the evaluation reports including the type of donor, donor, aid agency, title of evaluation report, sector, subsector, type, and region can be found in Appendix E. Each of the evaluation reports was classified according to a data abstraction form developed for this study. The data abstraction form was developed to determine whether or not the evaluation report was participatory in nature. Of the 102 evaluation reports reviewed, only 5 stated that a participatory evaluation approach was used. However, in 3 of these cases no evidence was provided to verify these assertions. For example, in the executive summary of one evaluation report, it was reported that "The [Mid-term review] MTR has been conducted using a "participatory assessment approach," but in the evaluation methodology section this is not corroborated:

The methodology for the MTR has been based on a review of project related documents, attendance at the First Tripartite Review meeting and interviews with key participants. A bibliography of cited documents and an interview list is contained in appendices A and B. The MTR Report has been informed by UNDP Guidelines for Evaluators in terms of the analysis of specific issues that need to be covered in such a review. The report also addresses questions raised in the MTR Terms of Reference and relies on the Project Document as the baseline for analysis of projected outputs. (Report #75: UNDP)
There is nothing that indicates that stakeholders were included in any capacity beyond a data source (i.e., stakeholders were simply interviewed). The following two examples seem to indicate that the evaluation was participatory because stakeholders engaged in discussions and were interviewed. However, similar to the example above, no evidence is provided that stakeholders participated in any manner further than that of a data source.

The methodology was highly participative, with a total of over 180 people involved in discussions and interviews (see Annex 2). At the end of the in-country mission the consultants presented preliminary results of the evaluation in a workshop attended by representatives of the governments of Finland, Peru and Ecuador together with representatives of UNICEF. (Amazon Project: Promotion of Sustainable Human Development Along the Santiago River: UNICEF)

A participatory approach was adopted for this evaluation and as a part of the process, discussions were held with key project personnel in the UNEP offices in Geneva and Cambridge and other stakeholders to ascertain the degree of attainment of project objectives and outcomes, to assess replicability and sustainability issues, and to identify project benefits and constraints. Web sites of organizations associated with the project were browsed and e-mail consultations were made with a range of stakeholders. The list of those consulted for the project evaluation is given in annex IV. (Barriers and best practices in integrated management of mountains Jan-04 ecosystems: UNEP)

Two evaluation reports went beyond merely stating that a participatory approach was used but also indicated some very basic information about how they participated (i.e., stakeholders were included in every stage of the evaluation and helped to provide feedback and guidance on findings and conclusions). However, the information provided was too sparse to allow the evaluation approach to be correctly classified as participatory.

The team had as one of its objectives to ensure that the approach was as participatory as possible, and made every effort to involve the UNDP staff at every stage of its inquiry. (Country Evaluation: Assessment of Development Results (Mozambique: UNDP)
Throughout the mission, the evaluators held regular meetings with the Environmental Focal Team (see TOR), which provided invaluable feedback and guidance to improve and refine findings and conclusions in an iterative and participatory manner. (Energy and Environment UNDP Bhutan: UNDP)

One evaluation report (Joint Evaluation of Effectiveness and Impact of the Enabling Development Policy of the World Food Programme- Bangladesh Country Study Multi-Project Evaluations: Joint evaluation) did not classify itself as participatory, yet could potentially be considered as such. As is shown in the following excerpt, the evaluation report states that briefing sessions were conducted with staff and donors to "identify issues worth analyzing that may not have emerged during the inception phase and...verify and discuss the preliminary findings of the country staff." If stakeholders are given the opportunity to influence evaluation design (i.e., issues to be analyzed) and/or help analyze data (i.e., verify and discuss findings), this would be considered a participatory evaluation approach. Ultimately, however, too little information was provided in the report to make a definitive conclusion on the participatory nature of this evaluation.

The information collected, although essentially of a qualitative nature, was consolidated to allow a more systematic analysis of the findings. Finally, during the country study, briefing sessions for WFP Country Office staff and donors sponsoring the evaluation were organised. They were designed to inform the different stakeholders about the objectives and approach of the evaluation and to identify issues worth analysing that may not have emerged during the inception phase. The debriefing session served to verify and discuss the preliminary findings of the country study with the WFP Country Office staff. At district and upazilla level, briefing sessions were held to inform the local authorities and politicians on the mission's objectives and to obtain assistance in visiting the sites chosen.

Only one international development evaluation report (Type of donor: Joint evaluation) could be classified using the framework developed for this study. As is seen in the following example, the evaluation report not only states that a participatory
approach was used, but also details which stakeholders participated and how they participated. In this case, stakeholders included funding agency staff, program staff, recipients, non-recipients, and local youth organizations. The evaluation team was guided by a steering group which included representatives of the funding agency, and also held frequent workshops with a variety of stakeholders including recipients who were able to provide feedback on the evaluation team. Moreover, a recipient (in this case, a youth representative) was included in the evaluation team and participated in every stage of the evaluation process (i.e., evaluation design, data collection, data analysis, developing recommendations, reporting of findings, and dissemination of findings).

A participatory approach: The evaluation method was finalised in full consultation with the Evaluation Steering group (which included representatives of UNFPA and IPPF). In order to ensure participation in the evaluation process, a short workshop was convened at the start of each country study to inform stakeholders of the goal, objectives and approach of the evaluation. This introductory workshop enabled participants to undertake a participatory analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints faced by UNFPA country offices and the FPA in promoting the reproductive health and rights of young people. During the country evaluations the teams consulted a wide range of stakeholders using a range of participatory methods.

Young people's involvement in the evaluation process: Young people were consulted throughout the whole country evaluation process. The counterpart organisation studies (see below) held in-depth discussions with young people involved in the UNFPA and FPA country programmes (e.g., peer educators, youth volunteers), users and non-users of UNFPA and IPPF supported projects, and representatives of key youth organisations. Sufficient privacy in interviews and discussions was ensured for young people to share their views, and appropriate times and locations selected to facilitate the full participation of young people. A wide range of young people were consulted, including young people of different ages, gender, socio-economic status, marital status, religion, ethnicity, and locations (e.g., in and out of school, rural/urban). The international teams also met with and interviewed young people involved in UNFPA and FPA programmes; and during the introductory stakeholder workshops, youth representatives had the opportunity to comment on the objectives and approach of the evaluation, as well as
providing insights into the priority issues affecting young people's reproductive health and rights. A young consultant was included as a member of each country team (CT) and participated fully in the country study, including interviews and meetings with young people. A diversity of young people's perspectives on key evaluation issues in each country was thus ensured (albeit drawn heavily from samples of young people who were directly involved in or benefited from UNFPA and IPPF supported programmes).

Sensitivity and transparency: Evaluations can be a very stressful experience for staff and volunteers involved, and the issue of young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights is often sensitive. The experienced international CTs ensured that the evaluation was undertaken in a sensitive and transparent manner. The participatory approach ensured that UNFPA and IPPF Evaluation: Synthesis Report 5 UNFPA and FPA staff and volunteers were consulted at each stage of the process, and that during the country evaluations the team were open to continuous discussion and crosschecking of information.

Of the remaining international development evaluation reports, 52 provided information on the evaluation methodology but they neither claimed to be participatory in nature nor provided any evidence indicating as such. Finally, 42 evaluation reports did not provide any information regarding the evaluation methodology, making it impossible to determine whether the evaluation was participatory in nature.

Overall, only 1% of the evaluation reports reviewed were deemed participatory in nature. Another 1% was likely to be participatory but too little information was provided. Five percent claimed to have used a participatory approach but provided too little information to substantiate this claim. More than half (51%) of the evaluation reports were not participatory based on the information provided. Finally, 41% did not provide any information on the methods and were thus rendered unable to assess.

The systematic review of international development reports revealed that while present, participatory evaluation approaches are as not widespread in development evaluation as the literature suggest. Moreover, the lack of information provided about the evaluation methods in many of these reports makes them virtually impossible to
review. Of the evaluation reports that claimed to use a participatory approach, all but one appeared to use stakeholders as a data source only. If stakeholders are included only as objects of data for an evaluation (i.e., their involvement is limited to discussions, focus groups, or interviews wherein they are providing information about the program to the evaluator and not driving the evaluation itself), the evaluation cannot be considered participatory.

Characteristics of Questionnaire Respondents

The survey process commenced on April 13, 2009 and concluded on July 23, 2009. A total of 186 individuals completed the questionnaire with 151 (81%) individuals completing the Web-based version and 35 (19%) a Microsoft Word version of the questionnaire. The first item of the questionnaire was used to screen respondents, and asked respondents to indicate whether they had experience conducting international development evaluations. In all, 166 respondents (89%) responded affirmatively and the remaining 20 respondents (11%) were directed to the final page of the questionnaire and informed that their participation was not necessary.

Collectively, questionnaire respondents had $1,357 (M = 9.8, SD = 7.6, Mdn = 8)$ years of experience conducting international development evaluations and had conducted $1,412 (M = 11.0, SD= 13.0, Mdn = 5)$ international development evaluations. On average, respondents indicated that $53\%$ ($SD = 32.4, Mdn = 50$) of their time was allocated to evaluation activities.

With regards to their country of origin, respondents to the survey were from 55 countries and 6 continents including: North America (the United States and Canada), Africa (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan,
Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe), Europe (Bulgaria, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom), Asia (Armenia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Pakistan, Palestine, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Uzbekistan), Latin America (Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Haiti, Honduras, and Peru), and Oceana (Australia and New Zealand). The proportion of respondents according to their country of origin are shown in Figure 1.

![Respondents' Continents of Origin](image)

Figure 1. Respondents’ Continents of Origin

As is evidenced in Figure 2, while respondents had experience working in all of the world's regions, Eastern Africa, Western Africa, and Middle Africa were the most frequently reported regions. On the other end of the spectrum, less than 5% of respondents reported international development evaluation experience in Polynesia and Micronesia. In addition to asking respondents about the regions in which they worked,
the questionnaire also probed respondents on the sectors in which they worked. As can be seen in Figure 3, respondents had experience evaluating a wide variety of international development sectors. By far, the most commonly reported sector was community development (64%), health (58%), education (53%), agriculture (48%), and social services (45%). Only 2% of respondents had experience evaluating international development programs in the manufacturing and telecommunications sectors.

Figure 2. Regions Where Respondents Work
Almost half of the respondents were either independent evaluation consultants (27%) or work for INGOs (22%). The remaining respondents worked for multi-lateral aid organizations (10%), governments (8%), (local) NGOs (7%), universities (6%), and bi-lateral aid organizations (5%). 15% of respondents reported that they worked for organizations other than those listed above, such as national and international research institutes and private evaluation firms.

With regards to their familiarity with participatory evaluation approaches, almost all (92%) reported familiarity with participatory evaluation approaches and 8% did not. Of the 147 respondents who reported familiarity with participatory evaluation approaches, 116 (79%) reported that they had experience conducting such evaluations. Respondents reported that, on average, 72% (SD = 26.6, Mdn = 80) of their total international development evaluations had used participatory approaches.
As was extensively discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation, there is quite a bit of variation in how participatory evaluation is conceptualized and operationalized. Therefore, in the questionnaire respondents were not only asked to indicate their familiarity with participatory evaluation approaches but also to describe how they define participatory evaluation. Each definition was assessed using the participatory evaluation framework developed specifically for this study. In other words, each definition was assessed according to which stakeholders participate, the nature of their participation, and in which evaluation phase they participate. In this way, it was possible to document how participatory evaluation approaches are interpreted and practiced by international development evaluators.

Consistent with the findings from the literature review (Estrella et. al, 2000; Cousins, 2003; ONTRAC, 2007), there was extensive variation in how questionnaire respondents defined participatory evaluation approaches. In terms of assessing the definitions, on one end of the spectrum, some respondents provided very complete definitions in that they specifically detailed which stakeholders participate, the nature of their participation, and in which stage of the evaluation they participate. In these cases, it was easy to assess the definitions based on the framework developed for this study. On the other end of the spectrum, definitions were short and didn’t provide sufficient information for assessing whether or not they were participatory. Table 5 displays the frequency of themes within the definitions provided by questionnaire respondents. In the following section, respondents’ definitions of participatory evaluation approaches are assessed using the framework developed for this study.
Table 5
Questionnaire Respondents' Definitions of Participatory Evaluation Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition of participatory evaluation approach</th>
<th>Number of respondents mentioning theme (N = 140)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation phase</td>
<td>100 (71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td>66 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical control</td>
<td>17 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized tools/methods</td>
<td>15 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders more than just a data source</td>
<td>12 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving stakeholders' voice</td>
<td>10 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders just a data source</td>
<td>8 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning about program</td>
<td>8 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity building</td>
<td>7 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>6 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9 (6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluation phase.** For many respondents, participatory evaluation approaches are those where stakeholders participate in all phases of the evaluation. Other respondents identified specific phases in which stakeholder participation indicates a participatory approach as illustrated below:

Evaluation which involves participants, beneficiaries and program staff at multiple stages, but especially in instrument design, findings and recommendations.

It is an approach to evaluation that employs participatory processes and methods where stakeholders are extensively involved in the design, data collection, analysis and identification of recommendations. Writing may be done by external people.

**Stakeholders.** The range of stakeholders included in the definitions varied from “all relevant stakeholder groups” to “as many stakeholder groups as possible” to “beneficiaries.” Within some definitions, respondents specifically stated whom they considered stakeholders, such as “those who have direct or indirect interest in a project,”
“donors, program staff,” and “donors, governemnt., program staff, and recipients.”

Given the differences in how stakeholders were conceptualized by those who provided details, it was difficult to assess those definitions which did not explicitly describe who was meant by stakeholder.

Nature of participation. The nature of stakeholder participation is assessed on two dimensions: technical control of the evaluation process and extent of participation (i.e., consultation versus extensive participation). For some respondents, participatory evaluation approaches are intended to give voice to stakeholders:

Participatory evaluation is designed, implemented and reported in a way that sees stakeholders as important contributors to, and intended users of, the findings. The process ensures that the voice of important stakeholders is heard.

Approaches which give affected persons voice in evaluation, design, implementation, analysis or dissemination.

On a more extreme level, other respondents see participatory evaluation approaches as vehicles for capacity building and even empowerment:

Participation is the in active engagement in the evaluation process, in decision making and access to information, and evaluation resource while building an empowering process

It is a democratic approach [for] examining the values, progress, constraints, and solutions of individuals, groups, or group activities by involving all people. It recognizes and values the subtle contributions of grassroots people, and grass-roots workers plus the communities

Participatory evaluation means involving relevant stakeholders in all stages of the evaluation (e.g. establishing priorities, focusing questions, interpreting data, linking processes to outcomes). It also means building stakeholder capacity for future evaluations. Status and power differences are minimized. Stakeholders are treated as equal. Participatory evaluation also means the evaluation is understandable and meaningful to stakeholders.
On the other end of the participation spectrum, for some respondents participatory evaluation approaches include the involvement of stakeholders but only to a certain degree. Technical control and the final say over the evaluation process lie with the evaluator:

It should not always be taken as a participation of stakeholders at every stage of the evaluation as technical methodology and analysis should be under the control of those who possess the capacity to do so.

Involvement of all stakeholders at all stages of evaluation. In practice, funder has control of evaluation design and has stronger input on recommendations than stakeholders. But stakeholders’ opinion is strongly taken into account when evaluator develops recommendations—particularly in HOW things are done, rather than WHAT is done.

In addition to the themes already mentioned, some respondents defined participatory evaluation approaches according to the use of the definitions referred to specific tools, activities, or methods:

A process by which stakeholders determine how success is defined and measured and undertake the evaluation, facilitated by an evaluator. The evaluation methods build on those used in PRA/RRA.

Involvement of as many stakeholders as possible in design, data collection, analyses, and recommendations to explore the effectiveness and efficiency of the project/program using various PRA and qualitative methods/techniques.

As techniques using instruments such as focus groups, open interviews, structured interviews, others using materials to support their participation (whiteboard, games, tent sites, etc).

Another theme that emerged in the analysis was definitions that explicitly listed the involvement of stakeholders in a capacity more than a mere data source:

Evaluation that involves program participants in the design and implementation of the evaluation, rather than just as sources of data.

Evaluation where beneficiaries/clients participate to some extent in the evaluation, other than merely being interviewees.
Interestingly, particularly in light of the theme addressed above, some of the definitions provided by respondents seemed to only include stakeholders as data sources:

Evaluation that takes into account stakeholders’ opinions.

It’s an evaluation where stakeholders’ ideas, advices and points of view are taken into account, discussed and presented in the findings.

Evaluation that explicitly includes the views of the people directly affected by the program being evaluated.

Questionnaire respondents also reported that learning about the program being evaluated was an integral purpose of participatory evaluation approaches:

Emphasis on learning and changing from evaluation, with all stakeholders—donors, govt., program staff, and recipients equally involved in all phases.

Evaluation in which knowledge sharing and learning are key objectives and activities in the evaluation process and in which the ‘targets’ of the evaluation help define the evaluation issues and interpret the outcomes.

Participatory evaluation is a learning process for the program recipients that helps them and the project to reach desired goals.

Finally, as mentioned previously, some definitions were so vague that they were impossible to assess using the framework developed for this study. In these cases, respondents did not describe which stakeholders groups participate, the nature of their participation, or which stage of the evaluation they participate. Examples of these definitions are presented below:

Heavy stakeholder involvement.

In short, it’s an evaluation that would involve the stakeholders related to the project.

Evaluation done by evaluator and non evaluator.

Participatory approach involves some other staff, not only the evaluator.

Ultimately, analysis of how respondents defined participatory evaluation proved
beneficial in understanding how international development evaluators conceptualize this approach. As was clearly seen in the examples provided above, there is great variation in which stakeholders are included, the phases of the evaluation in which they participate, and how they participate.

Characteristics of Interviewees

Of the 186 respondents who completed the questionnaire, 15 (8%) were identified and asked to participate in a follow up interview designed to probe further into the issues raised in the questionnaire. The interviewees were selected based on their demographic characteristics including country of origin and experience conducting international development evaluations and their experience including stakeholders in the evaluation process; therefore, their selection was based on a criterion sampling process. Collectively, interviewees had a total of 201 years ($M = 14.4$, $SD = 9.9$, $Mdn = 14$) conducting international development evaluations and conducted 188 ($M = 15.7$, $SD = 13.2$, $Mdn = 12$) international development evaluations (see Table 6).
Table 6

Characteristics of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Stakeholder Groups</th>
<th>Extent of Participation</th>
<th>Control of Evaluation Process</th>
<th>Years Evaluation Experience</th>
<th>Number of Evaluations Conducted</th>
<th>Home Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>13</td>
<td>NP</td>
<td>Norway</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>NP</td>
<td>Bolivia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* All responses refer to international development evaluations. The stakeholder groups that typically participate in evaluations are coded as 1 = funding agency staff, 2 = government, 3 = program staff, 4 = recipients, 5 = non-recipients who were positively impacted, 6 = non-recipients who were negatively impacted; extent of participation is rated on a continuum from 1 to 5 with 1 = no participation/consultation only and 5 = extensive participation; control of the evaluation process is rated on a continuum from 1 to 5 with 1 = stakeholder and 5 = evaluator; and NP = answer not provided.

One of the primary purposes of interviewing select questionnaire participants was to probe further on how international development evaluators include stakeholders in both typical and participatory evaluations. While the questionnaire gathered general information on how all respondents define and implement participatory evaluation approaches, the interview protocol was designed to explore themes and patterns that emerged from the questionnaire. Moreover, the interviews were constructed to elicit
specific and detailed examples on the role of stakeholders in participatory evaluation approaches. Having specific examples is important because, in the words of one interviewee, “participation is becoming a buzz word used by donors and evaluators without understanding what it means.”

As part of the interview, interviewees were asked to describe how stakeholders participate in a typical international development evaluation. The following examples illustrate the richness and diversity of interviewees’ experience of including stakeholders in the evaluation process:

Interviewee #15: I am conducting a large evaluation of a 5-year malaria program sponsored by an United Nations agency. I am currently in the process of developing the instruments for the evaluation. The evaluation involves the participation of the government, implementing partners, and local authorities. The results of this evaluation will be used as a baseline for future projects. In other words, the findings won’t just influence the current project but also future projects. I would like to include direct beneficiaries (those receiving malaria services) in the evaluation process but it’s not possible due to logistical reasons. Sudan is a very diverse country. Sure almost all are Muslim, but there are 200 tribes that are very different from each other. In order to have a fully participatory evaluation, there must be people from all of the tribes involved. To be assured of this, you must include representatives of the local authorities. This evaluation is very participatory. The UNDP is accused of not being participatory; they are trying to break this image. Every stakeholder group (with the exception of beneficiaries), for example NGOs, government, implementing partners are involved in all stages of the evaluation process (i.e. evaluation design or data collection).

Interviewee #11: I try to make my evaluations as participatory as possible. My evaluations usually commence along the following lines: a consultancy firm contacts me and there is a lot of initial interaction with them and the donor agency. Sometimes the consultancy agency might also be the implementing agency. In any case, there is lots of upfront interaction about the evaluation design and plan. Once in country, there is lots of interaction with people who implement the project. You need to develop a relationship with them until they feel comfortable sharing information. Unless they feel comfortable, you won’t be able to get your work done, particularly in short time periods. So investment in the cultivation of relationships is very important. Next, I try to touch base
with partner agencies and obviously with beneficiaries. The amount of time with beneficiaries really depends because of a variety of factors such as time constraints due to remote location. Additionally, a lot of time translation is provided by the implementing partner so it is hard to determine how much the implementing partner is filtering and/or guiding the conversation. I really like to have the opportunity to interact with beneficiaries on multiple occasions, but sometimes this isn’t possible. Depending on timing, I can meet with government agencies and additional partner agencies. Usually the evaluation plan is drafted by clients but there is always room for discussion like identifying which countries to visit or which commodities to evaluate. The amount of changes that are made depends on the kind of relationship you develop with the funder. Ultimately, you are concerned with identifying the best way of accomplishing what they want to accomplish. If I see something that doesn’t make sense, I will address that.

Interviewee #12: When I first came to my INGO, the only evaluation policy that existed stipulated that all evaluations had to be participatory. When I saw what they were doing I was very concerned. There was no trustworthiness in the evaluation findings—not much attention given to maintaining objectivity and evaluation staff had very little knowledge about conducting evaluations. The folks who were doing evaluations didn’t have evaluation experience. They simply wanted to empower the poor. Our INGO works in places with substantial economic poverty. Our approach to development is to maximize the empowerment of stakeholders. However, there is a wide gap between what we aim to do and what we actually do. I wanted to know how I could help staff improve their evaluation; so I developed a framework to measure the extent to which stakeholders were involved in the evaluation process. I was interested in getting them to think about patterns in their evaluation process.

Before, the general evaluation approach was to have a workshop with beneficiaries and discuss what kinds of things they would hope to discover through the evaluation. Then they would talk about how they could collect the information. Collection of data was an intuitive process that used brainstorming, not critical thinking. The field staff who conducted the evaluations didn’t question what stakeholders said; rather, they just accepted what they said.

Interviewee #1: Stakeholders from all different levels participate in my evaluations. Some donors want to participate in the evaluation with you. That can be risky because you want to control the evaluation process. Government representatives are also involved to some extent in the evaluation process. I have never had an INGO want to participate in
evaluation, besides from setting it up. Regional or International NGOs
country level research organization and other donors often want to be
included in the evaluation process. At the local level, I like to include
beneficiaries or the people to whom services are rendered, going on
down to general community members, local government, religious
organizations, civic and society organizations. There is a difference in
participation by stakeholder group. The donor is critical one—if they
want to have an external evaluator or not. There may be various levels of
participation before the TOR is issued. I believe that the independence of
the external evaluator is key to get participation from stakeholders. We
need to get away from the donor in order to achieve real independence
and encourage participation.

The most participatory style of evaluation involves stakeholders
evaluating their own project (analyzing an evaluation, designing it,
conducting it). However, I don’t see that happening very often. I have
done a lot of civil society evaluation and they might monitor and evaluate
the progress of their own activities. However, I [have] rarely seen
programs where multiple stakeholders actually run the evaluation.

I’m living in a country where experimental design evaluation approaches
are really big right now. I see lots of debate about experimental design. I
closely followed the recent debates in Cairo where they concluded that
they needed to have a more holistic approach. It’s an interesting
controversy. The archetypes of experimental design are scientists in white
coats who are simply interested in behavior. They always talk about the
treatment of groups, are very standoffish, and only measure things in
terms of behavior. That sort of methodology is in a lot of tension to a
participatory approach. It’s very rigid and rarely allows for any change to
methodology. I think that the responsiveness of evaluators to
methodological flaws is key. You can’t do that with experimental design.

Interviewee #6: South Africa is a very consensus building society. You
need to bring people into the decision-making process. There are no
secrets in the evaluation process because you need to have transparency.
So we always bring stakeholders into the evaluation process. We use a lot
of appreciative inquiry. We ask recipients to tell us their story. Why is the
project important? What makes your heart sing? We don’t give recipients
control of the data collection process because they don’t have the skills.
We do involve recipients in designing instruments. We tell recipients
what sort of information they want to gather and then work
collaboratively with recipients to determine what sort of questions to ask
and how to word it. Then we have recipients role play and actually use
the instruments to see how well they work. We are really impressed with
the quality of the work that the recipients do. They vastly improve the
quality of the evaluation. We also hold findings workshops where we tell stakeholders about the findings of the evaluation. Stakeholders help us work through the findings to see if they make sense or not. Then we charge stakeholders to come up with recommendations based on the findings. We usually work with clearly delineated stakeholder groups. When we hold workshops, we like to have a mix of stakeholders present, i.e., from all stakeholder groups. But we tend to group program staff with program staff, beneficiaries with beneficiaries, and so forth. Sometimes we bring them all together so they can hear what the other groups have to say. If there is a big disparity we will facilitate the ensuing discussion.

Interviewee #6: In all of my evaluations, all conversations are driven by beneficiaries. They own the evaluation process. The evaluator is merely the facilitator. When my INGO goes into a community the first thing it does is conduct a stakeholder analysis. In doing so, we look at key characteristics of the group such as: political (government, chiefs, authorities) and social vulnerability mapping (women, children, gender and age issues). Women are often shy to participate. You need to consider all of these criteria including organizational structures and tradition and culture. The stakeholder analysis then helps us to identify which stakeholders to be included in the evaluation. Of course this needs to be updated because some new stakeholders could have entered the scene after the stakeholder analysis was conducted.

My preferred participatory approach is community participation. It is geared towards community involvement- 80% of the project is done by participants themselves. Program staff are just there to facilitate. In reality, the community owns the process. They have accurate and reliable information and they can urge others to participate if they themselves are involved in the process. Then they present findings to each other. “Downward accountability” is extremely important. Most agencies want and do only top down evaluation approaches.

As can be seen in the excerpts above, each of the interviewees had a different means of including stakeholders in the evaluation process. In the first excerpt, the interviewee detailed an international development program he was in the process of evaluating using a participatory approach. While he stated that the evaluation was very participatory and included the stakeholders from every level were included, he explicitly stated that recipients were not included due to logistical constraints. The second interviewee echoed the difficulty of including recipients in the evaluation process due to
time and logistical constraints. However, the second interviewee was only discussing the difficulty of meeting with recipients, not including them in the evaluation process. In other words, he is often not able to meet with recipients even as a data source in many of his evaluations.

The third interviewee had a strikingly different experience including stakeholders in the evaluation process. When he first came to his organization as head of the evaluation unit, evaluations were conducted exclusively by stakeholders, primarily recipients, and were simply an extension of the program intervention designed to empower and build capacity. While he appreciated the participation of stakeholders in the evaluation process, he believed that the evaluations were not objective and therefore not valid. During his tenure as evaluation director, he worked at enacting measures to help improve the quality of evaluation by moving control of the evaluation process from stakeholder to evaluator.

The remaining three interviewees reported that stakeholders from all levels, particularly recipients, participate in their evaluations of international development programs. Different reasons are cited for why they include recipients (i.e., improving accuracy of findings and cultural appropriateness) in the evaluations process. It is noticeable that only one interviewee reported that stakeholders control all aspects of the evaluation process; the others reported that control is maintained by the evaluator.

Ultimately, the interviews reveal widely differing methods in which to engage stakeholders in the evaluation process. The perspective of the second interviewee is particularly interesting as it helps explain the findings from both the systematic review of international development reports and the questionnaire. There appears to be a group of evaluators who consider including stakeholders as subjects or data sources as a participatory evaluation approach.
Another important finding from the interviews was that, across the board, interviewees reported that the role of stakeholders does not vary much across their evaluations. In other words, they essentially include stakeholders in the same capacity in all of their evaluations. For example, if an evaluator believes a recipient should be included on the evaluation team, he strives to make that happen in all of his evaluations, not simply ones deemed participatory.

Who—Which Stakeholders Participate in International Development Evaluations?

As shown in Figure 4, respondents reported that the following stakeholder groups typically participate in international development evaluations: program staff (82%), recipients (77%), funding agency staff (67%), government (53%), non-recipients who were positively impacted (30%), and non-recipients who were negatively impacted (28%).

![Figure 4. Stakeholders Who Participate in International Development Evaluations](image-url)
Knowing which stakeholders participate is not sufficient; it is critical to identify the phases in which stakeholders participate. Table 7 presents a matrix wherein questionnaire respondents indicated the phases in which stakeholders typically participate in international development evaluations. As is clearly evidenced, program staff are the stakeholder group most frequently included in the evaluation process, and data collection is the evaluation phase with the greatest stakeholder participation. Conversely, non-recipients who were negatively impacted were the stakeholder group least included in the evaluation process, and data analysis has the least amount of stakeholder participation. These findings were corroborated in the interviews. Findings from both revealed that program and funding agency staff were the most likely stakeholders to participate. Moreover, the inclusion of non-recipients, both positively and negatively impacted, was mentioned in only a few instances.
Table 7

Stakeholder Participation in Phases of Typical International Development Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Participant</th>
<th>Evaluation Design</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
<th>Developing Recommendations</th>
<th>Reporting of Findings</th>
<th>Dissemination of Findings</th>
<th>Total Stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding agency staff</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>399 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>281 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program staff</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>638 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipients</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>266 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-recipients (positively impacted)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>78 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-recipients (negatively impacted)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>291 (17%)</td>
<td>413 (24%)</td>
<td>161 (9%)</td>
<td>292 (17%)</td>
<td>266 (15%)</td>
<td>359 (19%)</td>
<td>1,733 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In an attempt to differentiate between the role of stakeholders in participatory evaluation approaches from that of a typical evaluation, questionnaire respondents were asked to respond to a series of questions on the most recent international development evaluation conducted using a participatory approach. The rationale for this line of questioning was that respondents, in having a concrete example on which to draw, would provide a more accurate description.

As can be seen in Table 8, there are no notable differences in which stakeholders participated or the evaluation phases in which they participated from a typical evaluation to one that uses a participatory approach. One possible explanation is that, as reported by interviewees, international development evaluators consistently include stakeholders in the same manner in all of their evaluations. However this explanation is not very likely and seems to represent evaluator ideology about how stakeholders should be included in the evaluation process.

---

1 The idea of asking respondents to report on a specific participatory evaluation, comes from Cousins et al's 1996 survey on participatory evaluation practices of international development evaluators. As it is hard for evaluators to generalize across all of their evaluation experience, it was thought having a specific example on which to draw would yield more specific and perhaps more realistic data.

2 Overall, 84% of the evaluations reported on by respondents took place in 2007, 2008, or 2009, of which 40% were both formative and summative in nature, 26% were summative, and 17% were formative.
Table 8

Stakeholder Participation in Phases of Typical International Development Evaluation Using a Participatory Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Participant</th>
<th>Evaluation Design</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
<th>Developing Recommendations</th>
<th>Reporting of Findings</th>
<th>Dissemination of Findings</th>
<th>Total Stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding agency staff</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>255 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>185 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program staff</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>464 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipients</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>232 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-recipients (positively impacted)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>73 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-recipients (negatively impacted)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>57 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>201 (16%)</td>
<td>282 (22%)</td>
<td>138 (11%)</td>
<td>227 (18%)</td>
<td>191 (15%)</td>
<td>227 (18%)</td>
<td>1,266 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to report problems experienced in using participatory evaluation approaches. Respondents' comments as they relate to which stakeholders participate are presented below:

There is always a question of who is actually participating. Is it the poorest of the poor? The disabled and disempowered? Often it is easier to deal with the accessible poor, especially when time and money constraints are factored in. Also, the NZAID model relies heavily on the ability of in-country partner organisations. If they are unskilled/unable to work with the inaccessible poor, the possibility that those individuals are not accessed increases. Disability is a good gauge in this, as they are often the poorest. However, in my experience, it is usually only those organisations with a particular interest in disability that deal with this aspect of the community (leprosy, blindness, HIV/AIDS etc.)

Powerful stakeholder groups especially donors and governments tend to dominate the process and give more value to their own views and interests.

Donor perspectives as well as programming agency issues often take precedence.

As an evaluation manager, the major problem has been determining who to include and related to this individuals who have some experience and understanding of evaluation so that their participation in the exercise is fruitful.

How—The Nature of Stakeholder Participation

Identifying how stakeholders participate in international development evaluation requires assessing both the extent to which stakeholders participate and who has technical control of the evaluation process. Taken together, these two dimensions reveal the nature of stakeholder participation. There are many different levels of participation. In more participatory evaluation approaches stakeholders would have control of the evaluation process and extensively participate. Conversely, in less participatory evaluation approaches, the evaluator would maintain technical control of the evaluation process and
stakeholders would have more of a consultative role.

Questionnaire respondents were asked to rate who typically has technical control of the evaluation process on a 5 point scale from stakeholder to evaluator. As shown below, respondents largely reported that evaluators typically have control of the decision-making process in international development evaluations ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.08$). Indeed, almost half of the respondents (44%) reported that technical control lies solely with the evaluator. The figure below shows the percentage of responses for each of the 5 points on the continuum.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
\text{Stakeholder} & 3\% & 8\% & 13\% & 32\% & 44\% & \text{Evaluator} \\
\end{array}
\]

When asked to report on technical control using the example of a participatory evaluation, the percentage of respondents reporting that evaluators maintain technical control dropped to 25%, as shown below ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.98$). Clearly, this finding runs contrary to the possible explanation cited above (i.e., evaluators tend to use stakeholders consistently across evaluations). The figure below shows the percentage of responses for each of the 5 points on the continuum.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
\text{Stakeholder} & 3\% & 7\% & 22\% & 43\% & 25\% & \text{Evaluator} \\
\end{array}
\]

Respondents were also asked to rate the extent of stakeholder participation on a 5 point scale from no participation/consultation only to extensive participation. As is evidenced below, the mean score on this item was 3.0 ($SD = 1.2$), or the mid-point for this continuum. While only 8% of respondents reported that stakeholders only consult and do not participate in their international development evaluations, twice as many
(15.4%) reported that stakeholders participate extensively. The figure below shows the percentage of responses for each of the 5 points on the continuum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>None</th>
<th>8%</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>30%</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>31%</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>15%</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>15%</th>
<th>Extensive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Instead of asking respondents to indicate the extent of stakeholder participation using the example of the specific participatory evaluation, the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate the extent of stakeholder participation in each evaluation phase using the example of their most recent participatory evaluation. In this way, it was possible to see how the extent of participation varied from evaluation phase. As is seen in Table 9 data collection had the highest mean score (3.82), followed by dissemination of findings (3.52) and developing recommendations (3.31). On the other end of the participatory spectrum, data analysis (2.57) and evaluation design (2.88) had the lowest mean scores on this item.

Table 9

Extent of Stakeholder Participation in Each Evaluation Phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation design</th>
<th>No participation/Consultation only</th>
<th>Extensive participation</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why—Why Are Participatory Evaluation Approaches Used and in which Circumstances Do They Work Best?

One of the objectives of this study was to determine why participatory evaluation approaches are used and in which circumstances they work best. In the section of the questionnaire on the specific participatory evaluation project, respondents were asked to report why a participatory approach was utilized. As shown in Figure 5, almost half (45%) of all respondents reported that doing so was most appropriate for the evaluation. Interestingly, more than one-third (34%) reported that they always use participatory evaluation approaches. Finally, 17% of respondents indicated that the client specifically requested the use of a participatory evaluation approach and 4% did not know why it was used.

![Figure 5. Reason for Using Participatory Evaluation Approach](image-url)
As part of the questionnaire, respondents were also asked if there are particular circumstances in which participatory evaluation approaches work best. There was a wide range of responses to this item that reveal the diversity in thinking and practice with participatory evaluation approaches. Table 10 displays the frequency of responses reported by respondents.

Table 10

Circumstances in which Participatory Evaluation Approaches Work Best According to Questionnaire Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circumstances</th>
<th>Number of respondents mentioning theme (N=99)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders included in evaluation process from the beginning</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders involved in project being evaluated</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor support</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducive environment</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient time</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory evaluation approaches are always appropriate</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation is formative</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some respondents reported that participatory evaluation approaches work best when stakeholders have been included in the evaluation process from the beginning. In other words, it is difficult to conduct a truly participatory evaluation when stakeholders are only brought on board at the later stages of an evaluation such as data collection. In this way, if stakeholders have an active role from determining what questions are asked to how the data are analyzed, the evaluation findings will have more meaning for them and they will be more likely to use the findings.
Having stakeholders involved in the initial discussions about the evaluation is best rather than doing all the thinking and bringing them in later to rubber stamp it. Ideally, stakeholders would suggest or generate the areas that should be examined or at least some of them so that they feel that they are also getting something out of the process as well. Also, ensuring that there is a clear understanding of how the data will eventually be used or timing it to a budget process etc. so that there is clear end-use of the findings.

In situations where stakeholders were involved from the start, from conceptualization of the project to implementation.

Another theme that emerged was if stakeholders had been actively involved in the project being evaluated, a participatory evaluation approach would work well:

Where the stakeholders had owned the vision of the outcomes and impact, and especially working on the perspectives of sustainability from day one of the project.

When they are part of the project design from the start and not something that is added on later to satisfy evaluation needs.

The support of donors or evaluation client was also mentioned by questionnaire respondents. Having donor support, in terms of financial and time resources, logistical support, and commitments to the participatory process, is critical to the success of a participatory evaluation approach.

With an administratively flexible donor is interested in developmental outcomes as much as project results. When outcomes are as important to the project as their outputs.

When the commissioning body (usually the funding agencies and staff, sometimes government or implementing NGO) has a good understanding of why doing a participatory evaluation and related benefits and are really willing to carry out one.

On a related note, another common theme that emerged from data analysis was having an environment conducive to supporting the interaction of stakeholder groups. For several respondents, this meant that stakeholder groups were on good terms and that there was no conflict.
When there is a good relationship between the project staff and all the others actors. When the government is part of the team, that makes contact of officials very easy. When there is a common understanding of the TOR of the evaluation. When the project team is willing to cooperate. If the stakeholders have been prepared for the evaluation process (availability, open mind).

As has already emerged in several other sections of this chapter, having sufficient time was cited by numerous respondents as being critical for the successful implementation of a participatory evaluation approach. This is particularly true for those respondents who reported that stakeholders need to be included in the evaluation from the beginning.

When there is enough time to manage it...most USG evaluation SOWs don't allow it.

If there is time (and budget) to truly engage in discussions.

Other respondents reported that they feel that participatory evaluation approaches are appropriate and work well all of the time. These respondents reported that stakeholder participation isn't something that should be reserved for particular cases, but rather something that should be incorporated in all evaluations.

They are essential in all cases, in my view. The question in each case is, what type and extent of participation is necessary?

I think they should always be combined with quantitative methods, just as quantitative methods should always be joined with a participatory portion.

Including additional people in the evaluation process opens the door for complications and the identification of emerging issues. Some respondents commented on the need to have flexibility to respond appropriately to both problems and the additional complications of including more stakeholders.

When the design is flexible and can incorporate learning from these evaluations.
When there is no prior agenda set by donors or the agencies. For a fully participatory approach there must not be pre-set evaluation questions and methods. There needs to be flexibility and openness.

Perhaps most interestingly, another theme that emerged was that participatory evaluation approaches work best when the evaluation is formative in nature. Several respondents reported that the stakes are too high for summative evaluations to allow for a participatory evaluation approach. This theme also emerged in the interviews where interviewees went even further saying that internal evaluators are much better suited than external evaluators for using participatory evaluation approaches.

Where the main goal is to improve the program, rather than to generate supposedly “objective evidence of impact (or the lack thereof).”

Where buy-in is needed and where evaluations are formative or strategic.

Finally, there were also a number of responses that were unique could not be classified. Examples of these types of responses are provided below.

In limited, focused evaluations (e.g. one particular aspects of a project)

In health programmes particularly child survival issues.

In case of successful operations

What—What are the Perceived Impacts of Participatory Evaluation Approaches?

As discussed extensively throughout this study, particularly in the second chapter, the use of participatory evaluation approaches is rather contentious. Proponents of their use cite many benefits such as increased empowerment and capacity building of stakeholders. Critics of participatory evaluation approaches cite those two specific examples of why participatory evaluation approaches should not be utilized. Ultimately,
understanding evaluators' perceptions of the consequences of participatory evaluation approaches will help answer the question of why they are used.

Survey respondents were asked to report their perceived impacts of the use of participatory evaluation approaches (see Table 11). Responses to this item were striking: 93% of respondents reported that the use of a participatory evaluation approach increased the usefulness of evaluation findings and correspondingly the use of evaluation findings (88%). A large proportion (88%) reported that their use increased the empowerment of stakeholders and 87% reported they increased stakeholder buy-in.

In terms of negative impacts, participatory evaluation approaches were reported to increase financial (58%) and time (69%) constraints. A few respondents (9%) reported that the use of a participatory evaluation approach decreased validity. Two surprising negative impacts listed by respondents were a reduction in fairness (5%) and stakeholders' technical research skills (3%).

Table 11
Perceived Impacts of Participatory Evaluation Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>impact</th>
<th>Decreased</th>
<th>No Change</th>
<th>Increased</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of evaluation findings</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>92.8%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment of stakeholders</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>88.3%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of evaluation findings</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy-in</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>86.5%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder's technical research skills</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time constraints</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social change</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial constraints</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To probe further into these issues, interviewees were asked to describe in greater details their perceived impacts of a participatory evaluation approach. In the following section, their perspectives are shared beginning with perceived positive impacts and followed by perceived negative impacts.

By far the most frequently cited positive impact of participatory evaluation approaches was a perception that they increased validity. According to interviewees, stakeholder participation helps ensure that the evaluation uses relevant data and accurately reflects the needs of stakeholders:

We usually need to use participatory approaches in international development evaluation because most of the time, the programme design was done by technicians alone in their corner without having taken into account stakeholders’ views. An evaluation is usually conducted either at the mid-course or at the end of a programme so stakeholders’ views are more than important in order to know what did really happen and why it happened that way according to those who lived the programme from inside.

Unless the beneficiaries are consulted early in the process and involved in discussions about their views of the program/topic being evaluated, it is very difficult to design instruments that collect pertinent information.

It helps me get better information and helps with the subsequent analysis. The principle behind stakeholder participation is that people hold their own knowledge. In most development evaluation we treat beneficiaries like animals, like they don’t know anything.

Another positive impact frequently cited by interviewees was facilitation of the evaluation process. Interviewees reported that including relevant stakeholders make it easier to collect and access data, use local resources, and reduce dependence on hiring consultants:

If you bring people into the evaluation process the evaluation process will be greatly facilitated. There will be better data. It will be more valid
and sound, in that it reflects what they think, more complete because they have a stake in the evaluation process. So, there will be less time spent in data management.

Capacity building was another positive impact reported in the interviews. Many interviewees reported that participatory evaluation approaches help develop the stakeholders’ evaluation skills. Indeed, some interviewees reported that it was one of their objectives to help build capacity and that they didn’t care if they crossed the line with implementation:

Participation enables stakeholders to assess the program results with various viewpoints and criteria. They see and hear the same things the evaluator is seeing and hearing which helps them come to the same conclusions and act upon the recommendations. Perhaps, more importantly, they learn how and why to do evaluations.

USAID has a subsidiary objective, they’re capacity builders. They always try to do capacity building because they think that it is a good impact from the evaluation. Thus, one of my objectives of including stakeholders is to develop their capacity. Some people think that you blur the lines by doing so, but I say “yes, we are doing capacity building!” Stakeholders should learn about evaluation and how to do it well. And frankly it is my role to facilitate their development in evaluation. I respect stakeholders’ knowledge and want to help build their capacity. I feel they must develop this capacity.

For a few interviewees, participatory evaluation approaches help resolve fairness issues, contribute to their empowerment, and facilitate transparency. For these interviewees, stakeholder participation in the evaluation process is viewed as an ideology:

For Pragmatic reasons: Problem solving rationale; instrumentality; enhance evaluation utilization. For Political reasons: Democratic rationale; amelioration of social inequity; enhance self-determinism; emancipatory/empowerment focus. For Philosophic reasons: Epistemological rationale; deepen understanding of meaning; constructivist focus (survey).

It is a basic human right to be much more than a subject in evaluations which affect the target population’s welfare. They live with the product. And it enhances validity, as well as their incidence in defining their own future.
For downward accountability: very often we only think of accountability to the donor on how the money is spent efficiently and effectively forgetting that those who are beneficiaries especially have a say on how they felt about the program or project delivery.

Interestingly, as compared to the questionnaire findings, only a few interviewees reported that participatory evaluation approaches increase the use of evaluation findings:

I usually use participatory approaches to evaluation in order to ensure that the perspectives of the various stakeholder groups are accounted for (not only that of the evaluator and other powerful groups i.e. donors, government, etc.) and that they will use the results of the evaluation since they then have meaning to them.

Overall, as noted on page 109 and in Table 11, there were far fewer reports of the negative impacts of participatory evaluation approaches than there were reports of positive impacts. Still, a number of negative impacts were discussed and are presented in the following section.

Consistent with the questionnaire findings, the time and financial constraints of participatory evaluation approaches were frequently mentioned by the interviewees. Interviewees reported that it takes time to coordinate to bring all relevant stakeholders together and, in particular, to come to a consensus. However, such constraints were not only listed as negative impacts of participatory evaluation approaches. Indeed, several interviewees reported that time and financial constraints precluded the use of participatory evaluation approaches:

Donors and NGOs talk about using participatory approaches; however, participation is usually minimal due to costs and time constraints. Findings are usually less rigorous because sample size decreases substantially due to funding and time constraints.

Many evaluations are slap-dash and are usually put together as an afterthought. People just don't think about evaluation beforehand. They try to do too much in too short of a time period. The amount of time in the field is almost laughable. It is impossible to think that you could have any genuine participation of stakeholders in the evaluation process. The more people you include in evaluations, the more complicated it
becomes. If you involve everyone in the process it takes more time and money.

Evaluations are often for a set period of time say 3-4 weeks. Stakeholders who are invited to participate often have no experience with evaluation. There is often no time allowed to bring them up to speed. They also often have trouble with data analysis and writing to a high standard of English as required by the donor. They are often not involved in the initial design of the evaluation and normally join the team after the work has been done and as a result they really don't understand why it is being done which is often to fulfill internal reporting requirements.

Decreased validity was the other most frequently reported negative impact of participatory evaluation approaches:

I have also struggled with accuracy as a problem with participatory evaluation approaches. Sometimes people report something that I know is not true. However, because all stakeholders agree on the issue, I have to go by what they say.

I do experience some criticism from people who are worried about reduced validity. But I try to go over the evaluation process with them so that they understand. Even if validity is reduced I think that it is worth the risk.

In addition to discussing the negative impacts of participatory evaluation approaches, interviewees also detailed problems with their use. These problems are discussed in detail in the following section.

**What—What are the Challenges Associated with the Use of Participatory Evaluation Approaches as Reported by Respondents?**

Even those evaluators who are strong advocates of and consistently use participatory evaluation approaches encounter problems when using them. Understanding the potential problems can help international development evaluators be better prepared and plan accordingly. In this section, problems with participatory evaluation approaches
identified in both the questionnaire and interviews with respondents are discussed. Recommendations for overcoming these problems as well as conducting participatory evaluation approaches are also presented.

As part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to identify challenges to utilizing participatory evaluation process (see Table 12). More than one-third of the respondents indicated that the time consuming nature of participatory approaches was very challenging and an additional 39% reported that they were often challenging. Reconciling power issues was considered challenging (both very and often) by 73% of respondents. On the other hand, one-fifth of respondents indicated that determining which stakeholders to include was not at all challenging.

Table 12
Reported Challenges to Using Participatory Evaluation Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all Challenging</th>
<th>Somewhat Challenging</th>
<th>Often Challenging</th>
<th>Very Challenging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determining which stakeholders to include</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determining how stakeholders will participate</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power issues</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of stakeholder expertise</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time consuming</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To probe further into this issue an item in the questionnaire asked respondents to discuss problems experienced with using participatory evaluation approaches. Table 13 displays the frequency of responses for this question.
Table 13
Problems Using Participatory Evaluation Approaches as Reported by Questionnaire Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems cited</th>
<th>Number of respondents mentioning theme (N=97)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donor dominance</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time constraints</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power issues</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicting priorities</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of expertise</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questionnaire respondents reported that donors and clients impede the use of participatory evaluation approaches in that they try to control the evaluation by “cherry-picking” stakeholders to participate, trying to stifle negative findings, and “overpowering weak stakeholders.”

Donor agency not wanting to accept the critical views expressed by beneficiaries of the intervention—another problem is that a commissioning agency may use the rhetoric of participation and call for an evaluation to be participatory, but not really provide the resourcing for this—this is very challenging to deal with.

Project managers and partners deliberately selecting community members and other stakeholders who have had favorable experiences with the project and will only say favorable things. Field coordinators not understanding or disregarding guidelines and not planning or implementing activities as requested (because participatory approaches are more complex than simply passing out surveys. They take shortcuts so as to simplify the process and compromise the integrity and validity of the evaluation).

When a participatory evaluation is conducted, it is usually at the demand of the donor (most cases in developing countries). So stakeholders’ participation is often considered as a masquerade because they know that very often what they would say will not be taken into account in the decision process following the evaluation, that it will be “always” the donor’s views that would matter.
Time and financial constraints were cited as an obstacle to using participatory evaluation approaches. Questionnaire respondents reported that the use of participatory evaluation approaches require significant time and financial resources in order to bring stakeholders together.

Clients are rarely willing to invest the time and money necessary for a truly participatory approach.

Harmonizing and aligning the different perspectives of a range of stakeholders Very time consuming - call for patience, working within the ever changing schedules of various stakeholders; this sometimes has a cost implication

Arranging appropriate time for all stakeholders is challenging. Bringing all stakeholders at a time is very challenging.

Power issues were another reported challenge of participatory evaluation approaches. As one interviewee reported, “I almost always have problems with power issues. In any culture, poor people do not hob knob with ministry people and literate people as they do in participatory evaluation approaches.” Trying to get stakeholders from different socio-economic groups to participate collaboratively can be extremely challenging.

Another problem I experience is with senior and more experienced people dominating. Younger people without power tend to keep quiet as they are afraid to participate. Power issues are problems for all evaluations but they are particularly problematic for participatory evaluations. This is because participatory evaluations tend to bring all stakeholders together to discuss issues. In regular evaluations, stakeholders can be met with one on one to get their perspective.

When I hold workshops, I like to have a mix of stakeholders present, i.e., from all stakeholder groups. But I tend to group program staff with program staff, beneficiaries with beneficiaries, and so forth. Sometimes I bring them all together so they can hear what the other groups have to say. If there is a big disparity I will facilitate the ensuing discussion. The biggest challenge they have is getting older women from lower classes to talk. So we have focus groups facilitated by an older woman to overcome that problem.
On a related issue, lack of stakeholder expertise/capacity, particularly illiteracy, makes participatory evaluation approaches difficult. Evaluation instruments have to be designed in alternative formats if stakeholders are illiterate. Several respondents reported that they build workshops on conducting evaluations into the evaluation plan to “bring stakeholders up to speed.”

I usually send a draft of the evaluation report to the stakeholders. However, it is difficult because they are very oftentimes illiterate so they can’t read the report. So it is very difficult to identify which stakeholders are capable of participating.

The level of expertise of the stakeholders comes into play as well (literacy plays a part in this as well). Ultimately, their level of participation depends on their ability.

It is very difficult to work with illiterate and uneducated stakeholders.

Reconciling conflicting opinions and priorities of different stakeholder groups was another theme that emerged. Having additional people in the evaluation process introduces new questions of interest and opportunities for conflict.

Sometimes there are differences in the opinions within the evaluation team about the importance or the mandate, or whether the project has really followed their mandate. Surprising!

Some stakeholders are interested in seeing changes in other areas which might not be the focus of the project (e.g., government often has its own priorities or political interest); some other participate only to get per diem and lose interest if no money is being paid to them; beneficiaries/clients are not self confident enough to argue with other educated people or challenge their views thus consenting on everything.

Finally, there were some responses that were so ambiguous that they were not able to be classified. Examples of these types of responses are provided below.

Provided wrong idea that the program was being really evaluated

Presentation of the data in a systematic way

Not very well known, neither by stakeholders or evaluation commissioners
Numerous questionnaire respondents and interviewees not only identified problems but also provided recommendations on how to conduct participatory evaluation approaches. The frequency of these responses is not provided because the recommendations below represent all of the recommendations provided by respondents. This section concludes with these recommendations.

Understanding the local context and stakeholders was identified as very beneficial. Taking the time to learn about local traditions and practices will help facilitate the evaluation process as it will allow for greater stakeholder buy-in.

There is an ancient Chinese proverb—When you are in the community do as the community. Eat like them, behave like them. When you go in consider it a learning process. Don’t go and tell them what degrees you have. Don’t act like you are smarter than them. Go thinking you will learn from them. Local people can teach you too. Give and take of knowledge.

Know your context. The extent to which participatory evaluation approaches will work ultimately depends on the regional context. In Africa, people like to work with NGOs and are very easy to mobilize. In Asia, people want to be paid to do anything. They are very difficult to include in evaluation work. If you pay people it can be expensive. If you cook for people it can be both expensive and time consuming. One thing you need to avoid is raising peoples’ expectations. If you keep coming to a community they might think that they are going to get something from you (e.g., some new project or funding).

Get to know the institutions with whom you are working in order to know who the stakeholders are. Not all stakeholders are the same.

On a related note, ample time for planning helps ensure that evaluators understand the local context and that stakeholders have time to participate.

Plan the evaluation activity well in advance and encourage the stakeholders to put the evaluation activity in their operational calendar. However, this will not always work.

I have always loved to ensure that enough information be provided before I move to the field. I always try to know the background of the
different stakeholders and also to know how involved they have been in the process. Sometimes different methods are used in different settings following their cultural backgrounds. There are some cultures in which women, men and children do not sit together to discuss in the same room.

Finally, making sure and facilitating buy-in to the participatory process helps ensure that all stakeholders are committed to the evaluation. Some respondents reported that that the time spent “upfront getting everyone on the same page is well worth the effort.”

Primary focus should be on buy in of the evaluation process- it will greatly improve the facilitation and relevance of evaluation.

Educate, educate, educate. It takes time to convince external audiences that participatory evaluations can provide valid and reliable data. Much time is spent to create this awareness, one thing useful is to show the cost savings and the increased buy in.

Summary of Key Findings

The results of this study suggest that there is no common understanding of what is meant by participatory approaches to international development evaluation. Indeed, how participatory evaluation approaches are defined and practiced varies widely. In general, program staff and recipients are the stakeholder groups that are included most frequently in participatory evaluation approaches. Of all the evaluation phases, stakeholders participate most in data collection and least in data analysis. Stakeholders have more technical control over the evaluation process in participatory evaluation approaches than in typical evaluations. The extent of stakeholder participation is most extensive for data collection and dissemination of findings. Stakeholder participation in data analysis and evaluation design tends to be a more consultative nature. Participatory evaluation approaches work best in formative evaluations, when the program being evaluated was
also participatory in nature, and when conducted by internal evaluators.

Many positive and negative impacts of participatory evaluation approaches were identified. According to respondents, participatory evaluation approaches increase validity, facilitate the evaluation process, develop stakeholder capacity, promote fairness, and help increase evaluation use. Negative impacts identified include increased time constraints and decreased validity. Challenges to the use of participatory evaluation approaches include donor dominance of the evaluation process, power dynamics, lack of stakeholder expertise, and competing stakeholder priorities. Recommendations for conducting participatory evaluation approaches include understanding the local context, allowing sufficient time for planning, and facilitating buy-in to the evaluation process.

The next and final chapter of this study will discuss these findings in further detail as well their implications. The chapter will present the limitations of this study and describe areas for future research.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS

Up to this point, this dissertation has been concerned with documenting what's so? As such, this study has been designed to document current practice in participatory approaches to international development evaluation. The preceding chapter detailed who (i.e., which stakeholders) are involved in participatory evaluation approaches, how (i.e., in what capacity and to what extent) they participate, when (i.e., under what circumstances do they work best), why are participatory evaluation approaches used and in which circumstances do they work best, and what are the consequences of their use. This final chapter deals with the most important question in evaluation: so what? The importance of the study’s findings is discussed with regards to their implications to the field of international development evaluation. The chapter is divided into three sections. The chapter begins with a discussion of key findings from this study. Next, the limitations of this research are discussed and presented. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

Discussion of Key Findings

Perhaps the most significant finding of this study is the confirmation that participatory evaluation approaches are interpreted and practiced in widely differing ways. On the surface, that finding might not seem very substantial. However, given the great debates over the use of participatory evaluation approaches, it presents potentially interesting implications. For example, without a common understanding of what is meant by
participatory evaluation, how can the merits or demerits of such approaches be legitimately debated?

Throughout the course of this study, it was apparent that there are more differences than commonalities in how participatory evaluation approaches are implemented. For some evaluators, participatory evaluations involve the extensive participation of all stakeholder groups (from donor to non-recipients) in every phase of the evaluation (from design to dissemination). For others, the participation of donors in the design constitutes a participatory evaluation approach.

As the debates over the consequences of participatory evaluation rage on, the question of the relevance of these debates emerges. One of the biggest complaints waged by critics is that participatory evaluation approaches lose objectivity and, even more troubling, lose validity via the inclusion of stakeholders. However, according to the majority of international development evaluators who participated in this study, evaluators maintain control of the evaluation process. Another argument is that participatory evaluation approaches cross the line into intervention when empowerment and capacity building become objectives. Interestingly, only a few respondents listed empowerment and capacity building as objectives of their participatory evaluation approach. If empowerment and capacity building are side effects that result from participatory evaluation approaches, should that be considered problematic?

Perhaps most interesting is the rather common practice of evaluators referring to interviewing stakeholders (recipients, government officials, implementing partners) as participatory evaluation. This view treats the notion of participation as essentially sources of information or data (i.e., they become informants rather than true participants). This phenomenon emerged in the systematic review of evaluation reports, questionnaire, and follow up interviews with evaluators. This begs the question if such evaluators do not
even interview or interact with stakeholders to any extent in non-participatory evaluations.

As mentioned in Chapter II of this dissertation, participatory evaluation approaches are best considered on a continuum. In other words, there are many gradations to participation and evaluations should be classified accordingly. Some authors (Rebien, 1996; Daigneault & Jacob, S., 2009) have called for the use of minimum thresholds for participation on these continuums. Given that there are multiple dimensions to participation (e.g., stakeholder group, evaluation phase, control of decision-making, extent of participation), determining precise thresholds can be very complicated.

However, there is a strong argument for the inclusion of a single criterion that must be met if an evaluation is to be considered participatory: Are stakeholders included as more than simple data sources? This criterion alone would not be sufficient for ultimate determination of participation. It would however be the minimum necessary condition to be considered participatory. For example, the first step in assessing if evaluations are participatory would be to determine if stakeholders were more than data sources. If that minimum criterion is not met, there would be no need to assess the evaluation on the other dimensions.

Throughout the course of this study it became clear that the lack of a common understanding of participatory evaluation was problematic. For example, numerous respondents reported that donors call for participatory evaluations but provide no explanation of what specific activities that entails. In the systematic review of a sample of international development evaluation reports, several evaluation reports clearly stated that they used a participatory evaluation approach yet provided no evidence to support such claims. In several instances, it seemed as if stakeholders were only included as data
sources yet the evaluation was labeled participatory. Has participation become a buzz word that evaluators are eager to assign to their evaluations but, in reality, has no significance?

The most frequently cited problem associated with the use participatory evaluation approaches was increased time constraints. Respondents reported that the participation of stakeholders significantly increased the amount of time it took to conduct evaluations. From introducing new logistical constraints from the addition of more individuals to reconciling different priorities of stakeholders, participatory evaluation approaches are time consuming. However, even though donors frequently call for the use of participatory evaluation approaches, they don't seem to recognize the additional time demands of such approaches. Numerous respondents reported that the TORs and SOWs with their corresponding pre-established questions and expected data collection methods issued by donors do not allow for participatory evaluation approaches.

Donor dominance of the evaluation process was another important finding of this study. Respondents reported that the prescribed SOWs for international development evaluations do not allow for flexibility in the evaluation process. More troubling are the reports of donors trying to interfere with evaluation findings by “cherry picking” stakeholders with positive impacts to trying to dominate less powerful stakeholders to, most troubling, trying to stifle negative findings. Such environments or perspectives are not at all conducive to conducting any evaluation with integrity, regardless of the level of participation of stakeholders.

The findings of this dissertation underscore the importance of clarity and the need for details when discussing participatory evaluation approaches. Evaluators proposing to engage in a participatory evaluation approach should be prepared to answer
the following questions. Which stakeholders will be included in the evaluation? In what capacity will they participate? In what evaluation phases will they participate? Who will maintain technical control over the decision making process? The answers to these questions will help ensure that both evaluators and clients have a shared common understanding of the nature of participation.

The findings from this dissertation fit well with the body of literature on participatory evaluation. First, consistent with the literature (Estrella et al., 2000; Cousins, 2003), there were widely varying definitions of what is meant by participatory evaluation. Recall the 2003 quote from Cousins presented in Chapter II:

Participatory evaluation (PE) turns out to be a variably used and ill-defined approach to evaluation that, juxtaposed to more conventional forms and approaches, has generated much controversy in educational and social and human services evaluation. Despite a relatively wide array of evaluation and evaluation-related activities subsumed by the term, evaluation scholars and practitioners continue to use it freely often with only passing mention of their own conception of it. There exists much confusion in the literature as to the meaning, nature, and form of PE and therefore the conditions under which it is most appropriate and the consequences to which it might be expected to lead. (p. 245)

The definitions provided by respondents in this study varied not only in terms of quality but, more importantly, in what they described. For some evaluators, participatory evaluation is one where stakeholders are consulted during the evaluation process. For other evaluators, participatory evaluation is an approach where non-evaluator stakeholders are actively involved in all evaluation phases and retain technical control of the evaluation process. The results of this study have shown that the confusion that Cousins refers to is apparent in international development evaluation. Ultimately, understanding these differences is important because they demonstrate the lack of shared understanding about participatory evaluation.
Comparing the findings from this study to Cousins, Donohue, and Bloom's 1996 study on participatory evaluation in Canada and the United States reveals strong commonalities. While many of the specific questions in the Cousins et al study differed from this present study, there are points of comparison. The findings from both studies indicate that evaluators largely maintain technical control of the evaluation decision-making process. In the present study, program staff was identified as the stakeholder group with the highest reported participation in the evaluation process. In the Cousins' study, such fine distinctions were not made. Rather, that study reported that those connected to the program—developers, managers, funders, and implementers—had the highest reported participation. Finally, both studies found high levels of stakeholder participation in the data collection phase.

The findings from this study also side well with Rebien (1996) who argues that one of the necessary criteria for an evaluation to be considered participatory is that stakeholders are included as more than a mere data source. Information gathered from the systematic review of evaluation reports, questionnaire, and interviews demonstrated that many evaluators classify evaluations as participatory even if stakeholders have had a limited role (i.e., consultation or providing data). Classifying these types as participatory seems to be contradictory of the true intent of participatory evaluations.

Daigneault and Jacob's (2009) new participatory measurement instrument is promising and certainly a much needed addition. However, the findings from this dissertation raise questions as to its reliability and thus validity. The authors provide some guidance on what constitutes each level of the continuum in the coding scheme. The level of detail is somewhat ambiguous and that introduces concerns that ratings might not be consistent across raters. This could be easily remedied with the inclusion of more specific guidance for each level.
Finally, the findings from this study demonstrate that the vast majority of participatory approaches to international development evaluation tend to be more conservative than radical. While much of the debate surrounding participatory evaluation focuses on more radical approaches such as empowerment evaluation, this study shows that those types of approaches are the exception in international development evaluation. This study underscores the importance of precision and specificity in detailing how participatory evaluation approaches are operationalized and implemented in order to accurately discuss their merits and demerits.

Ultimately, each study makes incremental contributions to the field. Taken together they help improve evaluation theory and practice. This dissertation presents the findings of a study that was conducted to document current practice in participatory approaches to international development evaluation in order to help improve evaluation practice.

Limitations

Despite the high level of time and work spent planning and conducting this study, this dissertation has numerous limitations. The biggest limitation of this study is the lack of certainty that respondents are representative of the population of international development evaluators. Questionnaire respondents were recruited through posting on evaluation listservs, e-mails sent to international evaluation association members, contact with heads of monitoring and evaluation directors of INGOs and bi-lateral and multi-lateral aid organizations, and personal contacts. Great effort was taken to ensure that news about the study was distributed to as wide of an audience as possible in order to increase the diversity of respondents as well as to maximize the number of respondents. Interested individuals contacted the researcher and expressed interest in participating.
At worst, findings from the survey sample questionnaire might only be generalizable to those with similar characteristics as respondents. As respondents self-selected to participate in the survey sample questionnaire, they demonstrated (i) an interest in sharing their opinion and (ii) that they monitor professional listservs and/or are in contact with international development agencies. They may not share the same opinions and experiences as the larger international development evaluator community. The same limitation applies to interviews with international development evaluators. That is, findings are limited to those individuals who responded to the survey sample questionnaire. In other words, however useful the insights of the interviewees may be, the findings may not be generalized to the entire population of international development evaluators.

An additional limitation related to the questionnaire and interviews is that these reflect merely respondents' perceptions, perspectives, and opinions. While understanding how international development evaluators perceive participatory evaluation approaches is important, they do not take the place of empirical studies that research the impact of participatory evaluation approaches.

A limitation of the systematic review is that it is essentially a review of evaluation reports and not the evaluations themselves. In other words, what is stated in the report might not reflect what took place in the actual evaluation. Another serious limitation is that these evaluation reports are only representative of the population from which they were drawn. In this case, the population is publicly available international development evaluations in 2004. There might be numerous evaluation reports that, for one reason or another, were not made publicly available. Understandably, this greatly reduces the generalizability of the findings from the systematic review. However, it should be stated that this review was intended to provide additional insight into participatory evaluation
approaches in international development evaluations. In other words, this review represents only one snapshot, and taken in isolation it does little to deepen understanding. However, when combined with the other data collection methods used in the study it helps to provide a more complete picture of current practices in participatory evaluation approaches in international development evaluations. While some might question the use of evaluation reports that date back to 2004, this is only a minor limitation because information gathered from the systematic review was triangulated with a more current view from the perspective of current practitioners obtained from the interviews. Finally, the major limitation of the systematic review was the limited number of reports reviewed as well as the limited number of reports that were classified as participatory. A better way of handling the systematic review would have been to begin with a larger pool, filtering for participatory evaluations, and then sampling from among the participatory evaluations.

Despite the limitations of the individual approaches, the combination of all three data collection methods provides a much more accurate portrayal of current practice and consequences of participatory approaches in international development evaluations. Taken together, these methods reduce the weaknesses and biases of the individual methods.

Future Research

Some of the limitations and lessons learned from this study gave rise to ideas for improving future research into participatory approaches to international development evaluation. In the following section, these suggestions are presented and discussed.

Before conducting future studies on participatory evaluation approaches to international development evaluation, the framework used to classify such approaches
should be revised. First, two of the stakeholder groups (taxpayers and political supporters) were not relevant for the international development context and should thus be removed. Second, including a new stakeholder group, local NGOs (civil society organizations in the countries and communities where development projects take place), would be a worthwhile addition as numerous respondents indicated that such stakeholders participate in their evaluations. Third, the extent of participation of stakeholders and technical control of the evaluation process should be assessed for each evaluation phase. The findings from this study revealed that the extent of participation varies by stakeholder group and evaluation phase. This revision will provide greater insight into the nature of stakeholder participation throughout all phases of the evaluation process. Fourth, and finally, the framework should include a minimum screening criterion for determining if an evaluation is participatory: Are stakeholders included as more than a data source? If the answer to this question is negative, there is no need for continuing to assess the ways and extent to which the evaluation was truly participatory.

One area of research that merits future exploration is a study on the actual impacts of participatory approaches to international development evaluation. As mentioned in the limitations section above, the findings from the questionnaire and interviews reveal the perceptions of international development evaluators. An empirical study that examines the actual impacts of such approaches would be a great contribution to the field. For example, a study could be conducted that contrasted a participatory evaluation approach with that of a non participatory approach.

Another area for future research is to investigate the frequency with which and the reasons why donors request participatory evaluation approaches which numerous respondents reported to be one of the main reasons that they use participatory
evaluation approaches. This study has approached participatory evaluation approaches from the perspective of international development evaluators. Understanding how often and why donors or evaluation clients call for participatory methods to be used will help put together another piece of the puzzle. On a related note, how do donors conceptualize participatory evaluation approaches? Do donors have as widely varying interpretations as evaluators do?

Finally, a recurrent theme throughout this dissertation was lack of time to conduct participatory evaluations. Numerous respondents reported that evaluation contracts do not provide sufficient time to allow for as fully a participatory evaluation approach as they would prefer. Moreover, many evaluation RFPs call for pre-established evaluation approaches that do not include participatory methods. Understanding the nature of evaluation contracts including lead time and duration of evaluations will help shed more light on this issue.

Concluding Remarks

Since the late 1970s participatory approaches have been widely promoted to evaluate international development programs. Yet, while participatory evaluation approaches have been extensively researched in the North American context, there has been surprisingly little research on their use in international development. This dissertation has attempted to contribute to both the evaluation and international development fields by documenting current practice and the perceived impacts of participatory evaluation approaches to international development.

The findings of this study have shown that there is great variability in how participatory approaches are utilized. Confusion over what is meant by participatory evaluation extends to the donors who commission them and to the evaluators who
conduct them. Numerous evaluators contend that it is impossible to conduct a participatory evaluation in the amount of time or money allocated by donors. Lack of understanding of just what a participatory evaluation should be surely plays a role.

The lack of shared meaning of participatory evaluation approaches also impedes serious discussion on their use including their merits and demerits, suggestions for their improvement, and their overall effectiveness. Studies such as the one conducted for this dissertation will shed light onto this widely used yet little studied approach to international development evaluation.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A

Acronyms

This appendix is intended to serve as a point of reference for the many acronyms that occur throughout this dissertation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEA</td>
<td>American Evaluation Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Beneficiary Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE</td>
<td>Collaborative Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRS</td>
<td>Catholic Relief Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAC</td>
<td>Development Assistance Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-E</td>
<td>Democratic Evaluation</td>
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<td>DE</td>
<td>Developmental Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>Empowerment Evaluation</td>
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<td>ERR</td>
<td>Economic Rate of Return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agricultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>FtF</td>
<td>Farmer-to-Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPI</td>
<td>Heifer Project International</td>
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<td>HSIRB</td>
<td>Human Subjects International Review Board</td>
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<td>IIED</td>
<td>International Institute for Environment and Development</td>
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<td>IOCE</td>
<td>International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAR</td>
<td>Participatory Action Research</td>
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<td>PC</td>
<td>Peace Corps</td>
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143
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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
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<td>PE</td>
<td>Participatory Evaluation</td>
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<td>PM&amp;E</td>
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<td>Practical Participatory Evaluation</td>
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<td>Scope of Work</td>
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<td>Transformative Participatory Evaluation</td>
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<td>UFE</td>
<td>Utilization Focused Evaluation</td>
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<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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APPENDIX B

International Development Practice Questionnaire

This survey is being conducted to study current practice in international development evaluations and is open to all evaluators who conduct international development evaluations.

1. Have you conducted evaluations of international development programs? (screening question)
   a. Yes
   b. No (If no, politely inform participants that they are excluded from study)

Detailing How Stakeholders Typically Participate in your Evaluation of International Development Programs

2. In general, which of the following stakeholders participate in international development evaluations?
   a. Funding agency staff
   b. Government
   c. Taxpayers
   d. Political supporters
   e. Program staff
   f. Recipients (users of the services or products)
   g. Those who were not included and were positively impacted
   h. Those who were not included and were negatively impacted

3. In which phases do stakeholders participate in international development evaluations?
a. Evaluation design  
b. Data analysis  
c. Interpreting findings  
d. Developing recommendations  
e. Reporting of findings  
f. Dissemination of findings  

4. Who is typically in control of the evaluation process? For each of the following check ONE space only.  
   Stakeholder I I I I Evaluator  

5. In general, how do stakeholders participate?  
   No participation I I I I Extensive participation  
   Consultation only  

**Familiarity and Experience with Participatory Evaluation Approaches**  

6. Are you familiar with participatory evaluation approaches?  
   a. Yes  
   b. No  

7. If yes, how do you define participatory evaluation?  

8. Have you used participatory approaches in international development evaluations?  
   a. Yes  
   b. No  

*Questions 9-17 are for those respondents who indicated yes to Question 6*
9. Which of the following types of participatory evaluation approaches have you used? (Never, Sometimes, Often, Always, Unfamiliar with)
   a. Stakeholder-based model of Evaluation
   b. Practical Participatory Evaluation (P-PE)
   c. Transformative Participatory Evaluation (T-PE)
   d. Democratic Evaluation
   e. Developmental Evaluation
   f. Empowerment Evaluation
   g. Participatory Action Research
   h. Participatory Rural Appraisal
   i. Community-based Participatory Research
   j. Emancipatory Action Research
   k. Cooperative Inquiry
   l. Other. Please describe.

10. Please explain why you have used participatory approaches in international development evaluation.

11. Approximately, what percentage of your evaluations of international development programs have used participatory approaches since 2000? During the 1990s? During the 1980s? During the 1970s?

12. Based on your experience, what percentage of international development evaluation RFPs call for the use of participatory approaches since 2000? During the 1990s? During the 1980s? During the 1970s?

13. Please indicate how the use of participatory approaches to international development has impacted the following:

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<thead>
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<th>Decreased</th>
<th>No impact</th>
<th>Increased</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Validity</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
14. What are the greatest challenges of including stakeholders in evaluations of international development programs?
   a. Determining which stakeholders to include
   b. Determining how stakeholders will participate
   c. Power issues
   d. Lack of stakeholder expertise
   e. Time consuming
   f. Other. Please describe.

15. Please explain any problems you have experienced using participatory approaches in international development evaluations.

16. What strategies have you used to mitigate these problems?

17. In what circumstances do participatory approaches to international development evaluations work best?

Specific Evaluation Project

In this section, we would like for you to report on specific international development
evaluations you have conducted using participatory methods. Please provide

Evaluation 1

18. Agency/Donor who commissioned the evaluation:

19. Year of evaluation:

20. Type of evaluation:

a. Formative

b. Summative

21. In the table below, please indicate which stakeholders participated in each evaluation phase:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Data Analysis</th>
<th>Developing recommendations</th>
<th>Reporting of findings</th>
<th>Dissemination of findings</th>
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<td>Developing recommendations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reporting of findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dissemination of findings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. Who was in control of the evaluation process? For each of the following check ONE space only.

Evaluator  I  I  I  I  I  Stakeholder

23. Why was participatory evaluation approach utilized?

a. Client specifically requested

b. Was most appropriate for evaluation
c. Always use participatory approaches

24. Please describe the impact of the use of a participatory evaluation approach?

Demographic Information

25. How many years experience do you have conducting international development evaluations?

26. In total how many international development evaluations have you conducted?

27. What percentage of your time is allocated to evaluation activities?

28. In what regions do you work? Select ALL that apply.
   a. Australia/New Zealand
   b. Caribbean
   c. Central America
   d. Eastern Africa
   e. Eastern Asia
   f. Eastern Europe
   g. Melanesia
   h. Micronesia
   i. Middle Africa
   j. Northern Africa
   k. North America
   l. Northern Europe
   m. Polynesia
   n. South America
   o. Southern Africa
p. Southern Europe
q. South-central Asia
r. South-eastern Asia
s. Western Africa
t. Western Asia
u. Western Europe

29. What country do you call HOME?

30. What is your primary organizational affiliation?

31. In what sectors do you conduct evaluations? Select ALL that apply.
   a. Agriculture
   b. Manufacturing
   c. Economics
   d. Community Development
   e. Infrastructure
   f. Social services
   g. Education
   h. Health
   i. Humanitarian
   j. Trade/Commerce
   k. Tourism/Travel
   l. Energy
   m. Food/Beverages
   n. Financial
   o. Telecommunications
p. Transport

a. Other. Please describe.

32. For what organizations do you most frequently conduct evaluations

a. Bilateral organization (USAID, CIDA, DIFID, AUSAID, etc.)

b. Multi-lateral organization (World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, etc.)

c. Regional aid agency (European Union)

d. Charitable organization (Kellogg Foundation, Ford Foundation)

e. Nongovernmental organization (ActionAID, Mercy Corps, Oxfam)

f. Other. Please describe.

33. How did you learn of this survey?

a. Listserv (Specify)

b. Client

c. Colleague

d. Other. Please describe.
APPENDIX C

HSIRB Approval Notification

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Date: March 26, 2009

To: Chris Coryn, Principal Investigator
    Anne Cullen, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 09-03-25

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "The Politics and Consequences of Participation in Development Evaluation" has been approved under the exempt category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: March 26, 2010
APPENDIX D

Semi-structured Interview Protocol

In what ways do stakeholders participate in your evaluations?

Why do you include stakeholders in the evaluation process (e.g. pressure from clients, specified in the RFP, most suitable approach)?

How did you identify which stakeholders would be included (e.g. donors, program staff, impactees)?

In what stage of the evaluation did they participate (e.g. valuing, specifying the evaluation questions, identifying modes of data collection, etc.)?

What were the impacts of using stakeholders (e.g. on evaluation quality, duration, resources, validity)?

Do you plan on continuing to include stakeholders in the evaluation process? Why? Why not?

What recommendations do you have for evaluators wishing to include stakeholders in the evaluation process?

(For those interviewees who reported that they have not used stakeholders in evaluations) What have you not used stakeholders in evaluations?

Are you familiar with these stakeholder/participatory approaches?

Have you heard of instances where these approaches were problematic? If so, please give an example.
### APPENDIX E

List of Evaluation Reports Included in Review

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<th>Donor</th>
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<th>Sector</th>
<th>Sub Sector</th>
<th>Type</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Bilateral</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>Zambian Ministry of Education: education management information systems (EMIS) and related activities - external program review report</td>
<td>Social &amp; administrative infrastructure</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Grants / technical coop.</td>
<td>Africa</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>Europe &amp; FSU</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>Demonstrating the potential of private health providers: summary and evaluation of privatizing a reproductive health services project in Uganda</td>
<td>Social &amp; administrative infrastructure</td>
<td>Health &amp; population</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>An evaluation of humanitarian information centers including case studies of HICs for Iraq, Afghanistan, and Liberia</td>
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<td>Government &amp; civil society</td>
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<td>Government &amp;</td>
<td>Grants /</td>
<td>Africa</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>Institutional development services for the secondary cities project : assessment of the economic impacts of the project</td>
<td>Social &amp; administrative infrastructure</td>
<td>Water supply &amp; sanitation</td>
<td>Grants / technical coop.</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>Report of the external evaluation panel review FY 02B/03 bean/cowpea collaborative research support program</td>
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