

The Realities of Stakeholders' Evaluation Experiences in a Low-Resourced Nonprofit

Organization:

A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

Program evaluation is important for improving the activities and services of nonprofit organizations. However, the emphasis on program evaluation has created new challenges and uncertainties for nonprofit organizations. These concerns of evaluation capacity, quality and use are of particular importance in nonprofit contexts where resources are already stretched, and where staff size and capacity are limited. As such, this research study focuses on a specific niche of the nonprofit sector, exploring how stakeholders experience program evaluation in a nonprofit organization, which (a) operates exclusively in one region, (b) is low-resourced, and (c) identifies as providing educational services to a specific community. Using a phenomenological approach to study program evaluation, the study is informed by Colaizzi's phenomenological approach to explore stakeholders' lived experience of evaluation in this context.

The findings suggest that several components are shared among participants. Their experience is described by four themes (1) rushed and pressed for time; (2) some good will come: a sense of optimism; (3) perceived inadequacy of evaluation; and (4) dedicated, but alone and isolated. From the phenomenological analysis, three underlying contextual factors of this shared experience also emerged, including dependence on the granting system, a suboptimal structure, and individuals' backgrounds and training. In all, this study offers contributions to evaluation practice, theory and methodological development by studying program evaluation in a rarely examined context, and by contributing empirical data about program evaluation using a methodology that has rarely been used in this domain.

Keywords: program evaluation, nonprofit organizations, phenomenology

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Description of the Problem

Program evaluation is important for improving the activities and services of nonprofit organizations. Grant agencies, which fund programs operating in these organizations, also request delineated evaluation plans in funding applications. Existing studies have provided foundational information about funding organizations' evaluation expectations (e.g., Hall et al., 2003; Hoefer, 2000) and evaluation practices across a range of nonprofits. However, these studies have predominantly used surveys or case study approaches. While these types of studies have shed light on general processes, they are limited in capturing the lived experiences of those for which the processes have an impact.

The emphasis on program evaluation has also created new challenges and uncertainties for nonprofit organizations (Carman, 2007). Evaluation requires significant human and financial resources. Executives have raised concerns about the integration of evaluation into the extensive list of expectations placed on the nonprofit sector (Hall, Phillips, Meil-lat, & Pickering, 2003). Often, nonprofits lack the necessary capacity to do evaluation, and must complete evaluation activities without expertise or resources (Hoefer, 2000). Additionally, the literature does not address the experiences of those stakeholders who encounter evaluation in this rarely examined low-resourced nonprofit context. As Carman (2007) points out, "Although the demand for information may indeed be increasing, the evaluation field actually knows very little about the way nonprofit, community-based organizations are responding to these requests" (p. 60). As a result, evaluation theorists and researchers do not have a good understanding of the realities and everyday experiences of evaluation practice in nonprofit organizations.

It follows that the conditions with which evaluations are undertaken greatly affect stakeholders' perceptions of evaluation findings as relevant, useful or valid. In turn, their perception affects whether the findings are used for accountability purposes or program improvement (Johnson et al., 2009). Thus, evaluation use and evaluation capacity have a reciprocal relationship, as stronger evaluations increase likelihood of use, and with use comes a stronger propensity towards evaluative thinking and investment in developing evaluation skills. These concerns regarding evaluation capacity, quality and use are of particular importance in nonprofit contexts where resources are already stretched, and staff size and capacity are limited.

Thus, this study focuses on a specific niche of the nonprofit sector, choosing to explore the experience of stakeholders with the phenomenon of program evaluation in a nonprofit organization which, (a) operates exclusively in one region, (b) is low-resourced, and (c) identifies as providing educational services to a specific community. The purpose is to explore the lived experience of primary stakeholders who have participated in program evaluation at such a low-resourced non-profit organization. By exploring stakeholders' opinions, memories, attitudes, and perceptions about evaluation in their specific context and describing the essence of their shared experience with this phenomenon, evaluation theorists and researchers will have a better understanding of evaluation practice in this area.

Relevance of this Research

Ultimately, this exploration contributes to practice and theory by exploring an under-explored context, thus promoting evaluation capacity building among this niche of nonprofits. The study conclusions will help nonprofits to identify areas where they can work to build skills and morale around evaluation practice. It also contributes to the development of context-specific theory about "shoestring evaluation" (Bamberg et al., 2004)—an approach that is being

developed to support evaluators working within resource, data or time constraints. In particular, it helps to identify particular aspects that stakeholders perceive as barriers to their success with evaluation. It also identifies areas where nonprofits should be commended for exhibiting perseverance and optimism. Moreover, it responds to the call by evaluation researchers to extend the body of empirical research on evaluation, notably using a methodology that has rarely been employed to study evaluation. More specifically, using phenomenology, a qualitative methodology that endeavours to explore participants' lived experience with a shared phenomenon, and to describe the essence of this phenomenon, this study will describe the lived experience of evaluation according to stakeholders at this low-resourced nonprofit. This study helps to inform the relationship between nonprofit organizations and their funders, as well as between nonprofits and evaluation theorists. It contributes to development of policies and best practices that guide those relationships and the field of program evaluation.

Outline of the Thesis

To provide the aforementioned contributions, I have organized this phenomenology study into five chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 presents a summary of the relevant literature that provided a foundation for this research study. It also delineates my research questions and explains the conceptual framework that developed from my initial literature review. Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach of this phenomenological study, including the research design, sampling, data collection, analysis, strategies for establishing trustworthiness, and ethical procedures. Chapter 4 presents the study findings. Chapter 5 then integrates and discusses the key findings of the study with reference to the published literature. It also highlights the limitations of the study, contributions that this study

makes to evaluation and the implications that it has for evaluation practice. Chapter 5 concludes with some suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

To explore and describe the psychosocial phenomenon of program evaluation in a low-resourced context, it is necessary to understand the influences that may contribute to stakeholders' lived experiences. This literature review and resulting framework helped to uncover and organize components that could potentially influence program evaluation in this setting. This section also contributed to the structure of the study and steered the development of the interview guide and data analysis.

This chapter first elaborates on existing literature that discusses these influences. Second, it explains how this research project is informed by and extends existing literature, as well as outlines the specific research questions on which this study concentrates. Finally, it illustrates how the influences on the phenomenon of evaluation fit together to form a preliminary conceptual framework, which evolved through the duration of this study. In phenomenology, the literature review is used to create the foundations of the study—to draft an initial conceptual framework, and research questions. Following data analysis, a detailed description captures the shared essence of the participants' experience, and replaces the initial conceptual framework. This description is found at the end of Chapter 4.

Definitions of Programs and Program Evaluation in Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations are diverse and thus conceptualize “program” and “program evaluation” in many different ways. Programs can involve a wide range of resources and activities as well as offer interventions that span various durations in order to accomplish a diversity of outcomes. For example, the word program is used to describe those as diverse as medical programs that have operated annually for 20 or more years with 100 staff and a million dollar budget, to others that consist of a week-long online fundraising campaigning led by one

volunteer. Porteous (2009) describes a program as a composite of many activities that are supported by a specific allocation of resources in order to achieve an outcome for a targeted population. Gauthier (1984) aligns with Porteous' definition, while emphasizing that the outcome is a change in state, while Nadeau (1988) focuses on the organizational perspective, describing a program as a collection of goals, objectives, content, implementation and evaluation. Separate from these academic definitions, stakeholders' conceptualizations of "program" and "program evaluation" are grounded in their experiences with the phenomena in their particular contexts.

Similarly, the literature presents a diversity of definitions for program evaluation (King, 2003). For example, Alkin (2011) says evaluation involves judging the merit or worth of an entity. Conversely Patton (1997) emphasizes systematic data collection, defining program evaluation as, "the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming" (p. 253). For the purposes of the present study, I define evaluation as the "systematic inquiry leading to judgments about program merit, worth and significance, and support for program decision making and knowledge production" (Cousins & Chouinard, 2012, p. 459). This definition highlights the systematic nature of the methods, while also emphasizing the importance of (a) judgement, distinguishing it from research; and (b) program evaluation as a useful tool for decision making and policy development. It is also worth noting that program evaluation is distinct from research; primarily, they differ in purpose. Research aims to create new knowledge, whereas with evaluation the new knowledge is a means to an intended end of judging the worth of, or making decisions about, a program (Levin-Rozalis, 2003). There is also a range of purposes for conducting evaluation.

Purposes of Program Evaluations in Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations undertake program evaluation for reasons that are influenced by both external and internal factors. Carman (2011) conducted interviews with 31 nonprofit executives, finding that the majority conducted evaluations to satisfy funders' requirements or expectations, or to demonstrate accountability to stakeholders. A minority also reported undertaking evaluation as a means of improving program organization or delivery. The following subsections detail the literature about these purposes for evaluation.

Accountability. The pursuit of accountability has been historically important in the development of the field of program evaluation (e.g., Alkin, 1972; Mark, Henry & Julnes, 2004). Indeed, Alkin and Christie (2004) place “accountability and control” along with “social inquiry” at the base of the evaluation theory tree, implying that all types of program evaluation theory grew from these two foundations. Similarly, a dominant theme in the nonprofit literature expresses increasing pressure on nonprofit organizations to perform evaluation to demonstrate accountability—to funders, to clients, and to defend its tax-exemption status to the general public (Carman, 2007; Carman, 2009; Ebrahim & Rangan, 2010). Phillips and Levasseur (2004) conducted interviews with 29 Canadian nonprofit executives and furthered this research with a case study of a medium-sized, national service delivery nonprofit. Their study found that many nonprofits, notably those without strong corporate sponsorship, depend heavily on government funding and are thus affected by governance trends and expectations. They showed that organizations are fighting for a few pots of funding, which are annually or seasonally distributed and monitored with extensive, mandatory reporting procedures for both the organizations and the government departments that offer funding. Further, in the United States, legislation mandating accountability measures initiated by the federal government gradually put pressure on

all granting bodies to expect more evidence from the organizations whose programs they fund (Carman, 2009). Through national survey data of social service agencies in American cities, LeRoux and Wright (2010) uncovered that, in part, these pressures are a response to a series of scandals in nonprofit management, for example, cases where nonprofit managers were funnelling money for their private spending or allocating budgets based on ulterior motives. The result is a climate in which nonprofits must use program evaluation data to demonstrate effective use of the funding they receive, during in-progress projects, and at the end of program grants (Alie & Seita, 1997). Indeed, in a survey by Botcheva, White and Huffman (2002), “reporting to a funding source” was the most common purpose for evaluation (88% of respondents). Romzek (2011) shows that granting bodies often require specific evaluation activities; requirements may differ for each grant. This long list of demands creates pressure and confusion for nonprofits, especially those with fewer financial resources and diversity in funding sources (Carroll & Stater, 2009). The accountability movement spurs nonprofits to do evaluation, and this underlying purpose affects how stakeholders experience evaluation. For example, given this pressure, stakeholders undertaking evaluation can experience frustration and exasperation with the evaluation process, and the extensive demands on their already stretched time.

Program improvement. In contrast to accountability, nonprofits also conduct evaluation as a means of improving the program: for allocating resources, organizational learning, problem solving, and improving delivery. Hoefler (2008) surveyed 32 organizations, of whom the median operating budget was \$1 950 000, and showed that all were planning to use evaluation for program improvement in the coming year. Botcheva et al., (2002) conducted a survey of 22 child agencies, whose staff size ranged from 2-250, with a median of 29, and found this to be the second most common purpose (75% reported purposes of “assessing program implementation”

and “improving existing programs”). With this purpose, nonprofits have some degree of agency and can tailor the evaluation activities towards their particular needs and questions. When attempted with improvement in mind, evaluation activities are more likely to take into account contextual dynamics, and feel relevant to stakeholders. When initiated for improvement, evaluations can be better tailored to meet the needs of the stakeholders, by using more specific research questions, more appropriate research methods, or a timeline that better aligns with the programs being evaluated. Evaluation with the purpose of improvement is less common than accountability, but often emerges when an executive or manager has a propensity towards evaluation for learning (Botcheva et al., 2002) and when the human and technological resources are available (Peck & Gonzalski, 2009). This purpose is more internally motivated and context-relevant than the purpose of accountability, which often creates a more positive experience for stakeholders. Instead of feeling frustrated, stakeholders may feel interested in the findings, hopeful for improvement and empowered to make better connections with the program community.

Nonprofit Evaluation Capacity

Evaluations in any context require important resources: time and funding for evaluation activities, positive attitudes towards evaluation, as well as stakeholders with tangible evaluation knowledge and skills (or money to hire external evaluation consultants). Evaluation can be very time intensive. Hall et al. (2003) undertook surveys and focus groups of nonprofits with budgets ranging from 125 000 to 1.5 million and revealed that nonprofits undertake a variety of evaluation activities—all of which take time away from other responsibilities, such as serving clients, and developing or delivering programming. While some grant foundations include funding for evaluation, many do not; further, many grants require articulated evaluation plans at

the program application stage. As such, from data gathered through surveys, Carman (2007) reports that nonprofits are forced to fund evaluation from their already stretched internal operating funds. Research also shows that there is a discrepancy between the expectations of funders and the capacity of nonprofits to fulfill those expectations (Cousins, Goh, Elliott, Aubry, & Gilbert, 2014; Satterlund, Treiber, Kipke, Kwon, & Cassady, 2013). LeRoux and Goerdel (2009) demonstrates that low-resourced nonprofit organizations are tasked with balancing day-to-day actions that advance their mission and organizational strategies, such as evaluation, which strengthen their efforts in the long-term. The challenge of finding resources for a task that is often perceived as extraneous to their mission (Benjamin, 2008) is very difficult, especially in the low-resourced context (Easterling, 2000; Liket, Rey-Garcia, Maas, 2012). This strain can influence how stakeholders perceive their experience with evaluation. For example, stakeholders may feel that evaluations disadvantage the program, are inconveniencing the organization's clientele, or simply taking money where funds are already low.

Even when a nonprofit's management chooses to invest in evaluation, they may lack the necessary capacity. To extend activities from simply monitoring to evaluating—systematically judging the merit of a program—requires many specific skills. For example, it requires the abilities to properly design an evaluation, foster stakeholder cooperation and buy-in, collect data, analyze data, develop unbiased conclusions, articulate evaluation findings, and promote integration of findings in practice. In low-resourced contexts, the number of staff members is limited and they are less likely to have technical evaluation skills. Interview and survey data from Carman (2007) indicates that “even the most basic requests by funders and evaluators asking community-based organizations for simple input and output data can be complicated for community-based organizations to compile” (p. 68). Further, Botcheva et al., (2002) found that a

majority of organizations indicated a need for training in evaluation techniques (58%) as well as help building internal evaluation capacity (54%), while 50% needed assistance with program design and evaluation. Many funding organizations have produced guides for doing evaluation, though these target nonprofits generally, assuming greater available resources than is the reality for an overwhelming number of nonprofits (Benjamin, 2012). While professional development opportunities aim to increase evaluation capacity among nonprofits (Easterling, 2000), they too require money and time away from programming. As such, an overwhelming proportion of evaluation activities in this context are undertaken without sufficient evaluation capacity. This gap affects the phenomenon of evaluation in low-resourced nonprofit organizations, as stakeholders feel disappointed by evaluation conclusions, frustrated by their inability to access training, or inadequate as evaluators.

Participation of Stakeholders

In a review of the literature about evaluation use in nonprofits, Johnson et al (2009) remarked that these organizations were increasingly adapting participatory elements in their evaluations. For example, the authors show that stakeholders (e.g., staff, board members, funders, program participants) are being involved in program evaluation design and data collection in addition to their role as sources of data. Furthermore, the authors uncovered that participation of stakeholders can facilitate the evaluation process, increase contextual relevance, and foster evaluation capacity building and use of findings. Fine, Thayer, and Coghlan (2000) support this with their mixed-methods study that used surveys, interviews and organization profiles to compare the experiences of those involved in high-participation, medium-participation and low-participation evaluations. They found that that the participants who had engaged in high-participation evaluations were more likely to consider the evaluations to be both

credible and useful than the other participant groups. Johnson et al. (2009) demonstrate that stakeholders' direct participation in any stage of the evaluation (e.g., design, data collection) can affect the quality of the evaluation and stakeholders' attitudes towards use of findings (Cousins & Chouinard, 2012), and evaluation in general (Fine et al., 2000). Liket et al. (2012) support this, identifying participation as the most important factor in evaluation usefulness, saying "the inability of nonprofits to conduct evaluations that are useful to their strategic decision making largely rests on a lack of participation in the evaluation process" (p. 184). In addition, research by Patton (1998) demonstrates that involvement can lead to process use, in other words, learning in the form of changing in thinking and behaviour that result from involvement in the evaluation process. Evidently, participation affects stakeholders' lived experience with this phenomenon, as they feel accomplishment about being able to shape the evaluation design, have more confidence in the truthfulness of the findings, and feel empowered to be part of the process.

Quality of Nonprofit Evaluations

The quality of nonprofit evaluations is another factor that influences stakeholders' evaluation experience. In their comprehensive study of nonprofit organizations across Canada, Hall et al. (2003) uncovered that many grant organizations that fund nonprofit programs identify inadequate evaluation skills as the greatest barrier to conducting evaluation. However, nonprofit organizations give themselves a better self-assessment, citing lack of resources as the main obstacle they face. In spite of this disagreement, stakeholders' perceptions of the quality of evaluations influence their overall experience with them. According to the literature, three aspects of quality most affect the phenomenon of evaluation: quality of design and methodology, bias, and relevance to context.

Quality of design and methodology. Nonprofit organizations conduct a variety of activities to collect and draw conclusions from evaluation data. The choice of methods, and rigour with which they are conducted, influences the insights and conclusions drawn from the evaluation, and the certainty with which the stakeholders' can examine their program's impact (Braverman, 2013; Liket et al., 2012). Morley, Vinson, and Hatry (2001) exposed that "nonprofits are more likely to monitor things that are "easy" to measure, such as the number of clients served, quantity of program units delivered, activities provided, or number of volunteer hours contributed" (in LeRoux & Wright, 2010, p. 574). Carman (2007) supports this stance, revealing that the most popular evaluation activities (those practiced by $\geq 85\%$ of nonprofits surveyed are financial auditing (97%), reporting to the board of directors (95%), receiving visits from funders (90%), conducting performance reviews of staff (89%), reviewing documents (e.g., records and case notes; 88%), and observing the program (87%). While these contribute to general accountability and triangulation of data collection, they do not represent rigorous methodology or provide strong evidence about the impact on program recipients or judgments about the worth of the programs. However, Hoefler (2008) compared evaluation practice in 1999 and 2008, finding that a decade later, (a) more nonprofits are conducting formal evaluations, and (b) their evaluation designs are more likely to be scientifically valid (e.g., through increased use of standardized tools and a shift from posttest-only to the pretest-posttest design). He also found that these improvements were coupled with positive attitudes towards evaluation. For example, he discovered that positive attitudes towards evaluations, such as believing the "cost of an evaluation is money well spent," and believing that "an evaluation can help improve the program" were more popular among participants in 2008 than those in 1999 (p. 15). Meanwhile, while negative attitudes, such as "evaluations are inherently more trouble than they are worth,"

“evaluation results are generally of no use to practice staff,” and “evaluations are usually biased or inaccurate” were significantly less popular among respondents (p. 15). Finally, important research on evaluation use found that evaluation quality (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986) and more recently evaluation communication quality (Johnson et al., 2009) are among the best indicators of use of findings. Evidently, by influencing ability to draw informed conclusions and increasing the likelihood of use, evaluation quality affects stakeholders’ experience with the phenomenon.

Bias. In recent years, nonprofits have decreasingly relied on external evaluators (Carman, 2007; Fine et al., 2000). Especially in the low-resourced context, nonprofits do not have the financial capacity to hire evaluators; evaluation activities are often undertaken by executives or program implementation staff (Liket et al., 2012). This trend has increased stakeholders’ perceptions of bias in evaluations. Further, interview data from Carman (2007), in a study of a mix of high, medium and low-resourced nonprofits, revealed that staff sometimes intentionally alter or invent evaluation data when the report will be used for granting organizations. That individuals involved in evaluations in this context could be motivated to forge data—an unethical and likely illegal action—points to the necessity of research that explores the experiences of those individuals.

Evaluation Standards. In 1988, evaluation theorists and practitioners convened to create *The Program Evaluation Standards* to guide, and increase the quality of, evaluation. Now in its third edition, Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, and Caruthers (2011) cover aspects of utility, feasibility, propriety, accuracy and practical guidance. As mentioned in the introduction to this book, the standards are designed to steer evaluators to create more rigorous evaluations, through guidelines for increasing validity and reliability. Shuhla and Cousins (1997) recommend following such standards as a means of increasing rigour, and thus decreasing the likelihood and

depth of bias and misuse. As negative attitudes towards evaluation are often based on probability of bias, and either misuse or uselessness (Hoefler, 2008), making use of the Standards is a way of decreasing the chance that stakeholders will have a negative experience with evaluation.

Relevance to context. Cousins and Leithwood (1986), along with Marsh and Glassick (1988), established that an important factor in an evaluation's quality is its relevance to the local context; program evaluation, unlike research, should be tailored to the individual program's concerns. Funders often mandate evaluation requirements on all the organizations they fund without the opportunity to tailor the evaluation to local program characteristics (Easterling, 2000). Further, Benjamin (2012) reviewed the guides that many funding organizations have created to support their demands for doing outcome evaluation. He posits that even when funders do not require a specific evaluation design, nonprofits base their activities from these one-size-fits-all models. This is especially evident in low-resourced contexts where they cannot pay for evaluation training. The degree to which an evaluation is relevant to their program affects how stakeholders experience the phenomenon of evaluation. For example, if the evaluation is relevant, stakeholders may feel that the information is more useful, and thus have a sense of accomplishment and optimism.

Evaluation Use

The literature shows that there is a two-way relationship between evaluation use and stakeholders' lived experience with program evaluation. When the evaluation process or findings contribute to learning or program improvement, stakeholders perceive the experience to be more positive and worthwhile. On the other hand, when stakeholders report that the evaluation was simply filed away, or did not have relevant information to translate into use, their experience is negatively affected. In the other direction, if stakeholders have a positive experience with the

evaluation activities, then they are more likely to perceive the findings as useful, and thus, to make use of them. If their experience with evaluation is that it is externally imposed, extraneous to the mission (Benjamin, 2008; Easterling, 2000), or collecting irrelevant information, they are less likely to try to use the findings (Hoefer, 2000). There are three main ways that evaluation findings are used: for organizational learning (conceptual), for program improvement (instrumental), and for funders (symbolic).

Conceptual use. Empirical studies show that nonprofit organizations make use of evaluation findings for organizational learning. Program evaluation theory describes conceptual use as the individual or organizational learning that occurs throughout the process of the evaluation (King, 1988). Peck and Gorzalski (2009) found conceptual use to be more likely than other internal uses. Nonprofits express that while programs are consistently changing (Benjamin, 2012), and being replaced, evaluation findings can teach lessons about organizational structure and effectiveness that can be applied to multiple aspects of program creation and implementation (e.g., LeRoux & Wright, 2010). Findings are used for organizational learning that transcends specific programs, staff members, and time periods.

Instrumental use. Some nonprofits also report using evaluation findings to improve program delivery. This aligns with instrumental use, or the use of evaluation results for specific decision-making or problem solving within the context of the program that is being evaluated (Cousins & Chouinard, 2012; King, 1988). In some contexts, this takes the form of changing an approach to client interactions but in others it may mean a shift in resource allocation. In a study of municipalities, Poister and Streib (1999) showed that use of findings led to changes in the program's prioritization, focus, and budget in a majority of cases. In interviews with Carman (2007), nonprofits expressed that program improvement is one of the most ideal consequences of

evaluation. However, a variety of factors—including resource constraints and funders’ one-size-fits-all demands—make this kind of use less likely, affecting stakeholders’ lived experience with evaluation.

Process use. Patton (1998) coined process use as, “relating to and being indicated by individual changes in thinking and behaving that occur among those involved in evaluation as a result of the learning that occurs during the evaluation process” (p. 225). This learning, though arguably less direct than instrumental use, contributes to program improvement through gradual enlightenment and organizational learning (Preskill, 2004). Process use affects how nonprofit stakeholders’ experience evaluation, as their thinking and behaviour is affected by the learning that occurs from involvement in the evaluation process.

Symbolic use. Finally, as Hoefer (2000) exposed, the most common report of use of evaluation findings is for symbolic use: both to further the organization’s position or reputation and to use as evidence of effectiveness when interacting with granting or accountability bodies (King, 1988). This aligns with the most common motivation for utilizing findings, as nonprofits feel external pressure to use evaluation data when applying for, and demonstrating effective use of, grants. In particular, nonprofits report that evaluations are significantly more likely to be undertaken due to coercion or a desire for resources (Carman, 2011). As such, evaluations are designed with granting organizations specific requirements or perspectives in mind, and are most often used for these symbolic purposes. Carman and Fredericks (2008) showed that stakeholders frequently feel that evaluation is necessary, but predominantly important for symbolic uses, affecting their experience with evaluation activities overall.

Summary of Literature on Program Evaluation in Nonprofit Organizations

Existing research typically broaches the subject of nonprofit program evaluation through the use of interviews, focus groups, surveys, and case studies. In many of these studies, organizations are also not separated by type or resource-capacity. This lack of differentiation between type of nonprofit organization paints a general picture that combines multinational foundations with local nonprofits who have budgets of less than \$100 000. Some case studies examine specific organizations' evaluation practice, but rarely in the low-resourced context, and most often only examine concrete policies and practices. This study will fill a gap between existing literature and current practice by exploring stakeholders' lived experience with evaluation—their opinions, memories, attitudes, and perceptions about evaluation in their specific context—with a purpose of describing the essence of their shared experience with this phenomenon.

Guiding Research Question

Specifically, in this study I explore the phenomenon of evaluation in the nonprofit context. The following research question guides my research: What is the lived experience of evaluation among primary stakeholders who have participated in program evaluation at a low-resourced nonprofit organization?

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework that served as the preliminary guide for my study. It illustrates how the concepts outlined in the above-mentioned nonprofit and evaluation literature potentially interact and influence the lived experience of stakeholders who have participated in evaluation in a low-resourced nonprofit organization. In phenomenology, the conceptual framework is instrumental in the definition of the phenomenon, design of the

research questions, and interview guide (Creswell, 2007). Through data collection and analysis, the conceptual framework evolved, as other factors that inform and impact the stakeholders' complex lived experience emerged. This emerging data is represented in the findings in Chapter 4. The descriptions included in the findings now take the place of a conceptual framework in phenomenology, as it is more apt at eloquently illustrating the lived experience of the participants than a more rigidly structured framework.

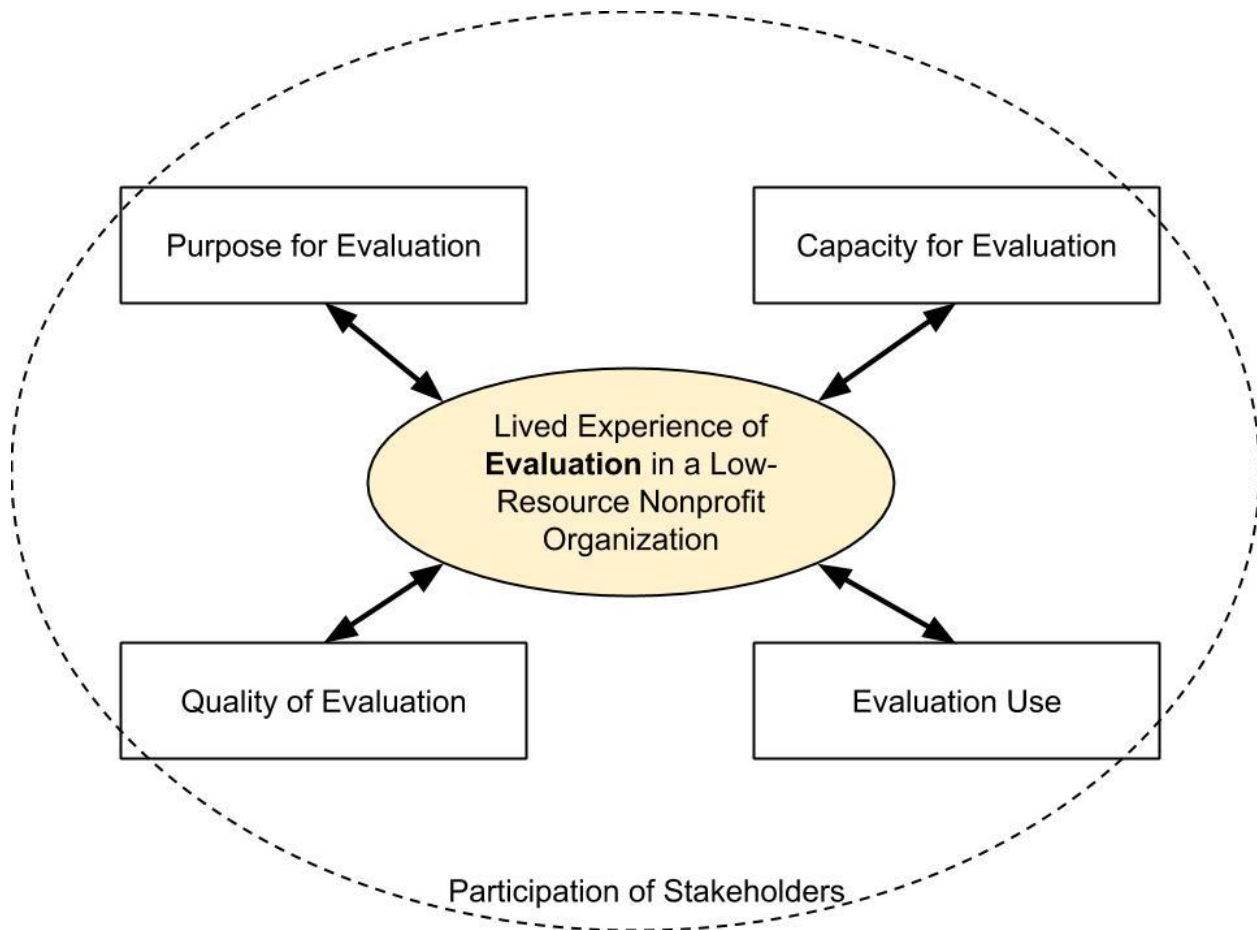


Figure 1. Initial Conceptual Framework.

This figure illustrates how the concepts in the nonprofit and evaluation literature potentially interact and influence the lived experience of stakeholders who have participated in evaluation in a low-resourced nonprofit organization. The conceptual framework consists of four

primary components: purpose for evaluation, capacity for evaluation, quality of evaluation and evaluation use. The horizontal rectangles depict these four components, which influence participants' experience with the phenomenon of program evaluation in a low-resourced nonprofit organization, which is depicted in the yellow circle at the center of the diagram. Double-headed arrows between the central phenomenon and each of the four components illustrate their reciprocal influence. In addition, the central phenomenon and the four components are situated within a circle that represents the participation of stakeholders. This design is intended to show that the relationship between all parts of the conceptual framework are influenced by stakeholders' participation, for example, the degree and type of participation, the stakeholders invited to participated, and the power dynamics of the participants.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The literature review and conceptual framework illustrate the context in which this study took place. In order to best explore the phenomenon of program evaluation in low-resourced nonprofit organizations, I used a phenomenological approach. My approach was informed by that of Colaizzi's (1978), and focused on describing the essence of stakeholders' lived experience with evaluation. It is important to note that Colaizzi's (1978) approach is descriptive in nature and involves contacting and connecting with the phenomenon through the perspectives of those who have experienced it. Each participant's perspective was studied to develop a common essence. The essence is described as the core structural elements that are inherent in the phenomenon (Lin, 2013). These elements are common to all participants' experiences. Though the participants may feel differently about these core elements, or have encountered them in different ways, each participant describes these core elements as part of their experience with the phenomenon. The description of the essence of their shared experience then ultimately becomes the findings of the study. Moreover, Colaizzi (1978) defines *experience* as:

(a) objectively real for myself and others, (b) not an internal state but a mode of presence to the world, (c) a mode of world presence that is existentially significant, and (d) as existentially significant, it is a legitimate and necessary content for understanding human psychology. (p. 52)

In other words, for the purposes of this study, I conceptualized experience as something that is not a subjective construct, but a phenomenon that exists separate from individuals and is both important to human existence and to understanding that existence.

Philosophical Foundations

Phenomenology is considered to be a philosophical stance as well as a method. Most phenomenologists believe that a researcher's interests always influence the research study and its findings—the researcher is always a part of the context and phenomenon being studied. Further, they believe that all experiences and 'knowledges' are legitimate and valuable; each participant should contribute equally to an understanding of the shared phenomenon. As such, a phenomenological study seeks to describe the whole phenomenon based on the descriptions of participants' perceptions of their experience interacting with the phenomenon (Colaizzi, 1978). This is different from other forms of qualitative inquiry that study individuals' experiences without connecting those experiences to a common phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Since this study explores how stakeholders describe their lived experience with program evaluation within a particular organization, it is inspired from the philosophical foundation of phenomenology.

Rationale for Using Phenomenology

Phenomenology was chosen as the approach for this study for several reasons. As this study endeavoured to understand how stakeholders think, feel, understand and experience evaluation in their context, phenomenology was apt in that it provided the opportunity to engage primarily with the participants' lived experience. This approach deprioritises other forms of data collection, such as document analysis or observation, which give evidence about evaluation practice, but do not always relate to how participants experienced evaluation. Second, phenomenology was chosen because it allowed the study to use a phenomenon (i.e., program evaluation) as the central focus. The study participants are diverse in their interactions with the research site, but they have a shared experience with evaluation. Phenomenology matches this focus on experience, aiming to create a description of their lived experience of evaluation at this

low-resourced nonprofit, rather than producing a new theory, or a collection of individual accounts that are then connected with theory. Finally, the particular approach of Colaizzi's (1978) existential phenomenology best matched the purpose of this study because it focuses on describing the collective experience, and does not report explicitly on the essence of each individual's experience, which allows for the protection of anonymity in this close knit nonprofit.

Researcher as Instrument

As Anderson and Spencer (2002) explain, the phenomenological researcher “transcends or suspends past knowledge and experience to understand a phenomenon at a deeper level” (Creswell, 2007, p. 269). Bracketing, otherwise known as examining presuppositions, is the process through which the researcher identifies and sets aside her or his beliefs, inclinations and affections in order to hear and learn from participants' lived experience with an open mind, thus respecting the nature of the phenomenon (Colaizzi, 1978; Valle & King, 1978). As a researcher engaging in the present study, I have very little prior experience with evaluation. My limited experience with evaluation comes from studying evaluation theory in two graduate classes, reading evaluation literature, and from participating in informal evaluation practices in two university societies (e.g., post-event feedback surveys and focus groups debriefs). Throughout the entire study, I have been conscious in attempting to keep my experiences distinct from the lived experience articulated by stakeholders at the research site. An elaboration of my bracketed experiences is included in Appendix A.

Description of the Research Context and its Stakeholders

The study was conducted at a Planned Parenthood in Canada. This is a low-resourced nonprofit organization that provides province-wide educational and health services for youth in

the areas of sexual health, maternal health, family planning, and LGBTQ¹ and sexual minority rights. In particular, it has educational outreach programs for youth.

Stakeholders are generally described as individuals or groups who have an interest or concern in something, such as an organization, idea, or group. Planned Parenthood has many types of stakeholders, including employees, clinic volunteers, special project volunteers, the Board of Directors, donors, funders, granting organizations, and those who receive services from the centre. It is important to note that the categories of stakeholders have different degrees of power within the organization, and also very diverse interactions with the evaluation that takes place at the centre. For this study, only primary stakeholders were invited to participate.

Planned Parenthood has two employees: the executive director, and client services coordinator. In addition, it has stakeholders who volunteer with the Centre through the Board of Directors, administrative and clinical support as well as with special projects such as fundraising initiatives and a Camp for LGBTQ youth and allies. Throughout this study and the reporting of findings, I classify evaluations as centre-specific (i.e., pertaining to the clinic or direct responsibilities of the staff), or as those for special projects (i.e., fundraising initiatives and the LGBTQ camp).

Research Design

This study used qualitative inquiry, with a phenomenological approach, to explore how primary stakeholders (e.g., employees, volunteers, board members, program leaders) experience program evaluation in the above-mentioned low-resourced nonprofit context. This form of inquiry is ideal for the purposes of exploring a representation of reality as conceived by

¹ An acronym that symbolizes those who identify as part of a sexual minority. The term initially stood for Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Gay and Queer, but has evolved to represent the broader community of sexual minorities.

participants; an experience described by Colaizzi as “objectively real for myself and others,” “a mode of presence in the world,” and “existentially significant” (p. 52). Creswell (2007) points out that phenomenology is distinct from other forms of qualitative inquiry as it relies on participant self-report, and is less interested in other data such as observation, artefacts or documents. In addition, Colaizzi (1978) indicates that “there is no such thing as THE phenomenological method... There is no single method or procedure, but only methods and procedures of description” (p. 53). What unites the phenomenological approaches is the search for the essence of experience, in other words “the implicit structure and meaning of such [experience]” (Lin, 2013, p. 470). Guided by Colaizzi’s (1978) approach, I interviewed each participant and developed a detailed description of their collective lived experience with the phenomenon of program evaluation.

Identification of Phenomenon

According to Colaizzi (1978), the “identification of phenomena must [be] the crucial first step” (p. 57). As mentioned, phenomenology is the study of participants’ experience with a specific phenomenon. For this study, the phenomenon is defined as program evaluation at Planned Parenthood. As such, the study aims to describe the experience of interacting with evaluation. This includes a diversity of interactions, such as collecting statistics for evaluation, conducting interviews or surveys for evaluation, analysing evaluation data, writing evaluation reports, reading evaluation reports, discussing evaluation results, and implementing changes based on evaluation conclusions.

Characteristics of the Setting

Types of programs at Planned Parenthood. Planned Parenthood is the only sexual health centre in the province, and provides services to the entire province. They undertake programs in three main categories: clinical services, education and outreach programming, and special projects.

Clinical services. Providing clinical services is the main role that Planned Parenthood plays on a daily basis. The centre offers a variety of clinics many days a week for those who do not have access to certain sexual health services at a family doctor. Their clinics include services such as cervical screening, pap tests, colposcopy referrals, and testing for sexually transmitted infections. They also provide pregnancy tests and condoms to their clients. This programming is led by the Client Services Coordinator, in conjunction with the 23 clinical volunteers who book appointments and help administer clinics.

Education programming. Planned Parenthood responds to a high demand for education and outreach within the province about sexual issues. In some cases, this includes workshops or presentations about how to practice safe sex, about different types of sexually transmitted infections, or about sexual diversity issues such as LGBTQ rights. Commonly these presentations are for youth audiences, but have been adapted to suit other groups. They also hold an evening social group for LGBTQ youth. The Executive Director, who also fills the role of Education Coordinator, is responsible for the presentations, and a volunteer from the Board runs the youth group.

Special projects. Special projects reported in this study focussed on fundraising initiatives and the LGBTQ youth summer camp. The fundraising events completed by Planned Parenthood in the past year include a crowd funding campaign (i.e., online sponsorship

campaign) to fix the floor of the Centre, an annual February peer-to-peer sponsorship campaign that also raises awareness to promote regular cervical screening, and an annual silent auction event. From the interviews, it was also clear that special projects emerged from the unique needs of the community, or the financial needs of the centre. One special projects volunteer has taken the independent initiative to fundraiser for the floor and for February. Moreover, another board member organizes the LGBTQ summer camp with a seasonal committee. The summer camp is seen as being arm's length from the centre, with their own evaluation activities and their own pot of funding.

Evaluation activities. The participants' comments focused generally on one of two types of evaluations. More specifically, four participants focussed on what they called "centre evaluations": reports for the Board of Directors or for grant requirements that summarize statistics of clinical or education programs, or compare actual outcomes with those that are desired. Reports for the Board of Directors involve summarizing statistics relevant to clinical and educational programs in a one-page document that is distributed and presented to the Directors for review at their board meeting. To draw conclusions, these "centre evaluations" involved statistics on service use, personal reflection from the Executive Director, and sometimes a client satisfaction survey or an informal phone interview with a partner organization about their collaboration experience.

On the other hand, two participants focussed on evaluations that they led as part of programs that were supplementary to the day-to-day operations of the centre and its staff. In one of those cases, evaluations were based on a survey with a mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions. In the other, evaluations were based on personal reflection, and from an evaluation report and focus group with event organizers.

Participant Selection

This study employed criterion sampling to choose its participants². For phenomenology, the most important criteria are that the participants have experienced the phenomenon, are interested in interpreting its meaning, and are willing to share their lived experience in data collection for publication (Colaizzi, 1978). Colaizzi states that “experience with the investigated topic and articulateness suffice as criteria for selecting subjects” (p. 58). The following points represent this study’s selection criteria:

1. The participant has experienced the phenomenon of program evaluation
2. The participant is a stakeholder at the research site
3. The participant was willing to share his/her experience and partake in the exploration
4. The participant is not a client or customer of the research site.

Since the research site is a small nonprofit, with two employees, 8 board members, 23 clinic volunteers and 2 special project volunteers, only a small number of individuals meet these criteria. Taking stakeholders’ availabilities and willingness into account, I interviewed six primary stakeholders, who met these selection criteria, thus satisfying the standard of a minimum of five participants set by Polkinghorne (1989) for phenomenology studies. It should be noted that for Colaizzi (1978), there is no minimum number of participants necessary to explore a phenomenon.

Participant Characteristics

Six stakeholders from Planned Parenthood each participated in one interview. Two of these participants were staff members (representing 100% of Planned Parenthood’s paid

² In phenomenology, participants are typically referred to as *co-researchers*. Since the term co-researcher holds existing meanings in program evaluation research, specifically in relation to participatory approaches, this study uses the term *participant* instead.

employees), two were board members (representing 25% of Planned Parenthood's Board of Directors), and two volunteers (accounting for 4% of clinic volunteers, and 50% of special project volunteers). The participants have been involved with the centre for varying lengths of time; anywhere from five months to seven years. Table 1 describes the key characteristics of the participants. Their involvement with evaluation varied greatly. For example, the participants described their experiences as being tasked with doing "95% of [it] myself," collecting statistics about centre use, leading evaluations of special projects, or reading or hearing evaluation reports at board meetings.

Table 1*Participants' Demographics*

Item	n (%)
Position at Planned Parenthood	
Staff Member	2 (33)
Board Member	2 (33)
Clinic Volunteer	1 (16)
Special Project Volunteer	2 (33)
Years experience with Planned Parenthood	
Less than a year	2 (33)
1-3 years	2 (33)
4-6 years	1 (16)
7+ years	1 (16)
Primary role in evaluation	
Conducting centre specific evaluation	1 (16)
Conducting special project evaluation	2 (33)
Reading or hearing evaluation reports	1 (16)
Collecting centre statistics	2 (33)
Number of evaluations involved in	
1-2	1 (16)
3-4	0 (0)
5-6	0 (0)
7+	5 (67)
Gender	
Female	6 (100)
Educational Background	
Gender Studies or Women's Studies	
Social Sciences	
Humanities	
Social Work	
Business	
Science	
Formal Evaluation Training	
Completed certification or training program	
Attended a workshop or presentation	
No formal evaluation training	

Instrument Development

To ensure that the interview guide included appropriate questions and solicited relevant information, I piloted the guide with two experienced program evaluators, who were not participants in this study. The evaluators participated in interviews, in which they pictured their evaluation work at particular nonprofit centres to answer the interview questions. At the end of each pilot interview, we discussed ways to improve the questions and prompts. Based on the pilot data, I revised the guide. The revised guide was then piloted with a phenomenology researcher, who read it and provided feedback to ensure that it aligned with the phenomenological approach of this study. The final interview guide included six major questions with several probes to help clarify the questions for the participants (see Appendix B).

Data Collection Procedures

In order to “contact the phenomenon as people experience it” (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 57) the principle method of data collection was in-depth, open ended, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with participants identified using the selection criteria outlined above. A staff person distributed information letters (see Appendix C) to all potential participants. Those who met the selection criteria and were interested in participating in an interview contacted me directly to obtain additional information. All participants signed an informed consent form (see Appendix D) prior to the interview. All interviews were conducted in person at a time and location selected by the participant. Structured as an informal conversation, each interview lasted 20-40 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants’ permission. During the interviews, I attempted to build a trusting relationship by following the suggestions of Keen (1975) to communicate: “(1) interest in understanding the participant’s experience; and (2) suspension of moral judgement” (Knaack, 1984, p. 110).

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data using Colaizzi's (1978) suggested approach. First, I organized the data from each interview into a list of extracted significant statements, which means "phrases or sentences that directly pertain to the investigated phenomenon" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 58). I paraphrased these significant statements from the each participant's transcript. I then compiled the significant statements for each participant into lists of non-repetitive, non-overlapping statements of equal worth. Second, I used creative insight to "spell out the meaning" (p. 58) of each significant statement. Third, I combined the significant statements and their associated meanings into clusters of themes that are "common to all subjects' [interview transcripts]" (p. 59), and described the experience and the contextual factors that influenced their experience. Throughout the reporting of the findings, I included verbatim quotations to inform and supplement the theme descriptions. I then referred back to the initial transcripts for validation, ensuring that nothing was left out or falsely represented.

Finally, I created a "descriptive identification of the phenomenon's structure," which Colaizzi (1978) describes as "the exhaustive description of the investigated phenomenon in as unequivocal a statement of identification of its fundamental structure as possible" (p. 61). In other words, this included a brief synthesis description that captures the fundamental essence of the shared experience of the phenomenon, depicting how evaluation is experienced by participants at Planned Parenthood.

Trustworthiness

As mentioned, I used bracketing to describe and separate my own experiences from the lived experience of those sharing the phenomenon of evaluation in a nonprofit organization. This increases trustworthiness through transparency and articulation of personal influences. Next, I

used member checking to verify the individual interview transcriptions and the representation of the phenomenon (i.e., the Descriptive Identification of the Phenomenon Structure). Upon completion of each round of interview transcription, I sent the transcripts to the participants for member checking: the process of engaging the participant in a verification of accuracy of the data that represents their perceptions and experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants were encouraged to correct, support, or elaborate on the transcription. Participants also had the opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions on the study findings; the description of the phenomenon. Lastly, memo writing was employed throughout in which I took notes on my assumptions, questions, decisions, and the actions I took during the interpretation of data (Charmaz, 2000). The memo writing helped to create an audit trail, which allows another researcher to revisit my thought processes to verify my interpretations. Memo writing is a key component of trustworthiness and quality in qualitative research (Siccama & Penna, 2008).

Ethics Approval

I obtained ethics approval for this study from the ethics board at the University of Ottawa. I was granted permission to conduct this study at this Planned Parenthood from the Executive Director of the organization and articulated in a Letter of Support (see Appendix E).

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter describes the meanings, and the essential themes of the participants' lived experience with the phenomenon of program evaluation at Planned Parenthood. In the context of this study, as alluded to in Chapter 3, themes refer both to what the participants experienced and to the contextual factors that influenced their experience in regards to the phenomenon of program evaluation. Throughout the study, it was evident that each participant had his or her own unique encounters with the phenomenon of evaluation at the given nonprofit. However specific themes emerged as being essential to their lived experience, no matter the role or position they hold or what program evaluations they were involved with. As such, the findings presented in this chapter are the "themes common to most or all of the interviews" (Hycner, 1999, p. 154).

The first section of the chapter presents a summary of the setting, including the types of programs, the purposes of evaluation and the types of evaluation activities at Planned Parenthood. The second section presents the significant statements and their associated meanings from the interviews. The third section presents the themes of the experience, while the fourth presents the contextual themes; both include verbatim quotations for description purposes. Finally, the fifth section is the descriptive identification of the phenomenon structure, the capstone element that depicts the essence of the shared experience.

Reasons for Doing Evaluation at Planned Parenthood

There are several factors that motivate the participants at this centre to undertake program evaluations. The two most commonly mentioned reasons were to fulfil funding requirements and to learn. Many grants that this centre receives require the staff to submit an evaluation report at the end of the granting period asking, for instance, as one participant

described, “If we had enough to succeed in our program, if all of our goals were met, all of our objectives were met... and overall how the overall program unfolded.” Participants explained that these reports are designed to ensure accountability, and also to help chose funding recipients for future years. For example, one person summed this up saying, “I think they’re a good thing for the centre because that’s the way we can get funding,” while another mentioned the long term importance, saying, “So, based on things that were said back to them the year before [in the evaluation report] they can certainly influence if they’re going to fund another program or another organization the following year.” Many participants also mentioned that evaluations are useful for learning: improving the program, learning more broadly from the experience, and learning more about clients’ needs. As a participant said,

I think [we need to do evaluations to get more money], yeah. And also for like the staff and volunteers to learn and grow from them. Really... I mean what’s the point of doing them if you don’t learn from them?

Speaking about the purpose of evaluation, another participant also reiterated the purpose of learning, saying “It’s very much about what can we do better. What’s working, what’s not working.” Moreover, the participants mentioned that they undertook evaluations to “make broader social change,” to “help [participants’] voices to be heard] and to decide whether a program should continue.

Significant Statements

As mentioned in Chapter 3, once the interviews were transcribed and read thoroughly, I extracted significant statements and connected what participants said with formulated meanings. Tables 2-7 show the significant statements and formulated meanings for each transcript (i.e., participant) and thus, provide important contextual information for the subsequent findings.

Table 2***Significant Statements of Participant 1***

Thematic Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
1. Evaluation takes a lot of time. [Frustrated]	Rushed and pressed for time for evaluation.
2. Evaluation takes time away from the service delivery, and makes both rushed. [Frustrated]	
3. Evaluation gives an overview of the program outcomes. [Happy]	Happy with what evaluation teaches them.
4. Evaluation shows what can be improved. [Happy]	Frustrated that required evaluations are long and unfocussed. Tired from doing evaluations all the time. Optimistic about the opportunities evaluation presents for learning. Discouraged by difficulties in making adequate quality evaluations. Isolated in their specific roles.
5. Program evaluations are useful to learn from. [Grateful]	
6. Required evaluations are too long. [Annoyed]	
7. It's frustrating that required evaluations are repetitive and unfocussed. [Frustrated]	
8. Required evaluations are the same every year, thus feel futile. [Frustrated]	
9. Doing evaluation this way is exhausting. [Exhausted]	
10. It's good that evaluation offers opportunities for learning. [Optimistic]	
11. Evaluation questionnaires are challenging to create. [Overwhelmed]	
12. Evaluation is the Executive Director's role. [Matter of fact]	
13. Executive Director can ask for help from board, but rarely does. [Matter of fact]	
Contextual Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
14. Frequently complete evaluation/reporting questionnaires for funding requirements [Annoyed]	Dependent on grants, and forced to do evaluations for funders' monitoring and reporting requirements.
15. Specific grants require an evaluation report post-funding [Matter of fact]	
16. An important portion of the budget comes from grants. [Frustrated]	Limited by stakeholders' lack of formal evaluation training. Stuck in the accountability system funders use to make decisions. Unable to learn from a nonprofit funding system that is not conducive to learning.
17. The Centre regularly applies for grants [Matter of fact]	
18. Working with other nonprofits provides experience with evaluation. [Relieved]	
19. Learning about evaluation while doing it. [Persevering]	
20. Evaluation is used for accountability to funders. [Matter of fact]	
21. Evaluations help funders hold organizations accountable [Positive]	
22. Available funds for nonprofits are limited. [Disappointed]	
23. Repetitive required evaluations do not promote learning. [Frustrated]	
24. Required evaluations are longer when the funding is bigger. [Frustrated]	

Table 3***Significant Statements of Participant 2***

Thematic Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings	
1. Evaluation is used to measure outcomes. [Happy]	Happy with what evaluation teaches them.	
2. Evaluations are necessary for improvement. [Grateful]		
3. Evaluation offers great opportunities to learn. [Happy]	Isolated in their specific roles and wishing they could collaborate and share responsibilities more.	
4. Evaluation is the Executive Director's responsibility [Matter of fact]		
5. Other stakeholders contribute statistics to the person who does evaluation. [Matter of fact]		
6. Interested in learning about program evaluation if there was time. [Wishing]		
7. The organizational structure is designed so one person does evaluation. [Regretful]		
8. Required evaluations are really long. [Frustrated]		Frustrated by the time that required evaluations take.
9. Required evaluations can be painful. [Frustrated]		Hopeful about the potential for evaluation to bring in resources.
10. Evaluation is useful for obtaining grants. [Hopeful]		Regretful that evaluation can take time away from their Centre priorities.
11. Evaluation unfortunately takes time away from things that are more beneficial to the Centre. [Regretful]		Rushed and pressed for time for evaluation.
12. There is not enough time for evaluation. [Frustrated]		
13. Another staff person would free up time for evaluation activities and learning. [Frustrated]		
Contextual Significant Statements		Formulated Meanings
14. The Centre depends on regularly applying for grants. [Matter of fact]		Dependent on grants, and forced to do evaluations for funders' monitoring and reporting requirements.
15. The Centre applies for grants every few weeks. [Matter of fact]		
16. There is not enough money to hire another staff person. [Frustrated]	Limited in all activities by having low resources.	
17. Being short-staffed affects evaluation activities. [Frustrated]		
18. Limited resources negatively affect evaluation capacity. [Discouraged]		

Table 4***Significant Statements of Participant 3***

Thematic Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
1. Using vigilance in collecting statistics. [Pressured]	Pressured to produce evidence for grant evaluation reports.
2. Evaluation is useful for improving services. [Optimistic]	Optimistic about the opportunities evaluation presents for learning and for bringing in resources.
3. Evaluation is helpful for obtaining funding. [Happy]	
4. All evaluations are done by the Executive Director alone. [Matter of face]	Isolated in their specific roles and wishing they could collaborate and share responsibilities more.
5. A third staff person would improve evaluation capacity. [Wishful]	Rushed and pressed for time for evaluation, and all other activities.
6. Resource limitations problematically affect all aspects of the Centre. [Discouraged]	
7. Volunteers are used to meet the basic needs of the Centre. [Matter of fact]	
Contextual Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
8. Evaluation is necessary for getting funding to run programs. [Matter of fact]	Dependent on grants, and forced to do evaluations for funders' monitoring and reporting requirements.
9. An important portion of our budget comes from grants. [Frustrated]	
10. The Centre writes a lot of grant applications. [Matter of fact]	
11. Funders require evaluation for accountability. [Frustrated]	Stuck in the accountability system funders use to make decisions.
12. Funders use evaluation to allocate grants. [Matter of fact]	
13. Society seems to be evidence-based. [Regretful]	

Table 5***Significant Statements of Participant 4***

Thematic Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings	
1. Evaluation offer opportunities for learning [Optimistic]	Optimistic about the opportunities evaluation presents for learning.	
2. Evaluation reiterates concerns that we might have missed. [Happy]		
3. Evaluation highlights new problems that have developed. [Positive]	Grateful for evaluation's contribution to program improvement.	
4. Our programs need evaluation to ensure they meet needs. [Optimistic]		
5. Evaluation data is used to improve programming [Grateful]		
6. Evaluation shows what can be improved. [Grateful]		
7. Evaluation is necessary because the program is evolving. [Positive]		
8. New programs require evaluation to grow. [Grateful]		
9. Evaluation is used for grant application. [Optimistic]		Hopeful about the potential for evaluation to bring in resources.
10. Evaluation data is used for marketing. [Optimistic]		Pressured to produce evidence for grant evaluation reports.
11. Evaluation is a requirement for funding. [Pressured]		Passionate about the role evaluation can play in creating social change.
12. Evaluation data is used in outreach presentations. [Optimistic]		
13. Evaluation data is used to make broader social change. [Passionate]		
14. Evaluation helps people's voices to be heard. [Passionate]		
15. Evaluation can create change at many levels [Passionate]		
16. Evaluation helps people who are marginalized. [Passionate]		
17. Evaluation allows participants to create change. [Passionate]		
18. Hearing from participants is a very positive experience. [Passionate]		
19. Challenging to find the best method for evaluation. [Annoyed]	Discouraged by difficulties in making adequate quality evaluations.	
20. Challenging, but necessary to be open to feedback. [Challenged, but determined]		
21. Difficult to connect with participants after they've given feedback. [Discouraged]		
22. Integrating and sharing results of feedback is important but often not done well. [Discouraged]		
23. Need to design the evaluation tool regularly. [Determined]	Determined to do evaluation better.	
24. Evaluators need to be prepared to actually make changes, even if it's tough. [Determined]		
25. Evaluations are long and repetitive. [Frustrated]	Frustrated that required evaluations are long and unfocussed.	
26. Evaluations are too long. [Frustrated]		
Contextual Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings	
27. Written reports and spreadsheets for centre are reported at the Board. [Matter of fact]	Operating in evaluation silos, where the board is not involved in evaluation.	
28. Few evaluations pass through the board. [Regretful]		
29. Learning all the time. [Determined]	Limited by stakeholders' lack of formal	

Thematic Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
30. Evaluation designed by volunteer and her colleagues. [Resourceful]	evaluation training.
31. One's background influences appreciation for evaluation. [Matter of fact]	Motivated to do evaluation activities when an individual's background has influenced her to
32. Some survey respondents don't believe their voices will be heard. [Discouraged]	value evaluation.

Table 6***Significant Statements of Participant 5***

Thematic Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
1. Evaluation helps the Centre to improve services. [Happy]	Optimistic about the opportunities evaluation presents for learning.
2. The Centre learns from evaluations. [Optimistic]	
3. Evaluation can help obtain funding. [Hopeful]	Hopeful about the potential for evaluation to bring in resources.
4. Evaluations are necessary for funding. [Matter of fact]	
5. Evaluation is used to fulfill grant requirements. [Hopeful]	
6. Evaluation only comes to the board for proof reading or one-off questions. [Matter of fact]	Isolated in their specific roles.
7. It's important to learn what clients need. [Passionate]	Passionate about the role evaluation can play in connecting with clients.
8. Evaluation helps ensure the Centre meets clients' needs [Passionate].	
9. Evaluation helps tailor programs to understand and meet clients' needs. [Dedicated]	
10. An external evaluator would decrease bias and drama. [Critical]	Evaluation is challenging to do well.
11. Evaluations could allow us to see more. [Determined]	Determined to do evaluation better.
12. Evaluation is not a priority. [Frustrated]	Rushed and pressed for time for evaluation.
13. Daily operations are a greater priority than evaluations. [Matter of fact]	
14. Staff are overwhelmed on a day-to-day basis. [Overwhelmed]	
15. The Centre does not do enough evaluations. [Disappointed]	Disappointed by the quality of recent evaluations.
16. Evaluations do not hear from clients. [Regretful]	
17. An unbalanced sample of client stories are shared with stakeholders. [Disappointed]	
18. The Centre's participants are not always available or seen a second time. [Discouraged]	Discouraged by difficulties in making adequate quality evaluations
Contextual Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
19. Evaluation can improve communication between the board, the staff and the clients. [Regretful]	Frustrated and limited by an evolving and unclear nonprofit-board relationship.
20. The board does not have much involvement in evaluation. [Regretful]	
21. Recent staff terminations have caused difficulties. [Frustrated]	
22. The Board was previously unaware of important organizational details. [Regretful]	
23. Board members have left because of the change in relationship with the organization. [Frustrated]	
24. Evaluation can help increase accountability within the organization. [Wishful]	
25. Evaluation can help avoid future bad experiences. [Wishful]	
26. Being short-staffed affects all areas of programming. [Frustrated]	Limited in all activities by having low resources.
27. Staff time is stretched. [Frustrated]	
28. Resources are instable. [Frustrated]	
29. Programs were cut because of financial limitations. [Frustrated]	

Thematic Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
30. Much of the operating budget is used for a special project. [Frustrated]	Dependent on grants, and forced to do evaluations for funders' monitoring and reporting requirements.
31. The Centre depends on grant money for survival. [Matter of fact]	

Table 7***Significant Statements of Participant 6***

Thematic Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
1. Evaluation is useful for learning about the organization. [Optimistic]	Optimistic about the opportunities evaluation presents for learning.
2. Evaluation allows reflection on the donor demographics. [Optimistic]	
3. Evaluation shows what can be improved. [Grateful]	
4. Rigour had to be self-motivated. [Discouraged]	Discouraged by difficulties in making adequate quality evaluations.
5. Motivation to do evaluation was difficult. [Discouraged]	
6. Evaluation is used to obtain funding. [Hopeful]	Hopeful evaluation's potential to bring resources.
7. Evaluation was initiated/ carried out by one person. [Annoyed]	Isolated in specific evaluation roles, and wishing collaboration was possible.
8. There is not enough time to learn about evaluation. [Frustrated]	Rushed and pressed for time for all activities, including evaluation and evaluation capacity building.
9. There is not enough time to do evaluation well. [Frustrated]	
10. There is not enough time for organizational learning. [Regretful]	
11. Evaluation is not a priority at the Centre. [Frustrated]	
12. Evaluation efforts turned to informal conversation. [Frustrated]	Frustrated evaluation is informal conversation.
13. Negativity is a barrier to constructive evaluation. [Frustrated]	
14. Evaluation is haphazard. [Disappointed]	Disappointed by the quality of inadequate evaluations.
15. Evaluation is scrappy. [Frustrated]	
16. Evaluation could be better. [Regretful]	
17. Evaluation is poor quality. [Disappointed]	
18. Evaluation learning is not shared with others. [Disappointed]	
19. Evaluations are not used well. [Frustrated]	
20. Evaluation is valued by some stakeholders. [Grateful]	Appreciative of evaluation work.
21. Evaluation work is appreciated. [Grateful]	
22. Individuals' dedication to the cause provides an opportunity for evaluation improvement. [Grateful]	
23. Evaluation is frustrating. [Frustrated]	Frustrated with, and tired of, evaluation requirements.
24. Evaluation requirements are infuriating. [Infuriated]	
25. Stakeholders are tired. [Overwhelmed]	
Contextual Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
26. Evaluation is not informed by research or practice. [Disappointed]	Limited by stakeholders' lack of formal evaluation training.
27. Stakeholders do not have a lot of experience with program evaluation. [Frustrated]	
28. There is nobody in the organization who can model evaluation practice for others. [Frustrated]	
29. Stakeholders are trained in social sciences. [Matter of fact]	
30. Few stakeholders trained in organizational learning. [Annoyed]	
31. The board plays an active role in Centre operations. [Matter of fact]	Frustrated and limited by an evolving and unclear nonprofit-board relationship.
32. The board and the organization have an unhealthy relationship. [Annoyed]	

33. The board does not play an evaluation role. [Frustrated]	
34. There is not enough time or money to improve evaluation skills. [Frustrated]	Limited in all activities by having low resources, and staff shortage.
35. There is not enough money to hire more staff. [Frustrated]	
36. Resource constraints negatively affect evaluation. [Discouraged]	
37. Required evaluations do not promote learning. [Discouraged]	Unable to learn from a nonprofit funding system that is not conducive to learning.
38. Required evaluations do not promote innovation. [Discouraged]	
39. The Centre depends on grants. [Frustrated]	Dependent on grants, and forced to do evaluations for funders' requirements.
40. The Centre does certain types of evaluations for \$. [Matter of fact]	

Description of Themes of Experience

There are four main themes that compose the “what” of the participants lived experience with evaluation. Each theme is elaborated on using quotes that illustrate how each experience is distinct, but yet connected by common experience. The themes include the following: (1) Rushed and pressed for time; (2) Some good will come: A sense of optimism; (3) Perceived inadequacy of evaluation; and (4) Dedicated but alone and isolated.

Rushed and pressed for time. The participants felt that evaluation demanded a notable amount of time from their busy schedules, and that it took significant energy to do the evaluations well. Given these perceptions, the lived experience of the participants who participated in program evaluation at this low-resourced non-profit organization was one of being rushed and pressed for time.

Participants felt that evaluation is valuable, but expressed exasperation with trying to do evaluation in such a time-crunched and short-staffed context stating that, “[evaluation is] squeezed in,” and that the task of squeezing it in is hugely demanding, as evaluation is required for project funding reporting, but not funded itself. One participant, who had undertaken her evaluation without it being a formal requirement, felt as if she was encountering many obstacles, and straining herself to finish her evaluation report among other pressing responsibilities. She said, “My overwhelming feeling doing the process was that I was pushing a really heavy boulder up the hill.” Another person shows a very positive propensity towards evaluation, but regretfully says, “We do have seven years of amazing data that in my spare time I would like to analyse and do some writing about... but that hasn’t happened yet.” She has an interest in doing evaluation, but program delivery activities are prioritised over, for example, in-depth analysis of data. Many participants also mentioned that the types of evaluations required by funders shaped their

experience to be one of “driving in rush hour traffic.” One said, “It can be exhausting to answer all of those questions. It’s like actually doing a proposal over again in reporting back. That really stands out to me.”

The participants also talked about the feeling of juggling multiple responsibilities alongside evaluation, and how this contributed to feeling rushed and frustrated. Other responsibilities they listed included client service provision, writing grant applications, doing outreach, organizing fundraisers, responding to client emergencies, and in the case of volunteers, their professional or other responsibilities outside of their volunteer commitments. They described feeling as if they are always working in the moment or in crisis mode, and that they are frustrated about the time the evaluation activities take from their jobs or other responsibilities. The following quotations capture this feeling:

And that’s where a lot of the work comes in. You’re then, again, another week taken up with trying to get this report done that has to be handed in by a deadline as well... a really lengthy evaluation process significantly takes away from our time doing other things, which would probably be more beneficial to the overall contribution of the centre. Another participant nicely summarized this thought by stating, “[Evaluation] hasn’t been a priority. Daily survival, really.”

Overall, for some participants, this experience of being rushed was more negative, while others maintained a very positive outlook. Some participants described their experience of being rushed as being couched in frustrating demands or an impossible balancing act of priorities. Others describe their experience of being pressed for time as something that is unfortunate, but very positively viewing it as a temporary limitation that they will be able to overcome one day. The experience of evaluation as rushed and pressed for time, a resource that is not readily

available at this low-resourced nonprofit, was pervasive throughout all participants' stories.

Some good will come: A sense of optimism. Participants overwhelmingly expressed that their experiences with evaluations were useful, culminating in a shared experience of feeling optimistic that the evaluations will help them go forward. They shared a belief that they were worth the “pain” and that they were overall very helpful for their operations. This experience highlights the participants' positive perspective towards evaluation in general.

Many participants discussed how they felt positive and optimistic when experiencing first-hand how evaluation enhanced their learning. In reflecting on activities such as compiling centre statistics, conducting survey research or filling out evaluation reporting requirements they recounted learning many things from the evaluation processes and the findings, and that this learning contributed to the feeling that evaluations would help them go forward. One person said, “[Evaluations] let you take stock of ... the things that are worthwhile and beneficial... the problem areas, the challenges... it does highlight places where you kind of need to work on them more.” Another expressed, “It’s to really give a broad overview on what went well, and what didn’t go so well. And then from those two pots, the final thing that you want is what can be then improved moving forward.” Sometimes this translated to learning how to improve a specific clinic or access to a specific resource, other times this was about improving the inclusivity of a workshop, or how to better select and write grant applications. Another quote highlighted the helpfulness of learning what should be changed, saying “Evaluation reiterates; sometimes it reiterates issues that are at [a program] that we are aware of, and sometimes it brings new stuff to light.”

Participants also described feeling optimistic that while sometimes painful, the gains from evaluations are worthwhile. One person, reflecting on the evaluation process in general,

said, “I think [evaluations] are a good thing for the centre because that’s the way we can get funding.” Another quote supports how participants feel this optimism and potential when they go through their routine activities:

I remember thinking that it’s important. Like, I try to make sure that I write down all the phone calls and stuff, because I know that it’s involved in funding. I think that’s the main thing that stands out to me... Like, if [a staff person] wants me to do something involving stats, like that’s one of the things that I know that I should do. As opposed to, if she’s like, oh can you restock the condoms? Then I’m like, oh, [a volunteer] can do that tomorrow.

Participants also experienced a feeling that good will come from evaluations because they represent a means of hearing clients’ or program participants’ voices and perspectives. As one person suggested when reflecting on the potential of client satisfaction surveys: “Some 15-year-old kid might need some services that are being offered nowhere else, that we could easily offer if they brought forward the idea [through an evaluation process].” This shared experience also came through when a participant said,

So, it’s really for me... about helping people who are marginalized or whose voices are not heard... helping those voices to be heard... [evaluation] is more than just looking at what’s working and what’s not working in a program. It’s also about how participants voices can change... make broader social change. Macro, micro, whichever level.

A common essence throughout all participants experience is the feeling that evaluations help them go forward as individuals and as an organization. That experience of feeling optimism and helpfulness stems from a variety of places, including evaluation use for program improvement and learning, use for funding applications, and use as a tool for connecting with

and empowering clients.

Perceived inadequacy of evaluation. Participants felt that the evaluations at this centre could be better, and as such, shared a common experience of inadequacy. Participants felt that evaluation is helpful and good, but experienced falling short of potential and hoping that they can improve in the future. Participants expressed a shared experience of inadequate evaluation quality, and a negative culture around evaluation, for example, feeling that co-workers or co-volunteers were not as willing to participate in evaluation meetings that they proposed, or they felt that evaluation attempts were not rigorous or well-designed. Participants had doubts that the centre's evaluation activities were fully meeting their potential, neither as tools for finding funding nor as tools for learning and improvement. Some said that evaluations were not well used, saying "That [evaluation focus group] was useful. [But] I'm not confident it will be used moving forward." Another echoed this, saying, "I did that [evaluation report] at work on my lunch break. Maybe it wasn't thorough... For as much as I'm aware of being unbiased, it was probably biased." Similarly, participants expressed experiences where internal evaluation focus groups or debriefs were reduced to informal communication or ranting:

[The] lack of time, and maybe desire, to do this evaluation and learning breeds conversations that are more complaints-based, or frustration-based and barriers-based than they are opportunities... There's a lot of "oh that didn't happen because x, y, z is a pervasive problem that we are never going to get out of, and isn't the world shitty." And that's my impression of how evaluations went.

Participants described the feeling of falling short in designing optimal evaluations, and a desire to constantly improve. One person said, "When you're forming your own survey and own

questions to give feedback, sometimes asking the right question to get the material that you need can be challenging.” Another described this by saying:

We do need to redesign, and will redesign our evaluation tool again this year. We try to keep it as consistent as possible... because when the data changes we can't cross compare... but we also need to do it in a way that works for the people using the tool.

Participants suggested that their shared experience of inadequacy stems from bias or from inadequate data. “[An external evaluator would make] things a lot better... because then your personal feelings, the dynamics, your feelings are totally out of it. There's no drama, so to speak.” Participants also felt that by relying on statistics for evaluation reports, the organization is missing an opportunity to better understand the needs of its clients. As one participant expressed:

I think we don't do enough [evaluations]. I... or, not that I've seen a whole lot... it's usually stats, it's usually at a Board Meeting like “this is who we've had, this is who we've served in the last little while.” I don't think I've ever really seen any client responses, based on first hand “how did you think your experience here at [the centre] was, did we meet your needs, is there anything we could do more?”

In sum, the participants shared an experience of inadequacy with evaluation at their nonprofit organization. For some, this means a slight tweak in the questionnaire, for others this meant a completely different approach to evaluation or beginning to do evaluation rather than just basing evaluation reports on personal reflections. No matter the reason, across all participants' accounts, a common essence of inadequacy, of both falling short and wanting to improve, was present.

Dedicated but isolated. Throughout the interviews, participants shared that responsibility for evaluations was placed almost entirely on one individual. They described this as creating an experience of working in “work bubbles,” or “silos,” and of feeling isolation.

Participants expressed that the Executive Director does all centre evaluations. She said:

[I] do 95% of [the evaluations] myself. Sometimes I get help from my Board of Directors. Because especially if it's a new application that I'm not familiar with, where I just took over less than a year ago, I do have questions. So sometimes on, “how did you report on this before” and “is this the same criteria it follows” and if they can provide me some feedback then that's helpful. But most of it all falls in my lap. So I'm doing the proposals and I'm doing the reports back.

Participants shared this experience of silos, as other stakeholders had minimal direct involvement with centre program evaluation, aside from contributing statistics or hearing a report at a meeting. They said, “our executive director is the one who is currently handling all of that,” and “I think program evaluation and grant application is interesting. And I would like to kind of see that side.” Even board members' experience included very little direct involvement with centre evaluation. As one board member explained:

I've only seen [evaluation] at a board level like, if it was brought to the board's attention regarding funding, or if someone needed to proof read or edit, or a piece being brought forward more so... Definitely not much [direct involvement].

Another board member also said, “I haven't seen any other evaluations done through Planned Parenthood. [The program evaluation she led for a specific special project] is only one I know of.”

Outside of centre-specific evaluation, participants who interacted with special project

evaluations experienced the feeling of being isolated from the rest of the programming and other stakeholders. Participants recounted stories about doing program evaluation, for example writing a report for a specific fundraising project, or conducting evaluation of a special project, while feeling very separate and alone in that initiative, one person said, “I was definitely feeling the insecurity of “alright, nobody’s on board”... Everybody else was just sort of looking at me and not quite getting why I was doing [evaluation].” Participants cited requiring resolve and determination to persevere through the isolation, saying “I’m going to have to keep pushing for this, because I think that it’s important.”

For some, this isolation is disheartening or demotivating, for others it allows for independence and autonomy. Whether perceived positively or negatively, all participants share this experience of isolation, or of working in silos, when it comes to their interactions with program evaluation at this nonprofit organization.

Description of the Contextual Themes

There are three main themes that depict the underlying structural, or contextual, conditions that affect the participants’ lived experience.

Dependence on the granting system. Throughout their interviews, the participants described how Planned Parenthood needs grant money to run their programs, to pay their staff, and to stay in operation from month-to-month. As such, many participants attributed the nature of their experience to their organization’s dependence on the granting system. The organization receives some government funding, but the rest of its operating budget relies on donations, fundraisers and grants from non-governmental funders. In order to receive this limited funding, the nonprofit fills out lengthy applications every few weeks, while trying to be creative, innovative and effective in order to fulfill the criteria for grants from a diversity of funding

sources. They apply for grants that are very substantial, for example, \$25 000-\$50 000, and others that help to fund small projects (\$1000-\$5000). Participants explained that this dependence on grants takes time away from other activities, and that the evaluations required with these grants affect their experience with evaluation at this nonprofit organization. As one participant explained:

Some nonprofits might have either more long-term funding and not have to apply for things quite as regularly to get continuous funding, versus I know every couple of weeks [the Executive Director] is applying for something else... or keeping an eye out to see if there's anything else that we can apply for.

The participants also cited a dependence on the granting system as a central factor in their experience not only with evaluation, but also with their involvement in the organization generally. One said, "I know that we're a nonprofit, so we need to get our funding from somewhere." Likewise, another said she believed that, "[required evaluations are] the only way that [funders] can figure out where needs funding." The participants articulated an experience of being locked into this system by a need for funding to continue surviving as an organization. This lack of agency forces stakeholders to experience evaluation as tied heavily to these grants, rather than as an independent activity that they initiate themselves for their own purposes.

In addition, participants discussed the impact of the structure of government grant evaluation requirements. One said:

As a nonprofit who used to, or sometimes does get government funding... Government reporting and learning is crap. Because like the system we build around nonprofits to help them improve is actually keeping them from improving... I mean government funding is sort of renowned for rewarding the same thing over and over again... and not

liking innovation and change. So it's just like the government funding pools are encouraging you not to think critically, learn and improve... [Evaluation] could be something that could be positive and valued and done on a regularly basis, but this isn't a system that allows for it right now.

Overall, the participants highlighted that their experience was heavily tarnished by the required evaluations, and the way their structures deemphasize learning and evaluative thinking. Participants expressed believing that evaluation could be a positive experience, if the organization had a different relationship with the funding system.

A suboptimal structure. At Planned Parenthood, there are several organizational components that contribute to making a suboptimal experience a factor in their experience. For one, the organization has operated for more than a decade with three staff people, filling the roles of Executive Director, Education Coordinator, and Client Services Coordinator. Due to financial instability and limitations that emerged in the summer of 2014, the organization is forced to operate with only two staff, while the Executive Director fills the role of Education Coordinator in addition to her managerial duties. Additionally, in the past year, due to the misconduct of former staff, their Board of Directors has been heavily involved with the decisions to terminate staff and to reduce staff time. As a result, many of their members have left the board (they have 8 members, with 5 empty positions), while others struggle with a heightened monitoring role. Despite this, the board is very informally structured. They have no formal, active monitoring and evaluation role, but instead, are involved in daily decision-making about operational details, through informal email conversations and phone calls.

In their interviews for this study, participants recounted that a suboptimal structure is a barrier to a more positive experience with evaluation at their nonprofit. A participant expressed,

“The basic truth of it is nobody has time for this stuff. There’s no time for learning, there’s no time for getting better at learning or hearing about [evaluation], or having really deep conversations about it.” As explained by participants, evaluation experience is deeply affected by the time the stakeholders are able to allocate to it. They say there is not enough time to learn from evaluations, nor to get better at doing and using evaluations. Countless times in interviews, participants articulated a shortage of time, in particular staff time, as a recurring factor in their experience with evaluation at this nonprofit. The organization is currently without a staff position that they have had for many years. One participant explains:

Right now, we don’t have an education coordinator at all. And that area is lacking. And we know it’s a need for the community... [We were] screwed over to the point where we said, “should we close the doors or not? ... We had no money for some programs, so we had to cut them.

The financial trouble they experienced in the past year means that they had to cut 33% of their staff time. The two remaining staff members try to cover off the responsibilities of the three positions, leaving even less time for evaluations. Participants expressed regret that this structure impedes stakeholders other than the Executive Director from taking a greater role in evaluation, one says “right now, you’re doing things to get things done. And I’m also very, very busy, and my position is very hectic so it... I just really don’t have time or capacity to take on that kind of role.” Another participant reflected on the involvement of other stakeholders in the evaluation process, saying,

I think in order to do [evaluation] in a way that’s really organized and really efficient, which lead back to needing more funding, we could have someone that’s like... that would their main job, it would be to work on program evaluation. And have really open

communication and the other person who is providing the funding. I think that would be better. It could be a staff person or it could be a volunteer who would want to devote all their time to doing that.

In addition to the shortage of funding for the third staff person, participants mentioned the relationship between the board and the organization as a factor in their evaluation experience. One participant, not a board member, explained that,

The board is a lot closer to the organization than my experience has been with other nonprofits... it's an unhealthy relationship. [The board is] not able to give as much attention as it should to monitoring and evaluation... which is an explicit purpose of ratifying or bringing in a board.

A board member explains that recent controversy has motivated the board to become more involved in the daily activities of the organization. She revealed that, "At a board level, we were unaware of the daily happenings at [the centre] until shit hit the fan, so to speak. Not until that happened, we realized that we needed to get more involved." Since then, the board and the staff have had a much closer relationship, to the point where the board is involved in "the decision on what colour floor goes on the first floor of the building" and in "tweet approval." The relationship between the board and the staff, in addition to the staff shortage contribute to making a suboptimal structure a major contextual factor in stakeholders' experiences with evaluation.

Individuals' backgrounds and training. The stakeholders at Planned Parenthood are commonly trained in the issues that clients interact with, rather than in specific operational or organizational skills. Table 1 shows that the majority of stakeholders have educational backgrounds in humanities and social sciences, while none have received formal evaluation

training. On the other hand, many participants come from backgrounds, former employment, or professions in which evaluation is viewed as valuable. For example, some came from the field of social work, where evaluations are valued as an important tool for program improvement. Others have worked in higher-capacity organizations that had the time to invest in evaluation training, even informal, or took the time to take evaluation work seriously.

Participants mentioned that individuals' backgrounds and training had an impact on their experiences with evaluation at this nonprofit. They described this sometimes as a positive influence, and sometimes as a negative influence, depending on the background and training in question. Participants mentioned stakeholders' lack of training in program evaluation, or in organizational learning, as a factor that contributed to feeling that evaluations were of low quality. They felt that, in hiring, the organization prioritises content knowledge, or knowledge of the clients' issues, rather than organizational or management skills. One person said:

“[In hiring there is] a heavy emphasis on the gender studies, women's studies, sexual health, community-based health... and I don't think that there's a skill set in terms of [evaluation] for staff and volunteers.”

On the contrary, many participants cited their various backgrounds as being the reason they had a positive memory of, or positive attitude during, their evaluation experiences. One person elaborated on this, saying “Partly it's my own background. Coming as a social worker means I bring certain values and ethics and beliefs. Coming as an academic I bring an understanding of research and evaluation.” Another person remembered experiencing determination and a prioritization of program evaluation activities, because of her personal values. She said, “I would say that the majority of [the evaluation] was led by me, because of my experience in valuing that reflection space.” As such, participants believe that background

played a role in influencing experience both by limiting evaluation quality, and by encouraging appreciation for evaluation.

Descriptive Identification of the Phenomenon Structure

Participants express doing their best to fulfill what they perceive as an exhausting list of time-consuming evaluation requirements, while working under rushed conditions and extreme resource constraints. They describe their experience as involving a positive, optimistic view of evaluation, experiencing it as helpful to moving them forward, but challenging to do well without specific formal training, or time allocated to learn about or practice evaluation. Those who feel more adept with evaluation report having gained these skills from experiences outside of their role at the centre. They report that their evaluation experiences are constrained by the realities of nonprofit finances: they feel that their organization's dependence on short-term grants means excessive time spent on reporting, and no long-term stability to allow for long-term planning and organizational development, in addition to a staff shortage. Despite financial troubles, and a suboptimal structure, the staff and volunteers of this organization have a dedication to improvement that transcends the barriers, and shapes all of their experiences with evaluation. According to participants, the essence of evaluation at this nonprofit is stakeholders doing their best to push a boulder that they believe to be good and helpful up a steep hill exaggerated by financial restrictions and instability. Participants expressed wanting to learn from evaluations, and wanting to use the evaluations to get funding, make improvements and hear from clients, all with the overarching purpose of better serving their clients.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Summary of Findings

Overall, the participants at Planned Parenthood experience evaluation as often occurring under time, financial and human resource constraints, and thus they frequently experience frustration or a feeling that they can do better in regards to their evaluation activities. The sense of both being pressed for time and of falling short is compounded by the financial pressure placed on the organization to do more evaluations in order to get more funding, which, if successful, means more evaluation and reporting. In spite of this pressure, and of having little training in evaluation or time for collaboration, participants at Planned Parenthood are optimistic about their experience with evaluation and its potential for helping them to improve their operations and service delivery.

Integration of Findings with the Published Literature

This study adds to the emerging field of empirical research on program evaluation. In particular, it contributes to the sub-areas that concentrate on evaluation in low-resourced contexts (shoestring evaluation) and on stakeholders' experience with evaluation. Overall, the participants' descriptions of their evaluation experience align well with existing research and theory in the field of nonprofit evaluation, pointing to a few discrepancies that should be further explored.

First, the study findings show that participants have some negative feelings towards program evaluation. Feelings of negativity or resistance towards evaluation have been documented by many researchers (e.g., Carter, 1971; Donaldson, Gooler & Scriven, 2002). For example, Patton (1997) showed that stakeholders often hold negative attitudes toward evaluation, which then influence the likelihood of utilization and of future evaluation projects.

He explains that negative attitudes can contribute to feelings of anxiety, nervousness, resistance and a sense of being threatened (Patton, 1997). As Taut and Brauns (2003) write, “even the word ‘evaluation’ (because of negative pairings and generalizations) creates negative, or at least sceptical, expectations” (p. 257). In particular, the stakeholders of this study expressed that evaluations were primarily undertaken as a means of obtaining funding, as is the case for many nonprofits in previous studies (Alie & Seita, 1997; Botcheva et al., 2002, Carman, 2011). The stakeholders are dependent on grants in order to continue their current programming, and as the grants require evaluation, these evaluations are necessary for survival as an organization.

Phillips and Levasseur (2004) have shown that nonprofits are often dependent on grants from funding organizations or government, and are thus affected by accountability trends and expectations. The participants in this study discussed how they had no choice in regards to doing evaluations for funding purposes. This obligation of evaluation contributed to their feelings of being rushed and pressured to fit in time for evaluation. It also contributed to a sense of frustration since evaluations take time away from their service delivery and Centre priorities. These findings confirm the conclusions of other authors, who have written about the negative impact of time constraints on evaluation, and participants’ perceptions that evaluation problematically takes time away from the mission of the organization (Benjamin, 2008; Easterling, 2000; Hall et al., 2003; Liket et al., 2012; Taut & Brauns, 2003). Several studies built on this, emphasizing that low-resourced nonprofits feel great pressure from these requirements (Carman, 2007; Carman, 2009; Carroll and Stater, 2009; Ebrahim & Rangan, 2010).

Stakeholders’ negative experience with required evaluations also aligns with motivation theory that shows that an unpleasant experience that a person chooses is perceived as less aversive than an unpleasant experience that a person is forced to do (Bandler et al., 1968). Also,

it was evident in this study that the participants were frustrated by the nature of the required evaluations, as they were long and unfocussed. Literature has well documented that required evaluations from funding agencies and governmental departments are long and different for each grant (Carman, 2007; Carroll & Stater, 2009; Romzek, 2011). Further, the participants expressed frustration that they do not have enough staff to cover the day-to-day activities, much less someone on staff who could take the time to do evaluation. To mitigate these feelings of frustration and enhance the quality of program evaluations, research suggests that it is ideal to have a specific evaluator, who has evaluation training and experience, to facilitate and oversee evaluation activities (King, 2002; Volkov & King, 2007).

Second, the participants also expressed feelings of inadequacy. The findings show that participants experienced disappointment about evaluation quality, regret that evaluation was not meeting its potential for the Centre, and a desire to make evaluation more relevant and useful for learning and improvement as well as funding. This supports research that explains that the quality of evaluation is one of the primary factors in evaluation use (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Shulha & Cousins, 1997), and that an evaluation's perceived usefulness is a primary factor in a stakeholder's perception of that evaluation. Smith (1992) used factor analysis to show that perceived usefulness was the most important factor in "readiness" for evaluation, in other words, having a positive attitude or openness toward evaluation. It also echoes Morley, Vinson, and Hatry (2001), who revealed that nonprofits have a habit of monitoring statistics, or "things that are 'easy' to measure," rather than using rigorous methodology to evaluate programs. It has also been shown that nonprofits decreasingly have the resources to hire external evaluators, and as such, are using their own, and possibly biased, evaluations (Carman, 2007; Fine et al., 2000; Liket et al., 2012).

The study findings show that when evaluation is of poor quality, stakeholders blame themselves, or dwell on the macro level factors that are a barrier to the Centre's evaluation success, such as time, human resources, and financial limitations. This contributes to a culture of negativity surrounding evaluation, and can invoke excessive evaluation anxiety. Donaldson et al., (2002) explore this negativity in their study on how anxiety can contribute to evaluation barriers, including lack of cooperation of stakeholders, false reporting and bias, problems with validity and use. For example, they showed that stakeholders with evaluation anxiety can withhold access to information, resist cooperation through participation, and show dissatisfaction with the process or results (Donaldson & Gooler, 2003).

Stakeholders at the centre attributed their experience of inadequacy to two main factors. First, financial restrictions prohibit stakeholders from participating in evaluation training programs, which are considered in the literature to be one of the most accessible ways of increasing evaluation capacity at nonprofit organizations (Easterling, 2000). They do not have time to allocate towards learning new evaluation skills or reading evaluation guides. Easterling (2000) and Liket et al. (2012) show that evaluation and evaluative skill building is especially difficult when resources are low. Second, stakeholders' formal education and training represents a lost opportunity for evaluation capacity. They are predominantly trained in humanities and social sciences areas and are lacking in stakeholders who are versed in organizational learning or program evaluation. Botcheva et al., (2002) discusses the challenges of low evaluation capacity in nonprofits and showed that a majority of nonprofits expressed a need for training, building evaluation capacity, and designing better evaluations. Patton (1997) emphasizes the role of the "personal factor," which he describes as the influence of the evaluator's personal characteristics on the success of the evaluation and the uptake of the results. However, current research does not

explore the relationship between nonprofit stakeholders' educational backgrounds and an organization's evaluation capacity. Further research could clarify whether this relationship between background and evaluation experience is present at other similarly resourced nonprofits.

The study also found that resource constraints and organizational structure caused the participants to experience evaluation as isolated. Participants were dedicated to their evaluation responsibilities, but were bearing the burden of those tasks without any help from other stakeholders. In particular, this isolation contributed to feelings of exasperation and negativity towards their evaluation experience. This is contradictory to existing research, which shows that evaluation at nonprofits is increasingly collaborative (Johnson et al., 2009). Existing research discusses the positive impact that collaboration and participation can have on stakeholders' perceptions of the evaluation as good quality, relevant to context, and useful (Cousins & Earl, 1992; Fine et al., 2000; Greene, 1988; Liket et al., 2012; Volkov & King, 2007), as well as the likelihood they will learn from the evaluation process (Patton, 1998). These factors contribute to the probability that stakeholders will have a positive evaluation experience. However, the findings from this study show that, because the Centre operates a diversity of programs, stakeholders operate in silos as an attempt to cover everything off while being short-staffed.

The study found that being short staffed was a major factor in their evaluation experience of being isolated. This supports research by Bamberg et al. (2004) and Hall et al. (2003), which reported that organizations with fewer human resources have a lower evaluation capacity, and as such, have a less positive, more strained evaluation experience. In addition to the staff-specific isolation, findings showed that the relationship between the board and the nonprofit represents a lost opportunity for evaluation improvement and collaboration. Besides reading a report on clinic and education service delivery at each board meeting, the board does not participate

directly in program evaluation. In contrast, the board is involved with day-to-day operational decisions of the Centre and thus, only reads or hears about evaluation reports. Participants shared that this suboptimal relationship restricted the board's potential to fill a monitoring and evaluation role, which is one of the three primary roles of a board (Miller-Millesen, 2003). Specifically, in a review of theory about nonprofit boards, Miller-Millesen (2003) demonstrates that the three primary roles of a nonprofit board are: monitoring (e.g., overseeing, fiscal control, evaluation), boundary-spanning (e.g., raising money, enhancing image), and conforming (e.g., assuring legal compliance, implementing mandates). Research shows that daily operations and evaluation are benefited from a positive board-nonprofit relationship (Fama & Jensen, 1983; Miller-Millesen, 2003).

Lastly, the study findings showed that stakeholders feel optimistic and grateful about the potential for evaluations to help improve programs, and to obtain funding. While the large majority of evaluations were undertaken with the goals of obtaining funding, or filling accountability requirements for funding, stakeholders feel that they can still learn from the evaluation results, and this contributes positively to their experience. This is supported by research that discusses the positive implications of process use, i.e., learning from participation in the evaluation process (Patton, 1998) and organizational learning (Preskill, 2004). It also aligns with the pan-Canadian survey results of Cousins et al., (2014), who found that voluntary sector evaluators reported "being more capable of learning, more supportive of training and specifically, more supportive of evaluation capacity training" (p. 9) than government-based evaluators.

In addition, they feel that evaluations are both necessary and useful for funding; necessity acts more as burden to them, but usefulness also contributes to positive feelings towards

evaluation. Existing empirical literature echoes that nonprofits find program improvement as one of the most ideal uses of evaluation (Carman 2007). Other documented uses include changes in the program's focus and budget allocations (Poister & Streib, 1999), as well as learning in general, i.e., conceptual use (LeRoux and Wright (2010); Peck and Gorzalski, 2009). Existing literature has well documented the relationship between an evaluation's perceived usefulness and a positive attitude towards evaluation (e.g., Patton, 1997; Smith, 1992). Stakeholders expressed that their own previous experiences with evaluation at other jobs or volunteer commitments influenced their experience with evaluation; in particular it gave them a value and appreciation for evaluation. This personal value allowed them to persevere with their evaluation responsibilities through isolation, frustration, and time constraints. Patton (1997) synthesizes research that has shown that valuing the evaluation process and results is a "necessary condition" (p. 43) for evaluation use (Mayer, 1975; Smith, 1992; Studer, 1978). The notion that previous positive experience with evaluation can contribute to one's attitude towards evaluation in general is supported by Taut and Brauns (2003) and Botcheva et al. (2002) which showed that an executive director or project manager with a propensity towards evaluation can foster more positive and improvement-driven evaluation experiences.

Limitations of the Study

As a researcher, my presence in the interviews may have led some participants to edit their comments in order to reflect themselves or their centre in a specific way. I took efforts to build relationships with the participants, and to convey that the interview was anonymous and confidential, but it is still possible that their responses were affected by my presence and a desire to present the Centre as positively as possible.

Moreover, participation for this study was voluntary. It is unknown whether there were any systematic difference between those who participated and those who did not. It is likely that those who chose to participate in the study were more vocal or active within the centre, or were more interested or informed about the topic of the study. While a diversity of roles and backgrounds were represented among the participants, this voluntary participation could mean that the participants' perspectives are not representative of all stakeholders' views.

In addition, this diversity of roles and backgrounds presents a limitation to the study. Between board members, staff and volunteers, the stakeholders had varying degrees of understanding of evaluation and also vested interest in the process. This affects their experience with evaluation. However, phenomenology accounts for this diversity, as it focuses on the common essence. Rather than report on all aspects of their stories, the study concentrates on the themes that are shared by all participants, regardless of their different perspectives and positions within the organization.

Another limitation was presented by the important differences between the centre's activities and the activities of one of its projects, the LGBTQ youth camp. The participant who reported primarily about experiences with the camp presented a very different narrative from the others, making the data more heterogeneous than it would have been with only the other five participants. However, the themes and common essence that emerged from the analysis is a product of all six participants' experiences.

Next, while six participants is sufficient for phenomenology (Polkinghorne, 1989), it was challenging to find participants for this study. Due to a limited number of stakeholders who fit the selection criteria, their limited availability, and the minimal amount of evaluation occurring at the centre, the findings are based on the perspectives of a selected group of participants. While

the participants who participated provided a substantial amount of information that will help inform future research initiatives in this area, more participants' inputs would have been ideal.

Finally, my bias as a researcher affects the results, as subconscious organization and interpretation likely has occurred throughout, thus, influencing the final descriptive identification of the phenomenon structure. Attention to careful bracketing and detailed memo writing, combined with the above-mentioned trustworthiness strategies, helped to increase the quality of my conclusions in light of such influences.

Contributions

Overall, the study has four main contributions. First, it depicts the evaluation experiences of stakeholders in a rarely studied context, which helps to inform evaluation practice in low-resourced nonprofit organizations. Nonprofit organizations have a lot to gain by improving their evaluation capacity, and this study provides a close look at evaluation practices and experiences that many low-resourced organizations can relate to, and learn from, thus promoting evaluation capacity building in this sector. Second, it contributes empirical data to the efforts of theorists such as Bamberger et al. (2004), who attempt to build theory that aptly describes evaluation in low-resource contexts (i.e., "evaluation on a shoestring"). Third, this study answers a call from evaluation theory leaders who have called for more diverse and better quality research on evaluation (Cousins & Earl, 1999; Henry & Mark, 2003; Mark, 2008; Smith, 1993). By documenting and reflecting on the phenomenon of how stakeholders experience evaluation, this study contributes to the growing, but still limited, body of empirical evidence on evaluation. Further, it makes use of phenomenology to study program evaluation experiences and thus, provides insight on the use of this rarely used approach for conducting research on program evaluation. Fourth, by capturing the lived experiences of those working on the frontlines of

restricted capacity nonprofits, it helps to bridge the gap between evaluation theory and the reality of evaluation practice. This helps to inform the relationship that nonprofits have with both funders and evaluation theorists, contributing to the policies that guide those relationships and the program evaluation theory that influences them.

Implications for Practice in Low-Resourced Nonprofits

The data from this study highlighted several areas within the nonprofit system that could be changed in order to improve evaluation experiences in low-resourced nonprofits.

Funders should offer more long-term funding. Participants in this study shared frustration with the funding system. To survive, this organization has to apply for grants regularly, and the evaluations that come with each grant take important time away from the organization's mission. The participants brought forth the suggestion that by offering more long-term funding, rather than smaller grants, funders could help nonprofits to reduce their time on reporting. Thus, they believe that, with sustainable funding, organizations such as theirs could concentrate on their program delivery and liberate time that can be used for learning, evaluation capacity building, and program improvement.

Nonprofits should hire staff with prior evaluation skills, or provide training opportunities. Stakeholders at this nonprofit came from backgrounds that prepared them for the social issues that affect this nonprofit's client base but none had formal program evaluation training. As a result, participants felt that their evaluation quality is diminished. As such, evaluations are less likely to be used for learning and program improvement. Participants also recognized that their previous experiences with evaluation at other organizations were their primary guides in doing evaluation at Planned Parenthood. They recognized that stakeholders

trained in evaluation would likely be beneficial to this context, as they would not need to find time for training, and they would be able to share their skills with others.

Nonprofits should leverage volunteer time to improve program evaluations. The volunteers at this centre are integral to its operation. They assist in running the clinic, the summer camp, and many fundraisers. However, unless volunteers take the initiative themselves, they are not always actively involved in program evaluation. Even the volunteer who collects statistics for the organization's reports is not formally a part or always aware of the larger program evaluation efforts, beyond the data collection step. Volunteers are a valuable asset at low-resourced nonprofits, and should be sought out to help improve program evaluations.

Nonprofit board of directors should have a defined role in program evaluation. In many nonprofit organizations, the board of directors plays an important role in monitoring and evaluating operations. In this organization, board members are eager to assist in improving the organization, but play a passive role in centre evaluations. A low-resourced nonprofit board of directors could potentially alleviate the burden that program evaluation has on these centres by playing a more structured, active role in the evaluation process.

Suggestions for Future Research

The use of phenomenology in this study proved useful in highlighting the essence of the participants' experience with evaluation at this particular nonprofit organization. However, further studies in the area of program evaluation in low-resourced nonprofit organizations are necessary. Other phenomenological studies could explore this study's research question to compare the evaluation experiences of participants across similarly resourced organizations. Alternatively, a multiple case study approach could be used to observe and study the actions and opinions of those in this category of nonprofit organization. In addition, future research could

build on these findings to develop foundational theory about evaluation experiences in low-resourced non-profits, for example with a grounded theory study researchers could explore questions such as: (a) what are the influences affecting evaluation experience at low-resourced nonprofits?, and (b) what are the primary obstacles for low-resourced nonprofit stakeholders doing evaluation? Furthermore, since funding requirements played an important role in defining the participants' experience in this study, future research could also explore the funders' lived experience of program evaluation in nonprofits. That is, researchers could embark on the question of: How do primary stakeholders of organizations that fund low-resourced nonprofit describe their experience mandating, reading and using evaluations from the nonprofits that apply for funding? Quantitative surveys could also be used to gather information on these factors from a wide and more diverse range of organizations across Canada. From a more substantive standpoint, researchers could also explore the relationship between financial stability and innovation in evaluation in nonprofit organizations, the impact of evaluation training on evaluation experience, and the role of the clients' voices in program design and evaluation.

Summary

Previous research on nonprofit organizations focussed on large nonprofits that have access to great resources and training for evaluation activities. This study focussed on a niche of the nonprofit sector, studying one low-resourced nonprofit that delivers education programming. Further, it used a methodology that allowed for an in-depth look at stakeholders' accounts of their experiences with evaluation. Phenomenology involves hearing each experience, and then finding the shared essence of all participants' experiences. In this study, the analysis revealed that the organization's minimal access to resources plays a major role in the participants' experience with evaluation.

The findings suggest that several components are shared among participants' experience: a sense of being rushed or pressed for time, a feeling of optimism about what good can come from evaluations, a perception of inadequacy, and an experience of isolation in evaluation work. Three underlying or contextual factors of this shared experience emerged, including dependence on the granting system, a suboptimal structure, and individuals' backgrounds and training. In all, this study offers contributions to evaluation practice, theory and methodological development, by studying program evaluation in a rarely examined context, and by contributing empirical data about program evaluation using a methodology that has rarely been used in this domain.

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Appendix A Researcher as Instrument

In order to further detail how I bracketed my experience, I have unpacked my interactions with program evaluation and Planned Parenthood in this Appendix.

My experience with the phenomenon

My experiences with program evaluation practice. I have had very little experience with program evaluation. During my undergraduate education, I volunteered for a club and created feedback forms for an event we hosted. Aside from that, I have no experience with program evaluation.

My experiences with program evaluation theory. I have completed two program evaluation theory courses during my Master's in Education. In both courses, the content was theoretical and not hands on. I learned theory, but did not apply it in an internship or practical experience. The participants' practical knowledge indisputably trumps my theoretical knowledge.

My experiences with Planned Parenthood. I have never worked, or volunteered for Planned Parenthood. Prior to this project, I had some idea of the services they offered from reading their website, and from word of mouth.

Self-Interview

I attempted to perform a self-interview to bracket my experience, but I had so little experience with evaluation that it was impossible for me to even attempt to answer the questions.

Appendix B

Interview Guide

The Realities of Stakeholders' Evaluation Experiences in a Low-Resourced Nonprofit: A Phenomenological Study

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me about your experiences with program evaluation at Planned Parenthood. Today's interview will last approximately 45 minutes and with your consent it will be audio-recorded.

This interview is a part of a study that explores stakeholders' lived experiences with evaluation in a low-resourced nonprofit organization. It will describe the shared experience of stakeholders as a means of better understanding the phenomenon of evaluation in this context.

The information that you share in the interview will be kept confidential. Because the interview will be conducted with me, your anonymity cannot be protected. Only my supervisor and I will know your identity and you will not be asked to state your name or the name of your centre in the interview. Any information that may reveal your identity (e.g., name, town, or region) will be erased from the audio-recording and transcript so that you cannot be identified. I will email you a copy of your interview transcript to review and revise prior to analyses. I will password-protect the transcript and will contact you directly to provide you with the password. Your manager(s) and colleagues will not have access to your specific interview responses, recordings, or transcripts. The digital audio recording of the interview will be downloaded and erased from the audio-recorder immediately after the interview. All data will be stored in a locked research office at the University of Ottawa. All audio recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer in the same office. Only Beth Peddle and her supervisor will have access to the data. Data will be conserved for five years after the publication of research findings. After this time, data will be shredded and appropriately discarded.

Before we begin, I would like to remind you that there are no correct answers. Your participation is **voluntary**. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

1. Briefly describe your role at this Planned Parenthood.

Probes:

- a. *What do you do?*
- b. *How long have you been in this role?*

2. Please describe your involvement with program evaluation at Planned Parenthood.

3. Tell me about your experience with program evaluation at Planned Parenthood?

Probes:

- a. *What do you remember most about your program evaluation experience?*

- b. What stands out for you about your program evaluation experience?*
 - c. What does program evaluation mean to you given your past experience?*
- 4. Why do you think your program evaluation experience was like that?**

Probes:

 - a. In your opinion, what factors affected your program evaluation experience?*
 - b. What may have influenced your program evaluation experience?*
 - c. In your opinion, what are some of the reasons why you have experienced program evaluation in this way?*
- 5. Overall, how do you feel about the program evaluations you've been involved with at Planned Parenthood?**

Probes:

 - a. Do you think the program evaluations were useful or not useful? Explain.*
 - b. Do you think the program evaluations were needed or unnecessary? Explain.*
 - c. Do you think the program evaluations were good or bad? Explain.*
- 6. Think about what we have discussed today. Is there anything else that we should have talked about and did not?**

At this time, I would like to thank you for your participation. Your contribution to this study has been beneficial and insightful. If you have any further comments or questions please contact me. My contact information is included on your copy of the consent form.

Appendix C Information Letter

The Realities of Stakeholders' Evaluation Experiences in a Low-Resourced Nonprofit: A Phenomenological Study

Research Team:	Beth Peddle, M.A. (Ed) (candidate) Faculty of Education University of Ottawa Lamoureux Hall, Room 210 145, Jean-Jacques-Lussier Private Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 (613) 737-7600 (ext. 4125) [Researcher email]	Katherine Moreau, PhD Faculty of Education University of Ottawa Lamoureux Hall, Room 210 145, Jean-Jacques-Lussier Private Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 (613) 737-7600 (ext. 4125) [Supervisor email]
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Dear Planned Parenthood employee, board member or volunteer,

You are invited to participate in a one-on-one interview for the above-mentioned study. Participation in this research project has been approved by Planned Parenthood's Executive Director and Board of Directors.

The purpose of the study is to better understand program evaluation activities in low-resourced non-profit organizations, such as Planned Parenthood. It will explore stakeholders' opinions, memories, attitudes, and perceptions about program evaluation at Planned Parenthood.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may take part in one or two one-on-one interviews. We are aiming to interview 5-8 individuals who are stakeholders at Planned Parenthood. The interview may take place by phone or in person at a time that is convenient for you. If you are located in the metro area during Fall 2014, you may choose to conduct the interview in person with Beth Peddle at Planned Parenthood or at another private site of your choosing. If you are currently outside the metro area or prefer a telephone interview, we will ask that you select a location for the telephone interview that is private and convenient for you. Beth Peddle will then conduct the interview with you by telephone from a private office. The interview will be an unstructured, conversation-style session. In the interview, you will be asked a few open-ended questions, encouraging you to comment on your experience with program evaluation at Planned Parenthood. This can include reflections on evaluation activities, processes, and results or anything you deem relevant. The interview will take approximately **45 minutes** to complete. With your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed by Beth Peddle for analysis.

If a second round of interviews is necessary, I will follow the same procedures as the first round of interviews. First round participants will be contacted, and if you are interested in participating in a second interview you may contact me directly to obtain additional information. Taking place by in person or by telephone, the second interview will also be structured as an informal conversation, lasting approximately 45 minutes. Interviews will be audio-recorded pending the participant's permission. Each interview will take place at a time that is convenient for the participant. The recordings will be transcribed verbatim and the transcripts will be sent to the participants for verification and additional input.

There is little risk associated with your involvement in this study. Some of the questions in the interview may make you feel uncomfortable because they ask about your experiences and perceptions of program evaluation at Planned Parenthood. You do not have to respond to any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. Your employment or volunteer commitment at Planned Parenthood will not be affected by your interview responses, or your agreement or refusal to participate in the study. Your manager(s) and colleagues at Planned Parenthood will not have access to your specific interview responses, recordings, or transcripts.

You may or may not benefit directly from this study. The study will generate awareness and reflection about program evaluation at Planned Parenthood. The study will also potentially improve the evaluation of programs at Planned Parenthood. To thank you for your participation in the study, you will receive a summary of the findings in Fall 2015.

The information that you share in the interview will remain strictly confidential. The information you provide in the interview will only be used for describing the experience of stakeholders with program evaluation in this particular context. Because the interview will be conducted in person or by telephone with Beth Peddle, your anonymity cannot be fully protected. Only Beth Peddle and her supervisor will know your identity, and you will not be asked to state your name in the interview. Any information that could potentially reveal your identity (e.g., name, specific position in the organization, years of experience) will be erased from the audio recording and transcript so that you cannot be identified in published reports or presentations. We will email you a copy of your interview transcript to review and revise prior to analyses. We will password-protect the transcript and will contact you directly to provide you with the password.

The digital audio recording of the interview will be downloaded and erased from the audio-recorder immediately after the interview. All data will be stored in a locked research office at the University of Ottawa. All audio recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer in the same office. Only the members of the above-mentioned research team will have access to the data. Data will be conserved for five years after the publication of research findings. After this time, data will be shredded and appropriately discarded.

Your participation in the study and interview is **voluntary**. You can withdraw from the study at anytime and/or refuse to answer any questions without any negative consequences. If you choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be deleted, destroyed, and not included in any publications or presentations.

If you are interested in participating in a one-on-one interview for this study please contact Beth Peddle at [Researcher email] by [insert date] to obtain additional information about the interview. As mentioned, the interview will be schedule at a time that is convenient for you. Your written consent will be obtained prior to the interview. We will email you a copy of the consent form to review, sign, and return to Beth Peddle prior to the interview. We will password-protect the consent form and contact you directly to provide you with the password. If you choose to conduct the interview by phone, you can print and sign the consent form and then send a password-protected electronic copy of the completed consent form to Beth Peddle by email or you can mail her a signed copy of it.

If you have any questions about the study please contact Beth Peddle or Katherine Moreau at the coordinates below. If you have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, you may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa at:

Tabaret Hall
550 Cumberland Street, Room 159
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5
(613) 562-5841
ethics@uottawa.ca

Sincerely,

<p>_____ Beth Peddle, M.A. (Ed) (candidate) Faculty of Education University of Ottawa Lamoureux Hall, Room 210 145, Jean-Jacques-Lussier Private Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 (613) 737-7600 (ext. 4125) [Researcher email]</p>	<p>_____ Katherine Moreau, PhD Faculty of Education University of Ottawa Lamoureux Hall, Room 210 145, Jean-Jacques-Lussier Private Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 (613) 737-7600 (ext. 4125) [Supervisor email]</p>
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Appendix D Consent Form

The Realities of Stakeholders' Evaluation Experiences in a Low-Resourced Nonprofit: A Phenomenological Study

Research Team:	Beth Peddle, M.A. (Ed) (candidate) Faculty of Education University of Ottawa Lamoureux Hall, Room 210 145, Jean-Jacques-Lussier Private Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 (613) 737-7600 (ext. 4125) <u>[Researcher email]</u>	Katherine Moreau, PhD Faculty of Education University of Ottawa Lamoureux Hall, Room 210 145, Jean-Jacques-Lussier Private Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 (613) 737-7600 (ext. 4125) <u>[Supervisor email]</u>
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Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in a one-on-one interview for the above-mentioned research study conducted by Beth Peddle, M.A.(Education) candidate from the University of Ottawa under the supervision of Professor Katherine Moreau. It has been approved by Planned Parenthood's Executive Director and Board of Directors.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to better understand program evaluation activities in low-resourced non-profit organizations, such as Planned Parenthood. It will explore stakeholders' opinions, memories, attitudes, and perceptions about program evaluation at Planned Parenthood.

Participation: My participation will consist of taking part in one or two one-on-one interviews. The interview may take place by phone or in person at a time that is convenient for me. If I am located in the metro area, I may choose to conduct the interview in person with Beth Peddle in a private office or another location of my choosing. If I am outside the metro area or prefer a telephone interview, I will be asked to select a location for the telephone interview that is private and convenient for me. Beth Peddle will then conduct the interview with me by telephone from a private office. The interview will be an unstructured, conversation-style session. In the interview, I will be asked a few open-ended questions, encouraging me to comment on my experience with program evaluation at Planned Parent. This can include reflections on evaluation activities, processes, and results or anything I deem relevant. The interview will take approximately **45 minutes** to complete. With your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed by Beth Peddle for analysis.

If a second round of interviews is necessary, I will be contacted, and if I am interested in participating in a second interview I may contact Beth Peddle directly to obtain additional information. Taking place by in person or by telephone, the second interview will also be structured as an informal conversation, lasting approximately 45 minutes. Interviews will be audio-recorded pending my permission. Each interview will take place at a time that is convenient for me. The recordings will be transcribed verbatim and the transcripts will be sent to me for verification and additional input.

Risks: There is little risk associated with my involvement in this study. Some of the questions in the interview may make me feel uncomfortable because they ask about my experiences and perceptions of program evaluation practices at Planned Parenthood. I do not have to respond to any questions that make me feel uncomfortable. My employment or volunteer commitment at Planned Parenthood will not be affected by my interview responses, or my agreement or refusal to participate in the study. My manager(s) and colleagues at Planned Parenthood will not have access to my specific interview responses, recordings, or transcripts.

Benefits: I may or may not benefit directly from this study. The study will generate awareness and reflection about program evaluation at Planned Parenthood. The study will also potentially improve the evaluation of programs at Planned Parenthood. To thank me for your participation in the study, I will receive a summary of the findings in Fall 2015.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I have received assurance from the researchers that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the information I provide in the interview will only be used for describing the experience of stakeholders with program evaluation in this particular context. Because the interview will be conducted in person or by telephone with Beth Peddle, M.A.(Ed) candidate from the University of Ottawa, my anonymity cannot be fully protected. Only Beth Peddle and her supervisor will know my identity, and I will not be asked to state my name in the interview. Any information that could potentially reveal my identity (e.g., name, specific position in the organization, years of experience) will be eliminated from the audio recording and transcript so that I cannot be identified in published reports or presentations. Beth Peddle will email me a copy of my interview transcript to review and revise prior to analyses. Beth Peddle will password-protect the transcript and will contact me directly to provide me with the password.

Conservation of data: The digital audio recording of the interview will be downloaded and erased from the audio-recorder immediately after the interview. All data will be stored in a locked research office at the University of Ottawa. All audio recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer. Only the members of the above-mentioned research team will have access to the data. Data will be conserved for five years after the publication of research findings. After this time, data will be shredded and appropriately discarded.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at anytime and/or refuse to answer any questions without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be deleted, destroyed, and not included in any publications or presentations.

Acceptance: I _____, agree to participate in the above-mentioned research study conducted by Beth Peddle, M.A. (Education) candidate from the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa under the supervision of Professor Katherine Moreau.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact Beth Peddle or Katherine Moreau at:

Beth Peddle, M.A. (Ed) (candidate) Faculty of Education University of Ottawa Lamoureux Hall, Room 229 145, Jean-Jacques-Lussier Private Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 (613) 737-7600 (ext. 4125) <u>[Researcher email]</u>	Katherine Moreau, PhD (supervisor) Faculty of Education University of Ottawa Lamoureux Hall, Room 229 145, Jean-Jacques-Lussier Private Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 (613) 737-7600 (ext. 4125) <u>[Supervisor email]</u>
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If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa at:

Tabaret Hall
 550 Cumberland Street, Room 159
 Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5
 (613) 562-5841
ethics@uottawa.ca

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature:

Date:

Researcher's signature:

Date:

Appendix E
Letter of Support from the Research Site



Planned Parenthood

Planned Parenthood- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear Beth Peddle,

I am writing to indicate that the [REDACTED] is willing to participate in your research study on program evaluation practices used in pediatric rehabilitation settings entitled, **The Realities of Stakeholders' Evaluation Experiences in a Low-Resourced Nonprofit: A Phenomenological Study**

We look forward to being a part of this study.

Sincerely yours,

[REDACTED]

Education Coordinator (Acting Executive Director)

[REDACTED]

Appendix F
Letter for stakeholders not selected for participation

Dear _____,

Thank you for your interest in the study *The Realities of Stakeholders' Evaluation Experiences in a Low-Resourced Nonprofit Organization: A Phenomenological Study*. For this study, we will include a maximum of 8 stakeholders. Since more than the maximum number came forward with interest in participating, a random draw was used to select participants and unfortunately you were not selected for participation at this time. We will contact you if one of the selected participants withdraws his or her name, upon which you will have the option of participating.

Thank you again for your interest in this study.

Sincerely,

<hr style="width: 30%; margin-left: 0;"/> <p>Beth Peddle, M.A. (Ed) (candidate) Faculty of Education University of Ottawa Lamoureux Hall, Room 210 145, Jean-Jacques-Lussier Private Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 (613) 737-7600 (ext. 4125) <u>[Researcher email]</u></p>	<hr style="width: 30%; margin-left: 0;"/> <p>Katherine Moreau, PhD Faculty of Education University of Ottawa Lamoureux Hall, Room 210 145, Jean-Jacques-Lussier Private Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 (613) 737-7600 (ext. 4125) <u>[Supervisor email]</u></p>
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