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PROCESS USE ACROSS EVALUATION APPROACHES: AN APPLICATION OF Q
METHODOLOGY IN PROGRAM EVALUATION (293 pp.)

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What stakeholders learn from the evaluation process beyond the evaluation findings was first defined by Patton (1997) as process use. That learning is generated from stakeholders' engagement in the evaluation process and will occur even with non-collaborative and non-participatory evaluation approaches. In this study, the researcher attempted to differentiate process use from other evaluation use concepts.

There were two research aims. The first was to understand how evaluators defined the construct of process use by making distinctions among examples of stakeholder behavior to identify what in their estimation were illustrations of process use. The second aim was to identify the different types of process use which emerged when stakeholders reflected on their participation in evaluation activities in three evaluation contexts. These stakeholders were personnel from a prevention program, educators, and student nurses. To respond to the subjectivity which shaped individual perspectives of evaluation experiences, the researcher employed Q methodology in the study. This mixed methodological approach has systematic procedures for incorporating participants' perspectives and making them the focus of the analysis.

While some evaluators identified illustrations of process use which demonstrated their strong conceptual alignment with Patton, the findings illuminated three other perceptions held by

evaluators: process use includes the use of findings; process use is synonymous with process evaluation; and process use is the same as instrumental evaluation use. To collect the data from the stakeholders, the researcher developed and piloted a tool which can sensitize evaluators to the presence of process use because it helped stakeholders to talk about what they learned from evaluation activities. The findings also showed how the impact of different contextual variables shaped the types of process use which emerged. The findings also showed how the same type of process use can be demonstrated in different examples of stakeholder behavior. These findings can provide some basis for the eventual measurement and report of process use with the aim of helping evaluators do better work.