

# “Process Values” and “Deep values” in Evaluation

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**Background:** Many evaluation theorists and practitioners have advocated the application of cultural values to the evaluation process to ensure cultural appropriateness and responsiveness.

**Purpose:** This article draws a distinction between these “process values” and “deep values” in evaluation, using the specific example of cultural values to illustrate. The application of “deep values” refers to the deliberate and systematic inclusion of [in this case, cultural] values in the very definitions of “quality” and “value” used in an evaluation, and in the evaluative interpretation of evidence.

**Setting:** Not applicable.

**Subjects:** Not applicable.

**Research Design:** Not applicable.

**Data Collection and Analysis:** Not applicable.

**Findings:** Not applicable.

**Conclusions:** Including “deep cultural values” in the “merit determination” or “valuing” step in evaluation is partly about ensuring the right voices are at the sense-making table, but it’s also about having practical evaluation-specific methodologies for systematically and transparently building in those cultural values.

**Keywords:** *values, ethics, culture, indigenous communities, communities of color, evaluation methodology, validity*

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I remember a few years ago Michael Scriven making a very useful distinction between “process ethics” and “deep ethics.” Process ethics is covered in just about every research or evaluation course, and relates to whether the research or evaluation is being conducted ethically.

Deep ethics, in contrast, is unique to evaluation because it is about asking and answering the explicitly evaluative question: “*Is the program/evaluation itself ethical?*” To tackle a question like this, an evaluator might look at how people are selected or recruited into the program, whether anyone is unfairly excluded (or included); whether people are treated

ethically (e.g., in accordance with basic human rights) while participating in the program; whether the outcomes for various groups are fair/ethical; and so forth.

I’ve recently been involved in a caucus and working group formed by anzea, the Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association, to develop a list of competencies or capabilities for evaluation in this country. We have a very strong consensus that we want culture—and our founding document, the Treaty of Waitangi (between Māori, our indigenous people, and the Crown)—to be central to this work. This has led to some very

interesting discussions about what this means.

I've been arguing for going beyond what one might call (to borrow/adapt Scriven's terminology) "process cultural values" (i.e., conducting evaluations in culturally appropriate, responsive, and sensitive ways) to encompass the notion of "deep cultural values" in evaluation. This means drawing on the values, needs, strengths, and aspirations of the impacted community and their culture to define what is meant by "good program content/design," "high quality implementation/delivery" and "valuable outcomes."

Top New Zealand evaluator Nan Wehipeihana recently helped put some very real flesh on the bones of that idea in our AEA session: *An evaluative approach to quality assurance in higher education*. Nan's section of the presentation was entitled: *Evaluative quality assurance in indigenous contexts—challenges and opportunities* (Wehipeihana, 2009). This presentation has implications that spread far beyond the higher education domain, so it's well worth a look.

Leading Māori academic and highly influential policy advisor Professor Mason Durie talks about Māori wanting to live "as Māori" and as global citizens of the world (Durie, 2001, 2003). Therefore any program (in this case, the tertiary education system as a whole) needs, obviously, to respond to this aspiration.

To use the terminology above, this should be reflected in both the "process cultural values" and the "deep cultural values" for the evaluation.

For "process cultural values," Nan Wehipeihana advocates for Māori leading the evaluation process and determining what matters (Wehipeihana, 2009; see also Wehipeihana, Davidson, McKegg, & Shanker, this issue).

In her AEA presentation, she also provided some fantastic examples that bring to life the concept of "deep cultural values" in evaluation.

One of the required outcomes for higher education organizations is that "graduates gain employment, engage in further study and/or contribute positively to their local and wider communities." For Māori, this means not just being successful in non-Māori contexts, but being confident and competent contributors in Māori contexts, including (for example) taking up leadership roles in iwi (tribal) organizations.

As a more specific example, Nan talked about the kind of knowledge needed in a business management degree for Māori. For any graduate, it will be important to have traditional business management knowledge that includes employment/hiring policy, practices, and the law. For Māori, there also needs to be in-depth cultural knowledge and an understanding of the unique context, policy and practices when working in a whānau (extended family), hapū (subtribe) or iwi (tribe) context—when you are hiring or firing your cousins—and the impacts of these decisions on ongoing relationships. As Nan points out, in an iwi context, relationships and whakapapa (geneology) are 'forever.'

One final example from Nan's presentation related to evaluating the curriculum of a degree in biotechnology or biochemistry. There is obviously the usual scientific content coverage from a Western perspective, but for Māori students, there is also a need for curriculum content to include traditional Māori scientific knowledge and perspectives that will allow them to understand the topic from a Māori worldview. Additionally, they would need coverage of any impacts of biotechnology

ventures on the environment and traditional iwi resources (e.g., seafood, agriculture, culturally significant land) from a Māori perspective and based on traditional values.

Many others have applied cultural values to the evaluation process (i.e., culturally appropriate and responsive evaluation). But we are yet to see much discussion of how cultural values can be more systematically built into the definitions of 'quality' and 'value' and into evaluative interpretation. It's partly about whose voices are at the sense-making table, but it's also about how good our evaluation-specific methodologies are for systematically building in those cultural values.

In closing, because it's traditional in Aotearoa to introduce oneself in terms of one's roots and culture...

Kia ora (greetings). I'm Jane Davidson. I'm a 6<sup>th</sup> generation Pākehā (New Zealander of European descent), descended on my father's side from Scottish railway workers (from Muirkirk, near Glasgow) and on my mother's side from rugged English farmers (from Sussex). I grew up in New Zealand, spent four years in Tōkyō (and can speak reasonable Japanese), 12 years in the United States, and currently reside in Tamaki Makaurau (Auckland), in the lands of the Ngāti Whātua people. My husband is a marketing and strategy specialist from Japan who helps kiwi companies enter and succeed in the Japanese market, and we have three bilingual/bicultural poppets—Kiri (5), Ema, and Mariko (2-year-old twins).

## References

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