FACILITATOR AND PROGRAM PARTICIPANT ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS ABOUT PROGRAM EVALUATION

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FACILITATOR AND PROGRAM PARTICIPANT ATTITUDES AND

BELIEFS ABOUT PROGRAM EVALUATION

Abstract

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The current study was designed to explore facilitators' and program participant attitudes about evaluation. The hypotheses of the research were 1) facilitators will be significantly more negative in their attitudes about evaluation than program participants, 2) facilitators' own attitudes will be significantly and positively correlated with their perception of program participant attitudes, and 3) facilitators will think that program participants will have more negative attitudes about evaluation than program participants actually report. One hundred and twenty-four facilitators and one hundred and five program participants from Washington State Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth Aged Ten to Fourteen participated in the current study.

Facilitators' own attitudes about evaluation invading program participant privacy and evaluation taking too much time were significantly more negative than program participant attitudes on these two items. Facilitators' own attitudes were significantly correlated with their perception of program participant attitudes on evaluation invading program participant privacy and evaluation taking too much time. Facilitators' own attitudes about evaluation helping to improve the program were no different than program participants and were not correlated with

their perceptions of program participant attitudes. Lastly, facilitators' perceptions of program participant attitudes were more negative than program participants actually reported except on attitudes about evaluation helping to improve the program. These findings indicate that facilitators have more negative attitudes about evaluation than program participants. However, both facilitators and program participants believe that evaluation can help to improve.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to two important people in my life: my mom, Mary Katherine, who has always encouraged and supported all my efforts and my husband, Jeremi, who shows amazing faith in me on a daily basis. I hope I make you both proud.

CHAPTER ONE

Literature Review

In the past two decades more attention has been given to the field of prevention science and prevention practice than in previous decades. Prevention science methods were first widely applied in the area of mental health, where the term prevention was used to describe interventions that occurred before the initial onset of a disorder (Mrazek & Haggerty, 1994). Coie et al. (1993) defined prevention science as the study of possible precursors of dysfunction or health. Coie et al. (1993) also state that the purpose of preventive interventions is to neutralize *risk factors* (i.e. variables associated with higher probability of onset of health problems) and enhance *protective factors* (i.e. variables that improve resistance to health problems).

Much of the research in this field is based on a theoretical framework known as the preventive intervention research cycle (see Figure 1), which guides the design, implementation, and evaluation of preventive intervention programs. This framework follows a phase model starting with foundational or basic research, moving to formal tests of program efficacy in randomized clinical trials, to dissemination and evaluation in real world settings, and completing the cycle with information feeding back to researchers for continued program monitoring and development (Mrazek & Haggerty, 1994).

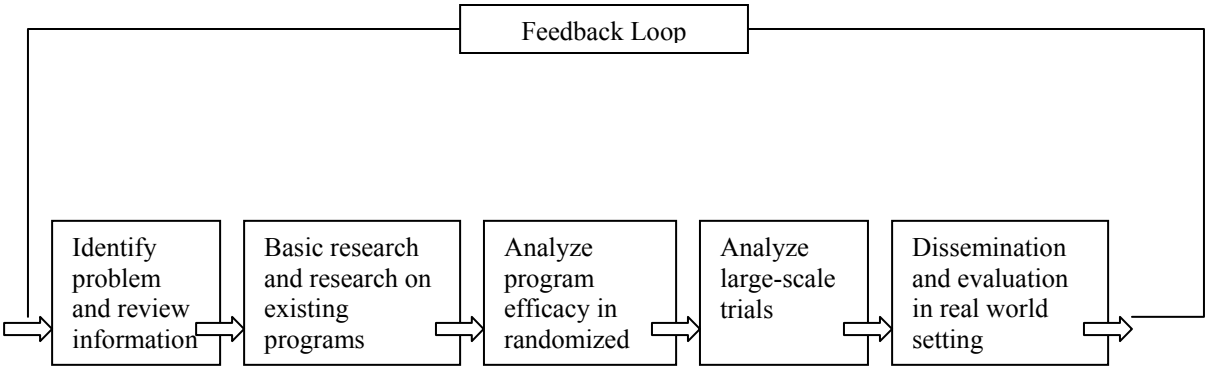

Figure 1

Preventive Intervention Research Cycle

Numerous studies have focused on testing theory-based prevention programs in randomized clinical trials. However, there is a gap between the ideals of prevention science and prevention practice (Morrissey, Wandersman, Seybolt, Nation, Crusto, & Davino, 1997), and the later phases of the preventive intervention research cycle have not received adequate research attention. A reason for the lack of attention to later phases of the preventive intervention research cycle is that whereas the first part of the cycle is researcher-driven, once programs move into communities the priority becomes service delivery rather than data collection. This creates a gap in the research cycle because evaluation data may not be cycled back from practitioners to researchers.

Practitioners, the people who actually implement programs, may be reluctant to collect data, and there are practical, cultural, and emotional reasons for this reluctance. Some practical reasons may include difficulty with recruitment, time pressure because delivery of program is top priority, and inadequate training in data collection (Hill, Maucione, & Hood, 2007). A cultural reason is that prevention researchers and prevention practitioners may hold different world views or paradigms (Chavis, Stucky, & Wandersman 1983; Mills, 2001; Myers-Walls, 2000). An

emotional reason for the reluctance to conduct evaluations may be anxiety about the evaluation process (Donaldson, Gooler, & Scriven, 2002; and Trower, Gilbert, & Sherling, 1990).

This reluctance creates barriers to community-based program evaluation. Understanding barriers to community-based evaluation is important, because without the reporting of practitioners back to researchers there is no way to know if a program is effective as it is being delivered in communities. It is also important because understanding barriers to evaluation must come before addressing and overcoming those barriers.

In his book *Utilization-Focused Evaluation,* Patton (1978, 1997) states that the largest problem in the field of evaluation is the underutilization or nonutilization of evaluations. In order for evaluations to get "appropriately and meaningfully used" (Patton, 1997, p. 10) Patton (1997) determined that what is needed is a comprehensive framework for evaluation with attention to use of evaluation built in from beginning to end. Utilization-focused evaluation starts with the premise that evaluations should be planned with the careful consideration of how everything during the evaluation process will affect use. This framework is based on how real people in the real world will experience evaluation (Patton, 1997).

Patton's (1997) proposed solution to the underutilization of evaluation is to involve stakeholders in the evaluation process. He states that intended users are more likely to use evaluation if they understand the evaluation process and feel as if the process is their own. Although Patton's theoretical perspective focuses on the utilization of evaluation results, it can be extended as well to the process of the evaluation itself; those intended to conduct a program evaluation are more likely to do it if they understand and value the evaluation process. It follows then, that if practitioners or program participants have negative attitudes about evaluation, practitioners will be reluctant to conduct evaluations.

The goal of the present study, therefore, is to explore practitioner and participants' attitudes about evaluation. First I will do a literature review, in which I will discuss practical barriers to community-based evaluation (Hill, Maucione, & Hood, 2007; Myers-Walls, 2000; Taut & Alkin, 2003), the differing paradigm theory (Chavis, Stucky, & Wandersman 1983; Mills, 2001; Myers-Walls, 2000; Taut & Alkin, 2003) and the evaluation anxiety theory (Donaldson, Gooler, & Scriven, 2002; Taut & Alkin, 2003; Trower, Gilbert, & Sherling, 1990) as a guide to the discussion about the lack of evaluation done in community implementation of preventive intervention programs.

Second, I will describe the proposed study, which is part of an ongoing study of a large scale multi-site prevention program with an evaluation component. Starting in 2000, Washington State University coordinated statewide dissemination of The Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth Aged Ten to Fourteen (SFP) through Extension faculty (Hill, Maucione, & Hood, 2007). SFP is an efficacious universal substance abuse prevention program that includes seven 2-hour sessions conducted once a week. Each session includes separate parent and child skills training for the first hour and family skills training for the second hour (Hill, Maucione, & Hood, 2007; Spoth, Redmond, & Shin, 1998; Spoth, Guyll, Trudeau, Goldberg-Lillehoj, 2002; Spoth, Shin, Guyll, Redmond, & Azevedo, 2006).

The current study was developed in the context of ongoing evaluation of SFP in Washington State. During this evaluation process some practitioners expressed concerns about conducting evaluations because they felt it might interfere with establishing rapport, especially if they administered the pretest on the first night of the program. Practitioners thought participants believed evaluation to be invasive. At the same time, there was little evidence that participants felt negative about the evaluation process; for example, although some practitioners refused to

conduct an evaluation, to the best of our knowledge no program participants refused to complete an evaluation. The literature review that follows shows that little research has been done on the attitudes and beliefs of practitioners or participants about evaluation. The primary research question of the study is "Do practitioners' beliefs about how participants feel about evaluation correspond with how participants actually feel?"

There is reason to believe that practitioners' thoughts about participants' attitudes toward evaluation may reflect their own attitudes, based on the theory of attributive projection (Murstein & Pryer, 1959). Attributive projection is the assigning of one's own attitudes, feelings, or behaviors to another person (Murstein & Pryer, 1959). From this theory it follows that practitioners may be attributing their own attitudes toward evaluation to participants. With this theory in mind, the three hypotheses of the present study are: 1) Practitioners will be significantly more negative in their attitudes about evaluation than participants; 2) Practitioners' own attitudes will be significantly correlated with their perceptions of participant attitudes; and 3) Practitioners will think that participants have more negative attitudes about evaluation than participants actually report. The value of the current study is that it provides direction for overcoming barriers to evaluation. If participants feel positive about evaluation, this information can be conveyed to program practitioners during training. Applying Patton's theory, an increased understanding should then lead to better use of evaluation tools by practitioners.

Barriers to Community-Based Evaluation

Little research has examined specific barriers to community-based evaluation or practitioners' attitudes about conducting community-based evaluation. In the limited research that has been done, each study has focused separately on a different type of barrier: practical, cultural, or emotional. However, one comprehensive study conducted by Taut and Alkin (2003)

examined all three types of barriers in depth. In this study they explored practitioners' perceptions of barriers to evaluation implementation. I will be covering the three types of barriers separately in my literature review with reference back to Taut and Alkin (2003).

Human, Context and Evaluation Factors

Taut and Alkin (2003) interviewed 18 practitioners of a university outreach program about their perceptions of barriers to evaluation implementation. At the beginning of each interview the participants were asked what they perceived others practitioners' attitudes about evaluation to be, followed by what their own attitudes were, and finally a question about how they thought these attitudes develop. Responses showed that perceptions about attitudes of other practitioners were evenly split between positive and negative, while personal attitudes were largely on the positive end. Responses also showed that positive attitudes often came from experiences with evaluation that resulted in personal benefits, and negative attitudes came from the fear of negative results from evaluation, as experienced in previous evaluations. These initial questions were used to help put the main findings into a context and appropriately interpret the main findings.

Taut and Alkin (2003) tried to apply prior research on evaluation *utilization* (i.e. the use of evaluation) to evaluation *implementation* (i.e. the actual process of conducting an evaluation). Research shows that there are utilization-enhancing factors summarized as *human, evaluation,* and *context factors,* and Taut and Alkin (2003) hypothesized that the absence of these factors could explain the existence of barriers to effective evaluation implementation. The *human* factor describes characteristics of evaluator/practitioner and user/participant. A barrier in the category of human factor might be fear of the evaluation or fear of what might be done with the information found during the evaluation. The *evaluation* factor is concerned with the way

evaluation is conducted, such as appropriate choice of evaluation design, data collection methods, and quality of information provided by the evaluation. A barrier in the category of evaluation factor might be difficulty gaining access to meaningful data; for example, attendance records may be easily accessed but do not offer much information that would be helpful to the evaluation of a program. The *context* factor refers to the context in which the evaluated program exists and raises questions about how the contextual variables pose barriers to evaluation. A barrier in the category of context factor might be the lack of stakeholder time to devote to evaluation because of other responsibilities.

After being asked about their attitudes toward evaluation, participants were asked to spontaneously report what they thought to be barriers to evaluation implementation. Participants most frequently mentioned *human* factors as explanations for barriers, followed in frequency by *evaluation* factors and *context* factors. Lastly, participants were asked to respond with their thoughts and experiences about each specific factor.

Within the *human* factor, participants' responses could be broken down into the two subcategories, evaluator competence and program staff issues. Taut and Alkin (2003) reported that the barrier most frequently mentioned under evaluator competence was social competence, meaning practitioners think that building relationships with evaluators is important for an evaluation to go well. The most stated barrier under program staff issues was lack of trust, meaning practitioners think participants fear what the evaluation is going to find and what the evaluation is going to be used for. They think that if participants fear evaluation, they are going to be less willing to do evaluation. Other human factor barriers described by Taut and Alkin's (2003) participants include inadequate communication about evaluation, lack of staff resources,

lack of stakeholder knowledge about evaluation, personalities, negative experiences with evaluation, and unclear benefits of evaluation.

Within the *evaluation* factor the most frequently stated barrier was lack of good methods and meaningful data, meaning that practitioners feel as though participants may feel the evaluation is not a good measure of the issues at hand, and thus participants will see the evaluation as unhelpful and meaningless. Other *evaluation* factor barriers described by Taut and Alkin (2003) included inadequate participation and information by staff, poor context sensitivity of evaluation design, unjustifiable and poor context-specific criteria/conclusions, reporting issues, inadequate amount of time, and inadequate competence of evaluator.

In the *context* factor the most frequently stated barrier was the lack of resources available to stakeholders, and the most common resource mentioned was time. Other context factor barriers described by Taut and Alkin (2003) include lack of clarity of the purpose and use of the evaluation, organizational culture, staff turnover, accountability requirements, and political structures, decisions, and mandates.

Limitations to the Taut and Alkin (2003) study include small sample size (n=18) and the inclusion of only one university-based program. Also, the program was university-based rather than community-based, which may have an influence on perceptions. It would be helpful to conduct this study with a larger sample of practitioners and a more diverse sample of practitioners from both community-based and university-based programs.

It is important to note that in the Taut and Alkin (2003) study, evaluators were different from practitioners, whereas in the current study evaluators and practitioners are one and the same. Nonetheless their findings are directly relevant to the questions of practitioner attitudes about conducting evaluations themselves.

Each type of barrier I will discuss in my literature review fits into one of the three factors described by Taut and Alkin (2003). A summary of how the barriers discussed in my literature fit into one of the Taut and Alkin (2003) factors is in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Barriers Categorized into Human, Evaluation, or Context Factor by Author

		Factor		
Author	*Barrier*	*Human*	*Evaluation*	*Context*
Myers-Walls (2000)	Negative impact on families	X	X	
	Time demand			X
	Misunderstanding procedures		X	
	Rapid growth		X	
	Data management		X	
Mills (2002)	Ontology	X		
	Epistemology	X		
	Methodology	X		
Donaldson et al (2002)	Dispositional	X		
	Situational		X	X
Posavac & Carey (2007)	Assume Program is Perfect	X		
	Evaluation will offend staff	X		
	Evaluation inhibit innovation	X		
	Program terminated	X		
	Information misused	X		
	Qualitative understanding supplanted	X		
	Evaluation drain program resources	X		
	Lose control of program	X		
	Evaluation has little impact	X		

Practical Barriers to Evaluation

Practitioners and researchers often have different goals and objectives for a program, making it difficult for them to agree on evaluation procedures. In exploring attitude differences between practitioners and researchers, Myers-Walls (2000) recounts barriers she encountered in an evaluation of a home-visiting program targeted at pregnant women or new parents who were considered at risk for abusing and/or neglecting their children. Myers-Walls was to complete a statewide outcome evaluation of the program working with a handful of program sites. The plan was to have practitioners and research evaluation team members collect questionnaires from consenting parents. Based on her personal experiences, Myers-Walls categorized the barriers she encountered during this process into five primary groupings: *practitioner concerns about negative impact of evaluation on families; time demand on practitioners; misunderstanding procedures related to data collection; rapid growth of program; and data management procedures*.

Four of the five groupings outlined by Myers-Walls (2000) can be considered practical barriers to evaluation. First, practitioners had concerns about the time demand of the evaluation study. They felt that the time needed to collect four questionnaires and one observation scale from each family every six months was taking time away from their regular program duties. They felt that their first priority was to deliver the program to families and that the evaluation time demand would take away from this priority.

A second barrier was the misunderstanding of data collection procedures. In this particular situation, practitioners understood that the research evaluation team did not want identifying information on data forms, so they mistakenly obliterated names from consent forms

before sending the forms to the research evaluation team, making it impossible to verify that consent had been given by specific participants.

Another barrier was the rapid growth of this program. The research evaluators wanted to collect more outcome results before expanding the program, but practitioners saw families with immediate needs and felt the program could help these families. Due to this difference, practitioners kept bringing more families into the program, making it hard for the research evaluation team to keep up with evaluation of families.

The last practical barrier described by Myers-Walls (2002) was an incomplete understanding of data management procedures. In this situation, research evaluators were not collecting background information on families because practitioners were collecting extensive information for monitoring and evaluation purposes. Because of this, each program site was allowed to create its own ID numbers. The data were computerized to support case management and program monitoring rather than evaluation, and because of this ID numbers were often changed for families. This made it extremely difficult for research evaluators to associate ID numbers with specific families reliably.

One last barrier described by Myers-Walls (2002) fits better into cultural barriers than practical barriers; cultural barriers are discussed more below. Practitioners showed concerns about negative impact of evaluation on families. This concern about negative impact on families arose because practitioners were concerned about collecting data at the beginning of the family's involvement in the research study. They felt that asking people for data immediately after they had participated in a detailed clinical interview to determine program eligibility would lead people to drop out of the program prematurely. The practitioners' perception of this as a barrier

reflects their attitudes about the time and place for evaluation which may reflect their overall attitude towards evaluation.

A significant limitation to Myers-Walls's (2000) study was her methods. First, the sample was small and consisted of one preventive intervention program. The study of the evaluation process needs to be replicated with a larger sample and using several preventive intervention programs. Secondly, no empirical data were collected. Myers-Walls (2000) simply observed what she saw occurring between the practitioners and evaluators of this program and categorized her observations. There is no empirical evidence to back up what she concluded from her own experiences. It would also be helpful to collect empirical data from both practitioners and evaluators on their experiences and thoughts on evaluation.

Cultural Barriers to Evaluation

The differing cultures of researchers and practitioners may also explain the gap that exists between science and practice (Beyer & Trice, 1982; Caplan, 1979; Chavis, Stucky, & Wandersman, 1983; Morrissey et al., 1997; Myers-Walls, 2000; Weiss & Weiss, 1981). Myers-Walls (2000) and Mills (2002) offer two perspectives on the cultures of researchers and practitioners (see Table 2), both of which I will discuss here.

Myers-Walls (2000) described cultural differences in six areas including: *temporal orientation, cognitive resources and "ways of knowing", values and definitions of excellence, patterns of communication, daily life styles, and use of tools*. She concluded that differences in these six areas may be a reason why more program research is not being done at a community level. She summarized the differences found between researchers and practitioners as follows: researchers operate on long time frames, believe things if demonstrated empirically, respect numbers and science, communicate by written word, have high levels of freedom within their

profession, and use complex technological tools; whereas practitioners operate on immediate time frames, respect intuition, experience, and personal stories, communicate verbally, have low levels of freedom within their profession, and use less complex tools that facilitate communication and connection.

Table 2

Two Authors' Descriptions of the Differing Cultures of Researchers and Practitioners

Author	*Researcher*	*Practitioner*
Mills (2001)		
Position	Post-positivistic	Constructivist
Ontology	Critical Realist	Consensual relativist
Epistemology	Modified objectivity	Subjectivist
Methodology	Quasi-Experimental	Qualitative
Myers-Walls (2000)		
Temporal orientation	Long time frames	Short time frames
"Ways of knowing"	Empirically demonstrated	Personal experience
Definition of excellence	Numbers and science	Intuition
Patterns of communication	Written word	Verbal
Daily life styles	High freedom	Low freedom
Use of tools	Complex technological	Less complex

Few articles examine differences between researchers and practitioners empirically. Mills (2002) took the research a step further by examining cultural differences empirically and from the standpoint of paradigms. A paradigm is a set of beliefs that guide action, whether the action is related to everyday occurrences or related to area of work or study (Guba, 1990). Mills (2002) theorized that paradigms not only guide researchers' and practitioners' work but also guide their understanding of the importance of evaluation. Within scientific research the term paradigm includes three levels: *philosophical*, *social*, and *technical*. Mills (2002) focuses on the philosophical level and hypothesized that philosophical differences between practitioners and researchers may sustain the gap between research and community-based evaluation. At the philosophical level, paradigms differ in three groups of assumptions: *ontology*, which refers to

how one views social reality; *epistemology*, which refers to how one views how knowledge comes about; and *methodology*, which refers to the process of research and the method one uses to conduct research in an attempt to understand reality (Guba, 1990). Using paradigms as a framework, Mills (2002) interviewed 19 local community-based practitioners to identify their underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions to possibly uncover a hidden source of resistance to science based practices. After completing the interviews, Mills (2002) contrasted what he found these practitioners' paradigms to be to the paradigms of researchers. Although Mills (2002) did not interview researchers, based on previous research he assumed that the dominant paradigm for scientific researchers was nomothetic, positivist, and realist.

Mills (2002) reported that researchers tend to adopt a critical realist ontology, which means that they believe that the social world is tangible, concrete, and consists of relatively unchallengeable structures that exist independently of anyone's description. Practitioners tend to adopt a consensual relativist ontology, which means that they believe that reality is individually constructed using names, labels and concepts to structure a person's own perception of the world. This way the social world is created through individuals' shared, constructed realities.

When it comes to epistemology researchers adopt modified objectivity; that is, they understand that true objectivity is impossible to obtain and that it is important to recognize and take into consideration the possible influence researchers themselves have on perception of a subject. Practitioners, on the other hand, can be characterized as adopting subjectivity; they believe that it is best to celebrate and explore the relationships between the researcher and subject. They believe that the only way to gain understanding of individuals is to study interpretations that a person uses to construct their social world.

Last, according to Mills (2002) because they see the value of combining quantitative and qualitative research to obtain a fuller view of the social world, researchers favor experimental or quasi-experimental methodology. Practitioners favor a qualitative methodology because qualitative methods give them the opportunity to discover "new" theories for changes in the social world. More specific to programs, qualitative methods give practitioners the opportunity to discover "new" theories for changes that may have occurred because of that specific intervention (Mills, 2002). By talking with clients, practitioners can gain insight on multiple realities that could lead to a better understanding of why a particular intervention had the effect it did and improvements that might be made.

Limitations to Mills' (2002) study include a small sample (n=19), Mills' (2002) assumptions about researcher paradigm, and Mills as a representative of the scientific community. Mills (2002) made an assumption about the paradigms of researchers based on previous research rather than including a sample of researchers in his own study. It would be helpful to conduct this study including a sample of researchers in order to have current data on researchers' philosophical perspectives. Lastly, Mills (2002) highlights that being a representative of the scientific community may have influenced some practitioner's responses making them feel compelled to answer questions according to the status quo of program planning. It would be helpful to conduct this study using practitioners as interviewers to see if responses would change when practitioners are interviewed by a peer.

Emotional Barriers to Evaluation

Another factor contributing to lack of community-level evaluation is practitioner anxiety about evaluation. Evaluation anxiety can be defined as a set of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses that accompany the worry about possible negative consequences based

upon the evaluation of one's performance (Donaldson, Gooler, & Scriven, 2002). It has been suggested that evaluation anxiety is a form of social anxiety, which can be defined as an aversive awareness of "self as I appear to others and that others will hold a negative impression of me" (Trower, Gilbert, & Sherling, 1990, p. 13). Evaluation anxiety has been studied extensively in many areas such as test taking, dating, work place performance, and oral examinations, but little research has been done on evaluation anxiety in the area of program evaluation (Donaldson, Gooler, & Scriven, 2002).

To my knowledge there is no research that specifically examines practitioner attitudes about administering evaluation, so the closest research is the research presented here on attitudes toward program evaluation. It is possible that practitioners experience evaluation anxiety when they participate in program evaluation and thus carry those attitudes and experiences to administering evaluations.

Donaldson, Gooler, and Scriven (2002) discuss evaluation anxiety from the perspective of an external evaluator conducting a program evaluation. When external evaluators conduct a program evaluation, the program, not the practitioner, is being evaluated and the practitioner may be helping to administer the evaluation. Even though the evaluation is on the program and not the practitioner, feelings of anxiety could still exist. They explain how recent developments in the field of program evaluation may have at times elevated the prevalence and importance of anxiety. An example is the replacement of distanced evaluation approaches with interactive approaches. The popularity of interactive approaches has caused more regular interactions between practitioners and evaluators which has made the fear of negative evaluation a more regularly occurring concern for some practitioners. When more distanced evaluation approaches

were used, practitioners and evaluators did not interact as often, perhaps only once when the summative report of the program evaluation was issued.

The problem of evaluation anxiety does have consequences for the outcome of program evaluation (Table 3). However, the overall effect of evaluation anxiety is that evaluation data and findings may be worthless and the credibility of the evaluators may be undermined because the barriers encountered will inhibit the evaluators' ability to conduct a quality evaluation (Donaldson, Gooler, & Scriven, 2002).

Table 3

Common Consequences of Evaluation Anxiety

Difficulty in gaining access to required information
Critical stakeholders uncooperative
Quality of data collected is compromised due to false reporting
The validity of the evaluation results are challenged
Program improvement lacking
Decreases performance and productivity in general
Program evaluation dissatisfaction

Donaldson, S. I., Gooler, L. E., & Scriven, M. (2002). Strategies for managing evaluation anxiety: Toward a psychology of program evaluation. *American Journal of Evaluation, 23*(3), 261-273.

Donaldson, Gooler, and Scriven (2002) go on to explain the sources of evaluation anxiety. The two sources they describe are dispositional factors of the practitioner administering the evaluation and situational factors of the environment in which the evaluation is being administered. Both of these sources fit into *human, evaluation*, and *context* factors described by Taut and Alkin (2003).

They describe dispositional factors as practitioner characteristics that exist prior to program evaluation. These characteristics include lack of experience with administering program evaluation, a negative experience with either administering or participating in program evaluation in the past or extreme ego involvement in the current program model. These are similar to Taut and Alkin's (2003) *human* factor.

Donaldson, Gooler, and Scriven (2002) also describe situational factors, such as behaviors of the practitioner during evaluation administration or characteristics of the environment of the program evaluation. This may include failure to highlight program accomplishment, social norms of the organization that may be unfavorable to evaluation, or role ambiguity between the practitioner administering the evaluation and stakeholders or evaluators. These situational factors are similar to Taut and Alkin's (2003) *evaluation* and *context* factors. This brief explanation of evaluation anxiety can help us to understand how previous experience and context may influence a practitioner's attitudes about evaluation.

Posavac and Carey (2007) present yet another perspective on practitioners' attitudes toward program evaluation. Posavac and Carey (2007) present the attitudes as "dysfunctional attitudes toward program evaluation" (p. 40). They describe dysfunctional attitudes as political and emotional factors which could represent misunderstanding of program evaluation or could reflect conflicts with an organization that surface during evaluation. They present nine attitudes that practitioners may hold prior to the evaluation process.

The first dysfunctional attitude is assuming a program is perfect, which simply means that practitioners are enthusiastic and confident in their program and its effects; they expect the program to have dramatic, positive effects. The second dysfunctional attitude involves program directors thinking that asking participants to evaluate the program will detract from the practitioners' professional image. Program directors fear that asking participants to evaluate will offend the staff. Practitioners also hold the fears that evaluation will inhibit trying new things until after the evaluation; the fear program termination due to a negative evaluation, or that information gathered during evaluation will be used for promotion or termination, or that quantitative methods will replace their own observation and experience. The next dysfunctional

attitudes presented by Posavac and Carey (2007) include the fears that evaluation will take time and money away from direct services, stakeholders will loose their decision making rights and that the evaluation will have little impact. These dysfunctional attitudes once again apply more to program evaluation conducted by an external evaluator than to practitioners being part of the evaluation process, but may provide some insight into why practitioners may have negative attitudes toward evaluation (Posavac & Carey, 2007).

Summary

Practitioners may view evaluation as taking time or resources away from program delivery, may not understand the value or importance of evaluation, or may have had a negative experience with evaluation in the past, thus making them reluctant to conduct evaluations. The examples given above of practical barriers to program evaluation describe common difficulties encountered in community-based evaluations that could lead to or help explain the development of negative attitudes about evaluation. Cultural barriers reflect practitioners' views of the world and their work which may explain why some practitioners do not view evaluation as an important aspect of community programming. From the given definition of evaluation anxiety, it can be seen that previous negative experiences and the context of evaluation could deter practitioners from conducting program evaluation. If a practitioner experiences evaluation anxiety then it is more likely his or her attitude about evaluation will be negative. I therefore hypothesize that practitioners will be significantly more negative in their attitudes about evaluation than participants.

If these barriers lead to the development of negative attitudes about evaluation then it is possible, according to the attributive projection concept (Murstein & Pryer, 1959), that practitioners will project these negative attitudes onto participants. I therefore hypothesize that

practitioners' own attitudes will be significantly correlated with their perceptions of participant attitudes. If practitioner attitudes are more negative than participant attitudes and practitioners are projecting their attitudes onto participants this may lead to practitioners believing that participants have more negative attitudes about evaluation than program participants actually do. Therefore, I hypothesize that practitioners will think participants have more negative attitudes about evaluation then participants actually do.

The above discussion outlined the practical, cultural, and emotional barriers to community-based evaluation and helped to explain possible reasons for the lack of evaluation in preventive intervention programming. The goal of the present study is to explore practitioners' attitudes about evaluation in order to provide direction for overcoming barriers to community-based evaluation. For the purpose of the current study both practitioners and program participants were surveyed on attitudes about evaluation. Also for the purpose of the current study and to help aid in clarification, "practitioners" are referred to as "facilitators".

CHAPTER TWO

Method

Procedure

Program participants. To recruit program participants for this study, facilitators from 11 of the 36 SFP programs conducted during 2006 were asked if they would be willing to add a 20-item questionnaire on participants' attitudes about evaluation to the program evaluation process. It is important to note that the questionnaire was administrated during the pre-test, because facilitators expressed concerns that evaluation at the beginning of a program is viewed as intrusive by participants. Thus, if participants had negative attitudes they would likely be more pronounced at pretest. None of the facilitators who were asked to add the questionnaire refused to participate. All participants were given a $5.00 gift certificate to a local store such as Fred Meyer or Wal-Mart for participating. Participants were informed that surveys would remain anonymous. We received WSU IRB approval for procedures before collecting data.

Facilitators. To recruit facilitators for this study, I obtained contact information from the WSU Extension trained SFP facilitator database. The database contained 495 facilitators trained by WSU Extension personnel between 2000 and 2006. This database was constructed from SFP facilitator training rosters provided by WSU Extension faculty. After a review of the database, I eliminated WSU faculty who were also trainers, duplicate entries, and those facilitators who did not have contact information. I conducted survey mailing following the procedures outlined by Dillman (1978) in *Mail and Telephone Surveys: The Total Design Method*. I received WSU IRB approval before sending out any letters. Facilitators received a letter with information about the purpose of the research and that asked for their participation in completing a survey that would arrive in the mail. A sample of this letter can be found in Appendix A. A second letter, survey,

consent form, and self addressed stamped return envelope was sent to all eligible facilitators approximately one week after sending out the research description letter. The facilitators were also sent $2 as a token of my appreciation for participating in the survey. A sample of the letter can be found in Appendix B. A sample of the consent from can be found in Appendix C. A sample of the survey can be found in Appendix G. These were sent before receiving returned mail.

Upon receiving returned mail of facilitators with incorrect addresses in the database, a record was kept in the database of trained facilitator for future reference. If a new address was provided, that address was changed in the database and another survey was sent to the new address. A record was also kept of all the surveys returned completed and uncompleted. Facilitators also had the option of opting out of the research via email or phone call, a record of these responses was also kept.

Roughly two weeks after sending out the second letter and survey, all facilitators who had not responded, or from whom I had not received returned mail, were sent a reminder postcard asking them to fill out the survey and return it as soon as possible. One hundred and fifty one reminder cards were sent. This approach yielded another 19 facilitators. A sample of the post card can be found in Appendix D. Lastly, a couple of weeks after sending the reminder postcard, all facilitators who had still not responded, or from whom I had not received returned mail, were sent a third letter asking for their participation along with another copy of the survey and consent form. This final step yielded another 14 facilitators. A copy of this third letter can be found in Appendix E.

A total of 326 surveys were mailed to facilitators for whom complete contact information was available. Out of this sample, 43 (13%) surveys were returned because the individual no

longer lived or worked at the addresses on file. Of the remaining 283, we received 124 (44%) completed surveys.

Sample

Program participants. One hundred and five program participants were recruited from 11 SFP programs being conducted in Washington State in 2006. The program participants ranged in age from 21 to 65 with a mean age of 38.36. Seventy two of the program participants were White/European and 71 were female. This sample represents only a handful of program participants of the 36 SFP programs conducted in Washington State in 2006

Facilitators. I collected data from 124 program facilitators who were recruited from a database of 495 facilitators trained by WSU Extension personnel between 2000 and 2006. I combined these data with data from a sample of 16 facilitators collected earlier by the SFP research team. The final facilitator sample (n=140) ranged in age from 21- 72 with a mean age of 49.25. Ninety one facilitators were White/European and 107 were female. The demographics for program participants and facilitators are reported in Table 4.

Measures

I collected data using two surveys: one from the program participants and the second from facilitators.

Demographics. Program participants were asked to report their birthdates, race/ethnicity, and gender. Facilitators were asked to fill in their gender, work status, education level, race/ethnicity, and age.

Program participant attitudes. Program participants were asked ten questions pertaining to their beliefs about evaluation. Sample questions include "I feel that my opinions are a valuable part of the evaluation process," "I believe that evaluations are an invasion of my privacy," "I am

uncomfortable filling out evaluations," and "I learn something about the program by completing evaluations." Responses were given on a 5-point scale ranging from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree." The WSU SFP research team created these ten items based on facilitator concerns about the evaluation process.

Program participants were then asked ten questions pertaining to their personal beliefs and attitudes. Responses were given as true or false on these items. A sample question is "When I don't know something I don't at all mind." This measure is a short version of the Marlow-Crowne Social Desirability Scale. This scale has been found to be almost as internally consistent (r =.79) as the original Marlow-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Strahan & Gerbasi, 1972). A sample of the survey can be found in Appendix F. This scale was included to rule out the possibility that high scores on the social desirability scale are related to more positive attitudes about evaluation.

Facilitator attitudes. Facilitators were mailed a survey to fill out at their own convenience. Facilitators responded to six items asking how they themselves feel about evaluation. Sample questions include "It is easy for me to describe to program participants why we are conducting an evaluation," "I am uncomfortable administering evaluation surveys to program participants," and "The evaluation process takes too much time." Facilitators then responded to ten items asking them their beliefs about how participants perceived evaluation. These ten items matched the ten items program participants answered about evaluation beliefs. Sample questions include "Participants feel that their opinions are a valuable part of the evaluation process," "Participants believe that evaluations are an invasion of their privacy," and "Participants learn something about the program by completing evaluation." Responses to both

sets of questions were given on a 5-point scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree.” A sample of the survey can be found in Appendix G.

Table 4

Demographic Characteristics of Facilitator and Participant Samples from Washington State Strengthening Families Program

Demographic characteristic	*Facilitators (n, % of total)*	*Participants (n, % of total)*	*2006 SFP Participants (n, % of total)*
Gender			
Male	17 (12%)	22 (21%)	113 (25%)
Female	107 (76%)	71 (68%)	272 (61%)
Unreported	16 (11%)	12 (11%)	64 (14%)
Race/Ethnicity			
White/European	91 (65%)	72 (69%)	250 (56%)
Asian/Pacific Islander	2 (1%)	0	3 (.7%)
Black/African American	3 (2%)	0	3 (.7%)
American Indian/Alaska Native	3 (2%)	7 (7%)	32 (7%)
White/Middle Eastern	1 (.7%)	0	0
Latino/Latina	13 (9%)	5 (5%)	88 (20%)
Other	8 (6%)	5 (5%)	7 (2%)
Unreported	19 (14%)	16 (15%)	66 (15%)
Age			
18-30	6 (5%)	18 (17%)	61 (14%)
31-40	24 (19%)	47 (45%)	214 (48%)
41-50	30 (24%)	30 (28%)	129 (29%)
51-60	46 (37%)	8 (8%)	33 (7%)
61-70	11 (9%)	1 (.9%)	7 (2%)
71-80	1 (.8%)	0	0
Unreported	22 (16%)	1 (.9%)	5 (1%)
Education (completed)			
6th grade	0		
9th grade	0		
11th grade	0		
GED/12th grade	13 (9%)		
Associate's degree	21 (15%)		
Bachelor's degree	44 (31%)		
Master's degree	42 (30%)		
PhD/Professional training	4 (3%)		
Unreported	16 (11%)		
Employment			
Currently working	117 (84%)		
Not currently working	7 (5%)		
Unreported	16 (11%)		
Types of jobs			
Admin./Program Coord.	40 (28%)		
Counseling	32 (23%)		
Parent Educator	5 (3%)		
Teacher/Program facilitator	19 (14%)		
Other	12 (8%)		
Unreported	29 (21%)		

CHAPTER THREE

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Intercorrelations on 10 matching scale items for program participants and facilitators were run separately. I found that for both program participants (Table 5) and facilitators (Table 6) most of the scale items were moderately and significantly correlated with one another.

Scale Development

Principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation on the ten scale items yielded three factors, which can be characterized as Negative Attitudes, Positive Attitudes, and Learning Attitudes (see Table 7). The only variable that loaded onto two factors was "Happy to give opinion" which loaded onto both Negative Attitudes and Positive Attitudes but loaded more heavily on Positive Attitudes; so for the current study it will be used in the Positive Attitudes factor. The factors determined by this factor analysis will be used as dependent variables in some of the remaining analyses, instead of the ten individual scale items.

I then examined intercorrelations of the scales for both program participants and facilitators separately. I found similar results for both program participants (Table 8) and facilitators (Table 9).

Table 5

Participant Report of Self Attitudes about Program Evaluation: Correlations and Descriptive Statistics (N=105)

Variables	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
1. Opinion valuable	-									
2. Too much time	-.28	-								
3. Answer honestly	.31	-.06†	-							
4. Invasion of privacy	-.17†	.42	-.32	-						
5. Happy to give opinion	.37	-.48	.31	-.48	-					
6. Do not enjoy	-.21	.34	-.20	.34	-.43	-				
7. Uncomfortable	-.19	.35	-.35	.52	-.40	.24	-			
8. Learn about program	.25	-.46	.20	-.38	.40	-.41	-.14†	-		
9. May improve program	.34	-.38	.33	-.38	.44	-.27	-.34	.35	-	
10. Learn about self	.26	-.43	.24	-.33	.46	-.42	-.20	.67	.40	-
M	4.1	2.5	4.5	2.1	4.1	3.1	2.4	3.5	4.3	3.6
SD	.57	.80	.54	.79	.77	.90	.81	.90	.62	.87
Range	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5

†= non significant correlation

Note: All correlations except those marked with † were significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 6

Facilitator Reports of Participant Attitudes about Program Evaluation: Correlations and Descriptive Statistics (N=137)

Variables	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
1. Opinion valuable	-									
2. Too much time	-.32	-								
3. Answer honestly	.42	-.17†	-							
4. Invasion of privacy	-.32	.43	.33	-						
5. Happy to give opinion	.51	-.31	.46	-.42	-					
6. Do not enjoy	-.12†	.43	-.22	.40	-.30	-				
7. Uncomfortable	-.35	.56	-.36	.60	-.50	.51	-			
8. Learn about program	.33	-.19	.27	-.22	.36	-.15†	-.28	-		
9. May improve program	.48	-.14†	.43	-.22	.37	-.09†	-.26	.28	-	
10. Learn about self	.36	-.16†	.25	-.18	.33	-.14†	-.16†	.59	.29	-
M	3.6	3.0	3.4	2.7	3.5	3.6	2.9	3.5	3.6	3.6
SD	.74	.91	.74	.78	.71	.75	.83	.86	.76	.83
Range	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5

†= non significant correlation

Note: All correlations except those marked with a † were significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 7

Factor Loadings for Factor Model of Facilitator Perceived Attitudes about Participants and Participant Attitudes

	Scales		
Variables	*Negative*	*Positive*	*Learning*
Uncomfortable	**.80**	-.31	-.07
Do not enjoy	**.77**	.02	-.08
Too much time	**.76**	-.08	-.12
Invasion of privacy	**.70**	-.31	-.04
May improve program	.01	**.79**	.14
Answer honestly	-.19	**.74**	.07
Opinion valuable	-.18	**.72**	.24
Happy to give opinion	-.40	**.61**	.23
Learn about program	-.06	.20	**.87**
Learn about self	-.15	.20	**.85**
Eigenvalues	4.49	1.27	1.04
Percent of variance explained	45%	13%	10%

Table 8

Participant Reports of Self Attitudes about Program Evaluation: Scale Correlations and Descriptive Statistics (N=105)

Variables	*Neg. Attitudes*	*Pos. Attitudes*	*Learn Attitudes*
1. Negative Attitudes		-.61**	-.53**
2. Positive Attitudes			.45**
M	2.5	4.3	3.6
SD	.60	.45	.81
Range	1-5	1-5	1-5

*$p<.01$

Table 9

Facilitator Reports of Participants Attitudes about Program Evaluation: Scale Correlations and Descriptive Statistics (N=137)

Variables	*Neg. Attitudes*	*Pos. Attitudes*	*Learn Attitudes*
1. Negative Attitudes		-.46**	-.27**
2. Positive Attitudes			.45**
M	3.1	3.5	3.5
SD	.64	.57	.75
Range	1-5	1-5	1-5

**$p<.01$

Hypothesis Testing

Each hypothesis is stated below and followed by the results of its test.

H1. Facilitators will be significantly more negative in their attitudes about evaluation than program participants.

An independent sample t-test was used to examine the differences between facilitators' attitudes about evaluation and program participants' attitudes about evaluation. For this analysis I used the three items from the facilitators' own attitudes measure and three items from the program participants' own attitudes that correspond to each other.

Facilitators own attitudes about evaluation invading program participant privacy and evaluation taking too much time were significantly more negative than program participant attitudes on these two items (t = -2.51, p = .01, t = -2.72, p = .01 respectively). There was no significant difference between facilitators' attitudes and program participant attitudes about evaluation helping to improve the program (t = -.51, p = .61).

H2. Facilitators' own attitudes will be significantly and positively correlated with their perception of program participant attitudes.

Correlations were used to examine the relationship between facilitators' own attitudes about evaluation and their perception of program participant attitudes about evaluation. For this analysis the three items from the facilitator own attitudes measure corresponding with the three items from the facilitators' beliefs about program participant attitudes were used.

There was a significant correlation for "Evaluation is an invasion of participant privacy" (r = .40, p <.01) and for "Evaluation takes too much time" (r = .59, p <.01). For "Evaluation may help to improve the program" there was no significant correlation between facilitators' own attitudes and their beliefs about program participant attitudes (r = .14). This suggests that

facilitator's believe that evaluation may help to improve the program and also believe that program participants feel the same.

H3. Facilitators think that program participants will have more negative attitudes about evaluation than program participants actually report.

An independent samples t-test was used to examine facilitator perspective of program participant attitudes and program participant reported attitudes. The three factor scales were the dependent variables.

The Negative Attitudes scale showed that facilitators' beliefs about program participant attitudes were significantly more negative than program participant reported attitudes about evaluation ($t(240) = -6.70$, $p = .00$). The Positive Attitudes scale showed that program participants reported significantly more positive attitudes than facilitators believed program participants would report ($t(240) = 11.04$, $p = .00$). The Learning Attitudes scale showed no significant difference between facilitator beliefs about program participant attitudes and program participant reported attitudes on the learning scale ($t(240) = .54$, $p = .58$). Figure 2 shows the means all the program participant reported and facilitator beliefs on the three scale factors.

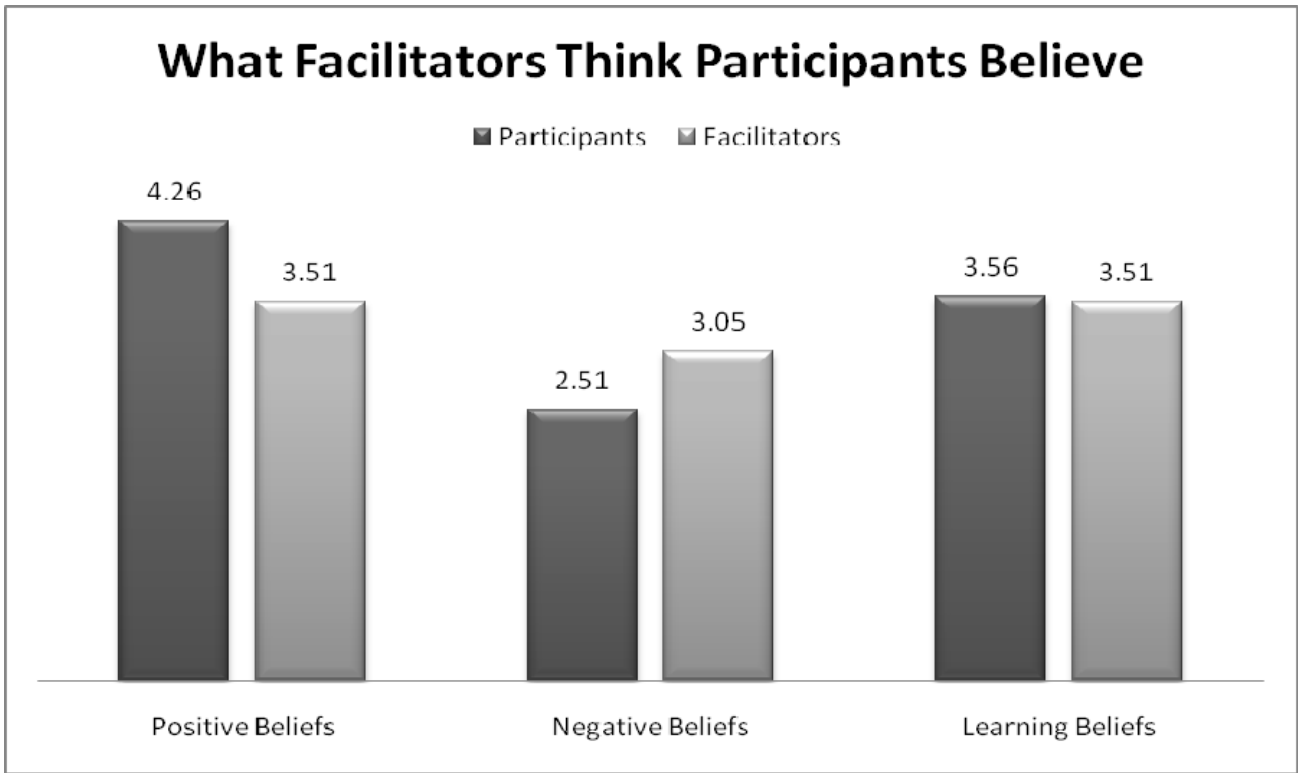

Figure 2

Means of facilitator beliefs and program participant reports on attitudes about evaluation

Additional Analyses

Multivariate exploratory analyses were run using a General Linear Model. Models included the demographic variables of age, gender, minority status, and facilitator status. The three factor scales were used as dependent variables. The analysis also included interaction terms for facilitator status with all other demographic variables (see Table 10).

Negative Attitudes Scale. The model for Negative Attitudes Scale was significant overall ($F(4, 196) = 10.63$, $p < .001$). The only variable significantly associated with Negative Attitudes was facilitator status ($F(1, 199) = 29.51$, $p < .001$), with facilitators showing more negative attitudes than program participants. Variables accounted for 18 percent of the variance in the

Negative Attitudes Scale. No interaction terms were found to be significant and thus were dropped from the analysis.

Positive Attitudes Scale. The model for Positive Attitudes Scale was significant overall ($F(5, 195) = 28.04$, $p < .001$). Variables significantly associated with Positive Attitudes were age ($F(1, 199) = 6.42$, $p = .01$) and facilitator status ($F(1, 199) = 31.66$, $p < .001$). Older facilitators and program participants had more positive attitudes about evaluation. Variables accounted for 42 percent of the variance in the Positive Attitudes Scale. There was a significant interaction between facilitator status and age ($F(1, 199) = 9.61$, $p < .01$). I created "young" and "old" age groups using a median split on the age variable. Exploration of this interaction across both young and old age groups showed that program participants' attitudes were more positive than facilitator attitudes. Among facilitators, however, the older age group was more positive than the younger age group (Figure 3).

Learning Attitudes Scale. The model for Learning Attitudes Scale was not significant overall ($F(4, 196) = .56$, $p = .69$).

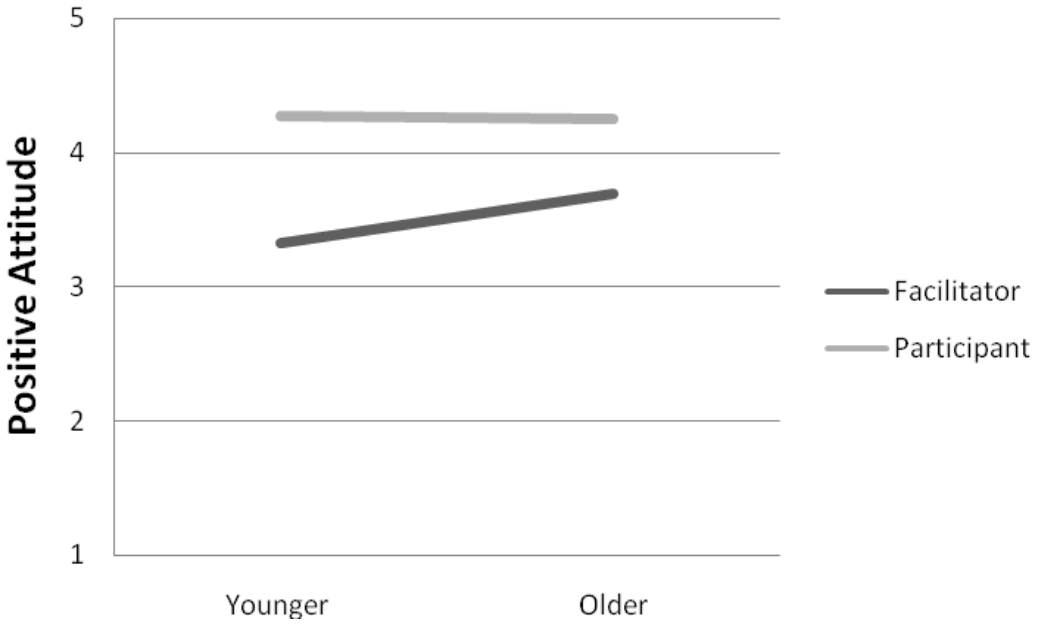

Figure 3

Interaction on Positive Attitudes Scale between Facilitator Status and Age

Table 10

Summary for Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Attitudes about Evaluation for Facilitators (n=124) and Program Participants (n=105) on the Negative, Positive, and Learning Attitudes Scale

	Negative Attitudes		*Positive Attitudes*		*Learning Attitudes*	
Predictor	*B*	*SE B*	*B*	*SE B*	*B*	*SE B*
Gender (1=Female)	.15**	.11	.01**	.09	-.09	.14
Minority	-.13	.11	.14	.09	.17	.14
Age	-.00	.01	.02**	.01	.00	.01
Facilitator	.57**	.11	-2.03**	.36	-.04	.13
Age X Facilitator			-.03*	.01		
R^2		.18		.42		.01

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Post Hoc Analyses

I ran post hoc analyses on the data because there was a low response rate on reporting of demographic information. I also ran post hoc analyses because there were so many participants who left their race unreported. There may be a difference in attitudes about evaluation between participants who do not report demographic information and participants who do report demographic information, specifically reporting of one's race. Lastly, I also ran post hoc analysis using the Marlow-Crowne social desirability scale because I happen to have this data collected and could use it address the possibility of a selection bias among the program participants. Overall, I ran these post hoc analyses to rule out alternative explanations for my findings.

First, I compared program participants in the current study with SFP participants who did not participate in this study to see if there were systematic differences between the two groups. I found no significant differences between program participants and SFP participants in age (t = .66. p = .51) or gender (χ^2 = 2.44, p = .12).

I also compared program participants in the current study with SFP participant who did not participate in this study to see if the program participant sample was more likely to report their race than the SFP sample. I believe that participants who do not report their race may have more negative attitudes about evaluation than participants who do report their race. Program participants were not significantly more likely to report their race than those in the SFP participant sample (χ^2 = .20, p = .66).

Secondly, I ran an independent t-test to compare program participants who did not report their gender or race/ethnicity to program participants who did to see if program participants who did not report were less positive in their attitudes about evaluation. I found no significant differences on the Positive Attitudes scale (t(240) = .17, p = .86), Negative Attitudes scale

($t(240) = .54$, $p = .59$), or Learning Attitudes scale ($t(240) = -.48$, $p = .63$) for program participants who did not report their gender. I also found no significant differences on the Positive Attitudes scale ($t(240) = .32$, $p = .75$), Negative Attitudes scale ($t(240) = .70$, $p = .48$), or Learning Attitudes scale ($t(240) = -.84$, $p = .40$) for program participants who did not report their ethnicity.

Last, I ran an analysis to see if program participants who had high social desirability scores reported more positive attitudes about evaluation. Social desirability scores on the Marlow-Crowne were not significantly related to any of the three evaluation attitude scales. This suggests that program participants' social desirability does not influence their attitudes about evaluation; that a high social desirability does not lead to program participants having more positive attitudes about evaluation.

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

The primary goals of the current study were to examine both facilitator and program participant attitudes about evaluation, and to explore whether there is a mismatch between facilitator attitudes and program participant attitudes. This is important because it provides direction for overcoming barriers to community-based evaluation.

The findings of the current study supported these three hypotheses: 1) facilitators had more negative attitudes about evaluation than program participants, 2) facilitators' own attitudes were significantly and positively correlated with their beliefs about program participant attitudes, and 3) facilitators believed that program participants have more negative attitudes about evaluation than program participants actually reported. To my knowledge, no empirical research has been done to examine facilitator attitudes about evaluation, facilitator perspective of program participant attitudes about evaluation, or to examine the differences between facilitator and program participant attitudes about evaluation. The current study adds to the literature on barriers to community-based evaluation by examining these questions.

Facilitators may have negative attitudes about evaluation because their first priority is delivery of the program to help those in need (Myers-Walls, 2000), because they may have cultural views that inhibit them from understanding or valuing the evaluation process (Mills, 2002), or because they may have had a negative experience with evaluation in the past (Donaldson, Gooler, & Scriven, 2002). This study found that facilitators do have significantly more negative attitudes about evaluation than program participants, which indicates that negative attitudes may be a significant barrier to community-based evaluation.

My second prediction for this study was that facilitators' own attitudes would be significantly and positively correlated with their beliefs about program participant attitudes, thus projecting their own attitudes about evaluation onto program participant (Murstein & Pryer, 1959). Myers-Walls (2000) reported that one of the barriers to evaluation was facilitators concern about evaluation having a negative impact because having to complete evaluations early in the program would lead to dropping out. The present study found that there was a significant and positive correlation between facilitators' own attitudes and their beliefs about program participant attitudes. Facilitators thought that program participants would view evaluation as time consuming and intrusive based on their own attitudes about evaluation.

The third hypothesis of the current study was that facilitators would believe program participants' attitudes were more negative than program participants actually report. Facilitators have negative attitudes about evaluation and seem to be projecting their attitudes onto program participants. It then follows that program participants will have more positive attitudes then facilitators believe they do. The current study found that program participants do report more positive attitudes than facilitators' perceptions, which supports the idea that facilitators are projecting their own attitudes onto program participants. These findings provide evidence that facilitators have more negative attitudes toward evaluation than program participants' attitudes about evaluation. Facilitators and program participants both showed neutral attitudes about evaluation helping to learn about the program or learn about self.

Combined results of hypothesis two and hypothesis three show that facilitators and program participants believe that evaluation can help to improve the program. Facilitators own beliefs did not correlate with their perception of program participants' beliefs; facilitator attitudes were more positive than their perceptions. However, when examining program participants

reported beliefs, I found that facilitators and program participant report similar attitudes about evaluation improving the program (M =4.38, M =4.33, respectively).

Patton (1997) states in his Utilization-Focused Evaluation theoretical perspective that intended users are more likely to use evaluation if they understand the evaluation process and feel as if the process is their own. Facilitators with negative attitudes may not see the value of evaluation or in some cases may even view evaluation as harmful to program participants. The correlation between facilitator attitudes and their beliefs about program participant attitudes suggest that facilitators project their own attitudes onto program participants and thus believe that program participants also have negative attitudes about evaluation. Facilitators may be reluctant to conduct evaluations because they view and believe program participants view evaluation as negative.

Implications

These findings have great implications for the preventive intervention field. Facilitator negative attitudes may be a significant barrier to evaluations in community-based programs. Without evaluations of community-based programs, data cannot be given to researchers by facilitators, and thus the preventive intervention research cycle (Mrazek & Haggerty, 1994) is left uncompleted. Incompletion of the preventive intervention research cycle limits the improvements that can be made to preventive intervention programs and communities may not be receiving the best program possible. However, unless community-based evaluations are conducted, the real world effectiveness of these programs will not be known.

Along these same lines, the second implication of these findings is that negative attitudes may be leading to evaluation implementation not being done correctly. In preparation for this study, the SFP research team heard from facilitators that they were concerned about

administering evaluations because they felt it might interfere with establishing rapport, especially when they administered the pretest on the first night of the program. Some facilitators therefore chose to conduct evaluations on the second night.

Another implication of these findings concerns the training of facilitators. SFP facilitators attend an intensive two or three day training to learn how to facilitate SFP but little of the training focuses on the evaluation aspect of the program. Extending Patton's (1997) Utilization-Focused Evaluation theoretical perspective to the training of facilitators, including training on the evaluation of the Strengthening Families Program and the importance of evaluation may help facilitators to understand the evaluation more and feel as if they are part of the process.

It may also be important to include in training the findings of this study about program participant attitudes. Program participants do not think evaluation takes too much time or is an invasion of their privacy. They also belief that their opinion is valuable to evaluation and that evaluation may help to improve the program. If facilitators can see that program participants have positive attitudes about evaluation they may not be as reluctant to conduct evaluation. This information may not completely change facilitators' views on evaluation but it may help them to understand that program participants generally do not mind evaluations.

An interesting finding that may also have implications for the training of facilitators is that as facilitators get older their attitudes about evaluation become more positive. It is possible that older facilitators are more experienced with program facilitation, and thus evaluation, and have more positive attitudes because of their experience. It is also possible that older facilitators have higher education which may influence their attitudes. If this is the case, it may be important to focus especially on training younger facilitators about the importance of evaluation and the evaluation process. Older facilitators may also be able to pass on knowledge or advice to

younger facilitators. It is also interesting to note that program participant attitudes did not change with age.

Strengths and Limitations

Limitations. The current study has five main limitations. First, the sample used in this study is not representative of all facilitators because I used a sample of facilitators from one preventive intervention program. Also it is not representative because the sample was taken in only one state. It is also not representative of all participants because participants were taking part in one preventative intervention program in one state during a particular time frame. Along these same lines, the second limitation is that the sample is a convenience sample and not a random sample. The facilitators and participants were people I had access to because of the SFP program.

The third limitation is that there could be a selection bias in the facilitator sample. In this study I used a mailing method to collect data from facilitators at their own convenience. Since facilitators had the freedom to either respond to my survey or not, facilitators who have more negative attitudes about evaluation may not have taken the time to fill out the survey and get it back to me. However, the results indicate that this selection bias did not occur; facilitator data showed negative attitudes about evaluation. Facilitators who did not return the survey may have even more negative attitudes than this sample.

The fourth limitation to the current study is that it is not a comprehensive study of all barriers to evaluation. I chose to focus on three barriers to evaluation that I found to be the most researched in the field thus far. There are more barriers to evaluation that need more research and some that may not have any research to date.

The last limitation to the current study is that my sample was English-speaking only. A large portion of the SFP programs done in Washington State are with Spanish-speaking participants. Spanish-speaking participants may have more negative attitudes about evaluation due to language barriers.

Strengths. The current study has several strengths. First, even though the sample is not representative of all facilitator or participants, the sample contains people with varied backgrounds and a variety of professions. There is also a large range of ages of both facilitators and participants and multiple races/ethnicities represented in both groups.

Another strength is that the current study asks both facilitators and participants about their attitudes about evaluation. To my knowledge, this is the first study to ask participants about their actual attitudes about evaluation. This study will provide some hard data on facilitator and participant attitudes. It is valuable to know what program participants are actually feeling so that facilitators have evidence of what program participants actually think and may be able to change their perceptions of program participant attitudes. Knowing that program participants feel positive about evaluation may lead facilitators to conduct evaluations more willingly.

Future Directions

The current study was an exploratory study examining facilitator and program participant attitudes about evaluation that in my research appeared to have never been done before. More research is this area needs to be done to further expand on the findings of the current study.

First, it would be important to replicate the study with a larger sample of facilitators and program participants. It also would be good to include facilitators and program participants from other preventive intervention programs to obtain a more representative sample. It would be ideal to replicate this study with a random sample of facilitators and program participants.

Secondly, as noted in the limitations above, there may be a selection bias in the facilitator sample because facilitators could choose to send back the survey or not. In the future it may be helpful to follow up with facilitators who did not complete the survey to see if their attitudes vary from the results found here. Originally, I thought that facilitators in my sample may have more positive attitudes about evaluation but the results show that this sample of facilitators had fairly negative attitudes about evaluation so this may not be the case.

Future research needs to examine attitude differences between English-speaking program participants and Spanish-speaking program participants. It may be that language barriers influence attitudes about evaluation. It would be interesting to know if Spanish-speaking program participants have more negative attitudes than English-speaking program participants.

The research on evaluation implementation needs to examine more barriers to community-based evaluation. The current study only examined one possible barrier (attitudes about evaluation) that may be affecting evaluation implementation. There are many more possible barriers that need to be examined in more detail.

From the findings of this study it is difficult to know the origins of facilitator attitudes about evaluation. Attitudes could be shaped by practical reasons such as believing that evaluation is taking time and resources away from program delivery (Myers-Walls, 2000). Attitudes could be shaped by cultural reasons such as facilitators' paradigms or work cultures leading them to not understanding the value of evaluations (Mills, 2002; Myers-Walls, 2000). Another explanation could be that facilitator attitudes are shaped by past negative evaluation experience or evaluation anxiety (Donaldson, Gooler, & Scriven, 2002). Future research in this area should look at the origins of facilitators' negative attitudes to better understand how to overcome or change their attitudes.

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Appendix A

Dear Program Facilitator,

Prevention programs have been shown to be a valuable resource for many youth and their families. Program evaluation is often required by funders of prevention programs, but obtaining evaluations may present a challenge for facilitators and participants. For this reason, we are interested in understanding some of the barriers to evaluation and how people feel about evaluation. We hope that by gaining more information we can work to improve the evaluation process in statewide programming and make it easier for facilitators and participants alike.

You are receiving an invitation to participate in a survey because you are on our list of individuals who have attended a Facilitator Training workshop for the Strengthening Families Program. All individuals who have attended this training will receive a survey approximately one week after receiving this letter.

We understand that not everyone who has been trained in facilitating Strengthening Families Program has actually been able to facilitate the program, but if you have been able to facilitate the program, it is very important that you complete and return the survey. If you have not facilitated Strengthening Families Program but have experience facilitating other programs, please feel free to fill out the survey using a different program as your focus. If you do not have experience facilitating any programs, then please feel free to disregard the survey.

You may be assured of complete confidentiality. Each survey has an identification number printed on it for mailing reasons only. This is so that we may check your name off our mailing list upon receiving your completed survey. Your name will never be placed on a survey or associated with your responses.

Summaries of this research will be made available to future program facilitators and to program trainers. You may receive your own summary of the results by writing “copy of results” on the back of the return envelope and printing your name and mailing address below it.

I would be most happy to answer any questions you might have about this research. Please email or call. My email is awhitehall@mail.wsu.edu. My telephone number is 509-335-2923.

Thanks for your assistance.

Appendix B

Dear Program Facilitator,

Approximately a week ago you received a letter asking you to participate in a study and describing the purpose of this study. You are receiving this survey because you are on our list of individuals who have attended a Facilitator Training workshop for the Strengthening Families Program. All individuals who have attended this training have received a survey. I am conducting this research with Laura Hill and Chris Koehler of Washington State University for my master's thesis project.

We would really appreciate your participation in this study because your opinion is valuable to us. By gathering information on facilitators' attitudes about evaluation we will better able to understand some of the barriers to evaluation and work to better the evaluation system.

You may be assured of complete confidentiality. Each survey has an identification number printed on it for mailing reasons only. This is so that we may check your name off our mailing list upon receiving your completed survey. Your name will never be placed on a survey or associated with your responses.

We have enclosed a token of our appreciation for your participation. Enclosed with this letter you will also find a consent form and a survey. Please return the consent form and the survey in the enclosed preaddressed envelope.

Summaries of this research will be made available to future program facilitators and to program trainers. You may receive your own summary of the results by writing "copy of results" on the back of the return envelope and printing your name and mailing address below it.

I would be most happy to answer any questions you might have about this research. Please email or call. My email is awhitehall@mail.wsu.edu. My telephone number is 509-335-2923.

Thanks for your assistance.

Appendix C

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
CONSENT FORM
Program Participant Responses to Program Evaluation

Researcher: Laura Hill, Assistant Professor
Department of Human Development
Washington State University
509-335-8478

Researcher's statement

We are asking you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what we would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When we have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called 'informed consent.' We will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

Washington State University conducts an evaluation of the Strengthening Families Program each time it is delivered. Participants complete a pretest at the beginning of the program and a posttest, asking the same questions, at the end of the program. This evaluation helps us to monitor the benefits of the program to participants and to ensure quality.

The purpose of the present study is to determine how facilitators of the Strengthening Families Program feel about the evaluation. The study is also to find out about facilitators' beliefs about how program participants feel about being evaluated. Previously we conducted a study about participant attitudes about evaluation. Results of the study will help us to restructure training to address specific issues and questions facilitators may have about conducting program evaluation. Completing the study may be interesting and may provide a brief opportunity for reflection. If you are uncomfortable with questions in the study you do not need to answer them. You may stop participation in the study at any time.

PROCEDURES

If you decide to participate, you will respond to 20 questions. Examples of the questions include the following: "I am uncomfortable administering evaluations", and "Participants feel that their opinions are a valuable part of the evaluation process". Responding to the questions should take about 10 minutes. You are under no obligation to complete the survey. You may refuse to answer any questions or stop at any time.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

It is possible that some people may find the completion of evaluation forms boring or intrusive. If this is the case you may refuse to answer the questions or stop completing the questionnaire.

OTHER INFORMATION

Your responses are to these questions are confidential. The questionnaires are sent to the researcher at Washington State University. Your responses will not be linked in any way to to your name. No agencies or personnel other than the researcher and her assistants will have access to the data. The data will be kept for five years after the end of the study and then will be shredded.

You may refuse to participate or may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of the $10.00 compensation that we offer in appreciation of your time.

_____

Printed name of researcher Signature of researcher Date

_____

Participant's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have general questions about the research, I can ask one of the researchers listed above. If I have questions regarding my rights as a participant, I can call the WSU Institutional Review Board at (509)335-9661. This project has been reviewed and approved for human participation by the WSU IRB.

_____

Printed name of participant Signature of participant Date

Appendix D

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

May 7, 2007

A couple of weeks ago I sent you a questionnaire seeking your opinion about facilitators' beliefs and attitudes. You were sent this questionnaire because your name is in our database of individuals who have attended a Strengthening Families Training Program.

If you have already completed and returned it to us please accept our sincere thanks. If not, please do so today. Because it has been sent to only a small sample of people it is extremely important that yours also be included in this study if the results are to accurately represent the opinions of trained facilitators.

If by some chance you did not receive the questionnaire, or it got misplaced, please call me right now, (509)-335-2923, and I will get another one in the mail to you today.

Sincerely,

Appendix E

May 29, 2007

About a month ago you received a survey seeking your opinion on facilitators' beliefs about evaluation. You are receiving this survey because you are on our list of individuals who have attended a Facilitator Training workshop for the Strengthening Families Program. I am conducting this research with Laura Hill and Chris Koehler of Washington State University for my master's thesis project.

As of today I have not yet received your completed survey. We would really appreciate your participation in this study because your opinion is valuable to us. By gathering information on facilitators' attitudes about evaluation we will better able to understand some of the barriers to evaluation and work to better the evaluation system.

You may be assured of complete confidentiality. Each survey has an identification number printed on it for mailing reasons only. This is so that we may check your name off our mailing list upon receiving your completed survey. Your name will never be placed on a survey or associated with your responses.

Enclosed with this letter you will also find a consent form and a survey. Please return the consent form and the survey in the enclosed preaddressed envelope.

Summaries of this research will be made available to future program facilitators and to program trainers. You may receive your own summary of the results by writing "copy of results" on the back of the return envelope and printing your name and mailing address below it.

I would be most happy to answer any questions you might have about this research. Please email or call. My email is awhitehall@mail.wsu.edu. My telephone number is 509-335-2923.

Sincerely,

Appendix F

Beliefs about Evaluation

Evaluations are used for a variety of reasons. Often times, evaluations are used to find out how effective a program is at achieving certain goals. We would like to know more about what you think of the evaluation process. Please give us your honest answers to the following questions, so we can understand how participants view evaluations and improve our program.

The first letter of your last name _____ Your Birthdate: _____/_____/_____

For the following questions, please mark the answer that best matches your thoughts or feelings.

1. I feel that my opinions are a valuable part of the evaluation process.

   ❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

2. I feel that filling out evaluations takes too much time.

   ❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

3. I answer the questions on evaluations honestly.

   ❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

4. I believe that evaluations are an invasion of my privacy.

   ❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

5. I am happy to give my opinions on evaluations.

   ❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

6. Some parts of the evaluation process I do not enjoy.

   ❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

7. I am uncomfortable filling out evaluations.

   ❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

8. I learn something about the program by completing evaluations.

   ❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

9. I believe that evaluating a program may help to improve it.

❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

10. I learn something about myself by completing evaluations.

❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

Attitudes and Beliefs

Listed below are a number of statements concerning personal attitudes and traits. Read each item and decide whether the statement is true or false as it pertains to you personally.

If an item is both true AND false for you, just pick the one you think is MORE like you.

For the following questions, please circle the answer that best matches your thoughts or feelings.

1. I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble.	True	False
2. I have never intensely disliked anyone.	True	False
3. There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.	True	False
4. I would never think of letting someone else be punished for my wrong doings.	True	False
5. I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way.	True	False
6. There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.	True	False
7. I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.	True	False
8. When I don't know something I don't at all mind.	True	False

9. I can remember “playing sick” to get out of something. True False

10. I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me. True False

Appendix G

Facilitator Beliefs about Evaluation

We would like to know more about what you think of the evaluation process and its effect on program participants. Please give us your honest answers to the following questions, so we can understand how facilitators view evaluations. This will help us to understand barriers to evaluation and to design a better evaluation protocol.

The following questions ask you to report your own feelings about conducting program evaluations for the Strengthening Families Program(s) that you have facilitated:

1. Conducting a "pretest" evaluation on the first night of a program makes it harder to establish rapport with participants.

   ❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

2. I am uncomfortable administering evaluation surveys to program participants.

   ❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

3. It is easy for me to describe to program participants why we are conducting an evaluation.

   ❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

4. Evaluations invade participants' personal privacy.

   ❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

5. Evaluating a program may help to improve it.

   ❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

6. The evaluation process takes too much time.

   ❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

For the following questions, please mark the answer that best matches your thoughts about how program participants respond to being evaluated.

7. Participants feel that their opinions are a valuable part of the evaluation process.

   ❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

8. Participants feel that filling out evaluations takes too much time.

❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

9. Participants answer the questions on evaluations honestly.

❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

10. Participants believe that evaluations are an invasion of their privacy.

❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

11. Participants are happy to give their opinions on evaluations.

❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

12. Participants do not enjoy some parts of the evaluation process .

❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

13. Participants are uncomfortable filling out evaluations.

❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

14. Participants learn something about the program by completing evaluations.

❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

15. Participants believe that evaluating a program may help to improve it.

❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

16. Participants learn something about themselves by completing evaluations.

❑ *Strongly agree* ❑ *Agree* ❑ *Neutral or Mixed* ❑ *Disagree* ❑ *Strongly disagree*

Facilitator Information

Your responses to the following questions help us to learn who has facilitated Strengthening Families and who has responded to our questionnaire.

17. Have you ever observed, administered or helped to administer a program evaluation to Strengthening Family participants? ❑ *Yes* ❑ *No*

18. Have you ever had to administer an evaluation to other program participants? ❑ *Yes* ❑ *No*

19. Are you male or female? ❑ *Male* ❑ *Female*

20. Are you currently employed? ___ Yes ___ No

***If yes*:**

a. What is the title of your present job? _____

b. At what agency or organization do you work? _____

c. What are your primary responsibilities (i.e. teaching, administration, counseling)?

_____

21. Which of these categories describes the highest level of education that you have *completed*:

____ 1 6th grade	____ 5 Associate's degree
___ 2. 9th grade	____ 6 Bachelor's degree
___ 3 11th grade	____ 7 Master's degree
____ 4 GED/12th grade	____ 8 PhD/Professional training (MD, DDS, JD)

22. How would you describe your race or ethnicity (pick as many as apply)

____ 1 White/European	____ 5 White/Middle Eastern
____ 2 Asian/Asian American	____ 6 Pacific Islander/ Hawaiian Native
____ 3 Black/African American	____ 7 Latino/Latina
____ 4 American Indian/Alaska Native	____ 8 Other (please specify) _____

23. What is your age? _____

24. Do you have any comments about program evaluations?