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A LATTER-DAY SAINT PERSPECTIVE ON EVALUATION

by

Courtney Miriam Glenn Peck

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

Department of Instructional Psychology and Technology

Brigham Young University

July 2003

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a masters thesis submitted by

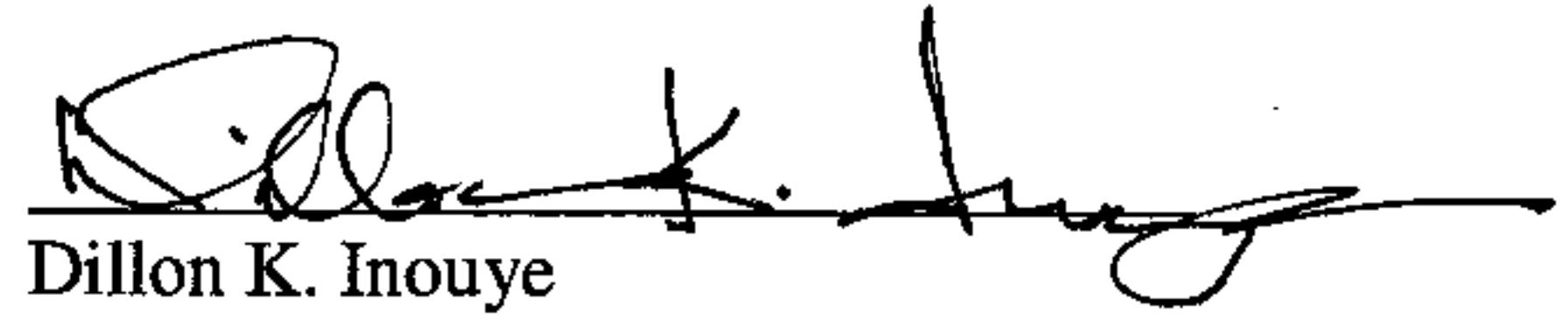
Courtney Glenn Peck

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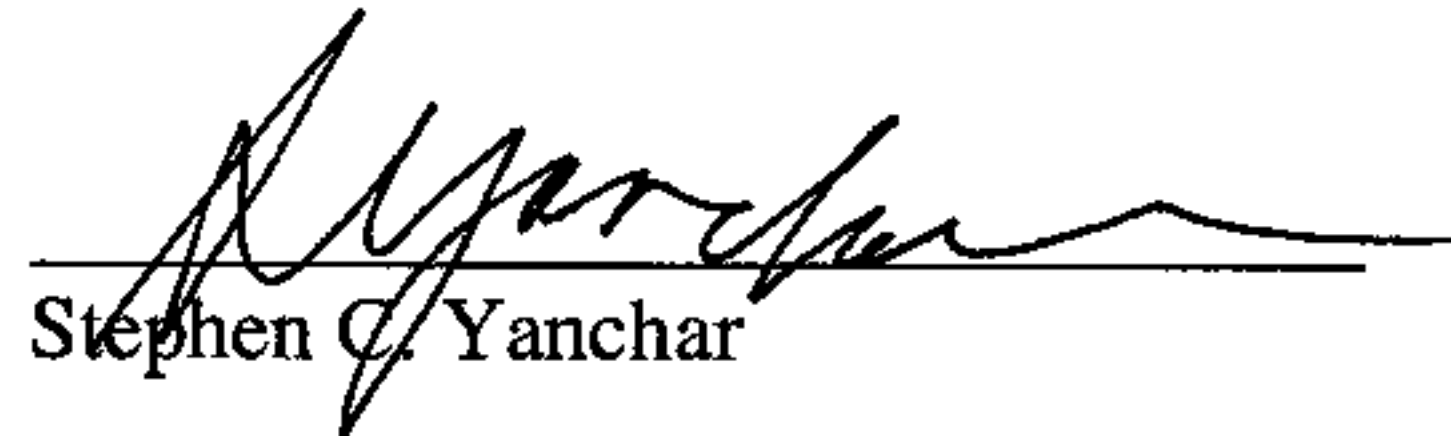
June 25, 2003
Date


David D. Williams, Chair

June 25, 2003
Date


Dillon K. Inouye

June 25, 2003
Date


Stephen C. Yancher

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Courtney Glenn Peck in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

July 2, 2003
Date

David D. Williams
David D. Williams
Chair, Graduate Committee

Accepted for the Department

Paul F. Merrill
Paul F. Merrill
Chair, Instructional Psychology and Technology

Accepted for the College

Richard Young
Richard Young
Dean, David O. McKay School of Education

ABSTRACT

A LATTER-DAY SAINT PERSPECTIVE ON EVALUATION

Courtney Glenn Peck

Department of Instructional Psychology and Technology

Master of Science

Evaluation scholars argue that evaluation as a discipline has traditionally rested on the assumption that knowledge should and can be evaluated objectively. As a result, evaluation has focused too much on techniques and methods, becoming paramountly an objective and technical enterprise that disregards any personal or *moral* responsibility that evaluators have.

How would a Latter-day Saint perspective of evaluation reframe evaluation as a moral rather than technical enterprise? The doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints provides powerful insights for evaluation that place moral responsibility in the forefront of evaluation. Knowledge in an LDS perspective is not obtained or evaluated merely objectively; it is inextricably linked with our identity. The purposes and methods of evaluating in an LDS perspective are understood first within the context of who we are and how we live practically in the world. Because who we are and how we live subsequently founds how we go about practically and continuously evaluating in our daily lives, we are morally responsible for our evaluations.

We are God's children, given the ability and responsibility to evaluate. We evaluate our progress to see how we are doing in our journey of becoming like God, in order to learn what more we can do. We learn how to improve through the Spirit, the means by which God evaluates us. We have the responsibility to be worthy in order to evaluate well. We are therefore first responsible for evaluating ourselves, which includes learning to be evaluated by God. When we evaluate others we have the responsibility to properly prepare and help them learn how to evaluate themselves and to seek God's evaluations of them. Although we may use traditional methods of evaluation, any thing we evaluate is secondary to the goal of improving the lives of the people we hope to serve. When performed in the proper spirit, with an understanding of our moral responsibility, evaluation essentially becomes an act of charity, for the improvement and growth of God's children. In reframing evaluation as a moral rather than merely technical endeavor evaluation becomes genuinely helpful and desired.

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A LATTER-DAY SAINT PERSPECTIVE ON EVALUATION

Introduction

General Overview of the Evaluation Discipline

Evaluation is a part of all of our lives. What dress should I buy? Is the movie worth seeing? Should I ask her out? What church should I attend? Do you think you'll get the promotion? These everyday questions require evaluation, making judgments, assessing value, and making decisions about what's good or bad, often by comparing perceptions of *what is* with opinions of what *should be*. We evaluate the worth of things and people around us, making decisions based on our evaluations. We are in turn evaluated by others.

Although these informal evaluations may occur without acknowledgment of their evaluative nature, most of us have experienced the structure and decision making power of formal evaluations. Anyone who has applied to college knows how important grades and standardized scores become in determining one's merit as a successful candidate for admission. In the workplace many have experienced formal evaluations of a program or product associated with their work.

Evaluation as a formal discipline is relatively new, emerging out of the need in the 1960s to evaluate social welfare programs. With federal funding pouring into new programs and products, Congress was concerned with "popular apprehensions about [their] legitimacy" (Shadish, Cook, & Levinton, 1991, p. 22). New social science graduates took up the challenges of evaluation and began applying their training in psychological measurement, policy analysis, and ethnography to address problems in what soon became known as the discipline of evaluation. In response to the demand for evidence of the worth of programs and products, social scientists produced results as efficiently as they knew how with the methods in which they

had been trained. Among those who engaged in its formal study, evaluation came to be defined as “systematically determining the merit and worth” of some *thing*, or *evaluand* (e.g. Scriven, 1999, p. 1; Gullickson, 2003, p. 5). As a formal discipline, evaluation scholars have since applied their theories to student evaluations, exemplified by the recent publication of standards for evaluating *students*, the term “used generically to refer to the *object* of the evaluation,” in a classroom (Gullickson, 2003, p. 5, italics added). The authors point out that “without evaluation we do not know if learning has taken place” (p. 1).

As institutions where learning is supposed to take place, schools and universities experience formal evaluations in many ways. For example, administrators are evaluated and policies undergo many kinds of review. Departments evaluate their purposes, policies, courses, and curriculum. Professors are evaluated for advancement, annual performance, and continuing faculty status by assessment of their scholarship, teaching, and service. Students are evaluated for admissions, scholarships, and grades. University programs are also continually evaluated. These evaluations are done with the assumption that determining merit and worth will improve universities as institutions of learning. But how well has evaluation aided in improvement and growth and what problems have evaluators encountered in meeting that goal?

Problem

The section of this thesis titled “Traditional Evaluation as a Technical Enterprise” sets up one of the problems of evaluation by dealing with two questions. First, what has been the dominant tradition of the evaluation discipline? Second, what is the main problem, as conceived by evaluation scholars themselves, of this tradition? I recognize that there are many possibilities for how to conceive of evaluation’s traditions and limitations, but I have chosen to focus on how evaluation scholars themselves, particularly Thomas Schwandt (2002), have dealt with these

issues. Schwandt and others argue that evaluation as a discipline has traditionally rested on the assumption that knowledge should and can be evaluated objectively. As a result, evaluation scholars worry that evaluation has focused too much on techniques and methods, becoming paramountly an objective and technical enterprise. The problem with this technical focus is that evaluators have subsequently assumed that their accountability ends merely with technical expertise, disregarding any personal or *moral* responsibility for their evaluations.

Purpose

As a student of evaluation at Brigham Young University, a university founded upon the principles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I have wondered what insights the Gospel of Jesus Christ could offer to address the problem evaluation scholars have raised. The section of this thesis titled “Gospel Insights for Evaluation” answers the question how would an LDS perspective of evaluation reframe evaluation as a moral rather than technical enterprise?

To address that question I look to LDS scriptures and teachings of LDS prophets. We discover that the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ provides powerful insights for evaluation that place moral responsibility in the forefront of evaluation. Knowledge in an LDS perspective is not obtained or evaluated merely objectively; it is inextricably linked with our identity, or who we are. The purposes and methods of evaluating in an LDS perspective are understood first within the context of who we are and how we live practically in the world. Because who we are and how we live subsequently founds how we go about practically and continuously evaluating in our daily lives, we are morally responsible for our evaluations. In this section then, I consider what the Gospel teaches us about who we are and the implications that result for why and how we evaluate (see appendices A and B for more information about the context and process of writing this paper).

The first subsection considers our divine nature as God's children, given the ability and responsibility to evaluate. Understanding who we are in relationship to God helps us know the purposes of evaluation, treated in the next subsection (Evaluation for Improvement and Salvation). We evaluate our progress to see how we are doing in our journey of becoming like God, in order to learn what more we can do. We learn how to improve through the Spirit, which is addressed in the next subsection (Evaluation through the Spirit). God is our Judge and Evaluator through His Spirit.

I continue by exploring the implications of these three subsections for what our responsibility becomes in evaluating ourselves and others (Evaluating Ourselves and Others). One implication is that we have the responsibility to be worthy in order to evaluate well. We are therefore first responsible for evaluating ourselves, which includes learning to be evaluated by God, giving self-evaluation a more prominent role. A subsequent implication is that when we evaluate others we have the responsibility to first properly prepare ourselves. Only then will we be able to help them learn how to evaluate themselves according to God's standards. Although we may use traditional methods of evaluation, any thing we evaluate is secondary to the goal of improving the lives of the people we hope to serve. The final subsection explains that when performed in the proper spirit, with an understanding of our moral responsibility, evaluation essentially becomes an act of charity, for the improvement and growth of God's children (Evaluation in Charity). In reframing evaluation as a moral rather than merely technical endeavor, evaluation becomes genuinely helpful and desired.

Rationale for Presenting an LDS Perspective of Evaluation

Invitation from evaluation scholars. My thesis addresses a need in the discipline of evaluation, as expressed by evaluation scholars, to consider different possibilities and different

ways of conceiving evaluation. Evaluation scholars have expressed the need to “decenter the primary discourse of method in evaluation practice” (Schwandt, 2002, p. 2), to “incorporate the vital contributions from other disciplines” (Rogers, 2001, p. 431), and to “imagine what it might be like to speak about evaluation differently...looking in different places” for help (Schwandt, 2002, p. 1). The purpose of my thesis includes looking to another place for help, namely the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to imagine what evaluation would look like with a moral rather than technical and method-centered focus.

Invitation from church leaders. We, as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and as members of the Brigham Young University community, have repeatedly been charged and invited to incorporate the truths of the Gospel into our scholastic efforts. While president of BYU, Jeffery R. Holland (1996) made “an unabashed appeal” to the BYU community “for a distinctly LDS approach to education,” of which evaluation is a part (p. 156). We are often reminded of Brigham Young’s challenge to “not teach even the alphabet or the multiplication tables without the Spirit of God” (e.g. Bateman, 2003, p. 3; Packer, 1996, p. 183, Kimball, 1996, p. 54). BYU has the unique role of “educati[ng] for eternity,” preserving the “heritage of knowledge that history has washed to [its] feet” as well as “the revealed truths sent from heaven” (Kimball, 1996, p. 43). What are those revealed truths and how might they apply to our evaluative efforts at this university? President Merrill J. Bateman (2003, p. 3) recently gave an example of how to apply the truths of the Gospel at BYU, encouraging faculty to seek the help of the Spirit in evaluating and assessing student learning:

Do we as faculty and staff seek the gift of discernment to know what our students comprehend and what they do not? Have you suddenly become aware of a particular student and realized that he or she missed a key point? I will never forget sitting on the stand as a bishop in a fast and testimony meeting. As I looked out over the congregation, I could tell which members needed help and the nature of the problems they were facing. Is it appropriate for a faculty member at Brigham Young University to enjoy this same

power? Why not? The teacher with this gift senses the impact of his or her teaching and is able to assess what should be done to enhance student understanding.

Practical problems reflecting the need for improvement. President Bateman's invitation implies that there is room for improvement, particularly here at Brigham Young University where we have the Gospel as a guide and resource. We must consider what standards of improvement our evaluations reflect and whether they are in harmony with the truths we learn from the restored Gospel. The following examples from either my own experiences or experiences related to me during my University education demonstrate that there is still room for improvement in our evaluations, specifically considering the unique purposes of Brigham Young University. While I hope and believe these scenarios are generally exceptions, they do stimulate serious reflection about our evaluative efforts and how they could be improved.

A student complained that the only feedback she received from her professor was a computer printout with her points for each assignment. Frustrated, she wondered aloud how this evaluation would help her learn. She knew her grade but did not receive enough information about how to improve. Another student admitted that his science classmates were scared to help each other because it might undermine their positions on the crucial grade curve. The curve, representing an evaluation of student performance in comparison to others had the capacity to either enhance or doom future admission to professional schools. I recall my own students entering class on the eve of their student teaching experience, worried because they had just been told that they were competing for jobs and would be evaluated based on their ability to prepare, teach, and perform better than their cooperating teachers.

These examples reflect some of the implications that arise when evaluation focuses on knowledge as an object to be possessed or accumulated, rather than as something connected to who we are and how we live. As a result of focusing more on the *evaluand* or *object* to be

evaluated, rather than the people our evaluations are supposed to help, evaluations often fail to really help people improve. They may not accurately represent what someone has really learned or how they change and grow with the knowledge they have gained. As a strictly technical enterprise, and though there are standards and guidelines for ethical treatment of others, evaluation practice in general disregards the personal and moral responsibility we have to each other for our evaluations. We often set up systems whereby we mechanically assign value and worth to individuals as objects, without recognizing the assumptions and judgments that precede what we see as valuable or that determine the criteria we choose for assessing value. What is it about evaluation's tradition that, at times, results in insufficient and unhelpful evaluations such as these?

Traditional Evaluation as a Technical Enterprise

Latter-day revelation warns that light and truth can be taken away “because of the tradition of [our] fathers” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:39). Our progress toward a “distinctly LDS approach to education [or evaluation]” could be impeded by intellectual traditions that may at times lead us astray or keep us from evaluating effectively in light of the restored Gospel (Holland, 1996, p. 156). Evaluation in education has inherited a tradition that carries with it certain assumptions that have influenced its purposes and methods for evaluating. Recognizing the assumptions that have emerged in the history of scholarly discourse about evaluation will provide a foundation for understanding some of the limitations of contemporary evaluation and how the perspective of the Gospel could enlighten and enhance questions of evaluation.

The traditions that inform “the purpose of evaluation and its methodologies have their origins in the social science disciplines” (Schwandt, 2002, p. 1). The “dominant approach” (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 60) of the social sciences was to adopt the methods and philosophies of

the natural sciences, based largely on the “philosophical precepts of logical positivism” (Kilburg, 1981, p. 186). Inspired by atomists such as Hobbes, who ultimately reduce “everything that exists” to “physical particles moving in accordance with physical laws” (Kolak, 1998, p. 354), the knowledge of science tends to prefer knowledge of *objects*, independent and disengaged from a *subject*. This tradition has assumed that, although perhaps spiritual and metaphysical realities exist, they are inaccessible through our senses; the methods of science therefore focus on what is assumed to be objectively true or transparent to human senses. To know about an object it is manipulated, controlled, measured, objectified, weighed, and evaluated through systematic methods. The resulting relationship consists of a knower (subject) who “stands over and against” what is to be known (object) (Schwandt, 2002, p. 44). Within this objective tradition, knowledge becomes “a product that the knower comes to possess,” a thing that must be acquired by some means or method (Schwandt, 2002, p. 45).

Contemporary evaluation has inherited the objective interpretation of knowledge in at least two ways; in *what* is evaluated and *how* that *evaluand* is evaluated, meaning the method that is applied. Most often what is evaluated, is an *object* of knowledge. For example, a professor gives a test, an essay, or assignment to assess what her students have learned. In these cases, some *thing* is chosen to represent the *accumulation of knowledge*, as if knowledge is an object that can be accumulated. When the evaluand is a person, such as a professor being evaluated for advancement, most often what is evaluated is some collection of objective indices designed to represent performance; number of published articles, student ratings, citizenship reports etc., which become a measure of his worth and value to a university. The professor thus becomes a commodity, almost as exchangeable as money. Stake (2001) notes that in evaluation we “have been advocates, seldom a voice of dissent, of finding objective indices of merit and

worth,” meaning that the decision or judgment of whether something or someone has worth can sometimes be based exclusively on an objective indicator (p. 349).

Evaluation has preferred objective knowledge not only as its object of examination, but in its method as well. Because knowledge in the objective tradition is knowledge of some specific thing, independent and separate from an expert who seeks it, the method for acquiring the thing becomes paramount. Following the traditions of the natural and social sciences, evaluation chose logical empiricism as its primary method of acquisition. This method requires the evaluator “to produce particular kinds of knowledge claims,” which he does through empirical methods, relying on the Lockean belief that “all knowledge comes through the senses” (Schwandt, 2002, p. 44; Kolak, 1998, p. 149). These knowledge *facts* are then put through an internal synthesis process of all relevant factual and value premises to “systematically determine merit, worth, or significance,” the often stated goal or definition of evaluation (Scriven, 1999, p. 1). In doing so, evaluation traditionally uses empirical methods to gather objective evidence that is then subjected to logical analysis, a wedding of sorts between empirical and rational ways of knowing. The facts that result from this evaluative process “allow consumers of evaluation to grasp in a detached, uninvolved way knowledge of the value of those evaluands,” through a statistic or evaluation report that supposedly represents reality (Schwandt, 2002, p. 63). This, however, creates its own problem. To value something is to weigh it in the balance, to make a judgment, to assess its worth. With each judgment a choice has been made based on the desires of our heart, or our interestedness. Therefore, how can value be detached and uninvolved? Supposing that an evaluative judgment can be made “in a detached” way is self-defeating and self-blinding.

While evaluation methods have developed and evolved, evaluation theory has continued to be “about methods,” (Shadish et. al, 1991, p. 31) and these methods continue to proliferate (Greene, 2001). Schwandt (2002) explains that within evaluation’s tradition the

correct exercise of method or procedure...is absolutely necessary. This is so because method or procedure is a device to screen out engagement with the world and thus prevent reason from being corrupted by prejudice, tradition, and so forth. Following the rules of method permits distancing of the object of study from the observer, thereby making objectivity possible. Hence evaluation practice is preoccupied with determining the right methods for producing [knowledge] claims (p. 44).

As a result of this emphasis on method, “technical issues of sampling, measurement, data analysis, and the like” have long been standards for sound evaluation (Cook and Gruder, 1978, p. 19; Chelimsky, year, p. 114;). Greene (2001) asserts that methods now define much of what evaluators do; methods remain “the foundation of our work, our own theories about our work, even our sense of purpose and identity” (p. 398). Method is assumed to remove an evaluator’s existential responsibility.

Some evaluation scholars have cautioned that the mechanistic focus in evaluation may be incomplete, even “inappropriate” and may lead “an educational evaluator to incorrectly understand the phenomenon evaluated” in its richness and complexity (Peper, 1973, p. 1; Briggs, 1976, p. 4). Greene (2001) worries that evaluators will continue their “technical method-centeredness, but that [they] probably shouldn’t” (p. 399). Why have some scholars been concerned about the technical focus of evaluation? Thomas Schwandt (2003), Jennifer Greene (2001), Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (1989), and Ernest House, (2001) among others, have worried that by preferring objective knowledge, evaluation has overlooked significant realities that may be inaccessible within the tradition. Kilburg (1981) argued that objectification destroys reality, turning the evaluand into a “logical compilation of facts, an abstraction, devoid of life and meaning” (p. 186). These evaluators assume that phenomena include contexts and

relationships that cannot be ignored. In other words, there is more to evaluation than merely epistemological issues. What we believe knowledge to be influences how we go about acquiring it; if we believe knowledge is objective and disconnected from our being then we attempt to obtain it through an objective method. In so doing we forget the ontological and ethical assumptions that influence our epistemological beliefs. Our values come from somewhere; it is impossible to ignore and disregard them through the proper exercise of method. We can never really “separate knowing from being,” or from how we live in the world (Schwandt, 2002, p. 122).

One of the problems with attempting to disengage ourselves from our evaluations by focusing on methods rather than on people is that technical accountability too often replaces or diminishes the essential taking of our moral responsibility. Because the morality of objectivity consists of carefully choosing and applying the correct method, we are not responsible for making a judgment or interpretation because we suppose that a correct evaluation of worth will appear with the proper exercise of method. The expectation of a technical method-centeredness is that evaluations should be disinterested and impersonal. But this is impossible because being morally and personally responsible to others and ourselves requires that we be interested and personal; this responsibility cannot be avoided, though exclusive use of objective methods is one way to ignore it. There is a discrepancy that arises when we try to talk about morality and ethics within a completely objective perspective.

Schwandt (2002) explained that the result of defining “knowledge in the human sciences as knowing about objects was to exclude [the] moral dimension from the activity of knowing” (p. 122). He gave as an example the traditional evaluation enterprise, which “seeks to equip a classroom teacher with a kind of knowledge of fact or procedure in such a way that every

problem she faces, from class size, to a decision about inclusion, to deciding the best curriculum for reading, is a technical problem to be solved,” doing little to “help her grasp the fact that in making evaluation decisions she is morally accountable” (p. 22). If evaluation is merely an exercise in collecting the necessary “facts” to make a decision, then an evaluator is only responsible insofar as he adequately and expertly collects and analyzes objective knowledge claims. So, although evaluation has increasingly included discussions of values, ethics, and moral philosophies, as evidenced by the *Guiding Principles* (Shadish, Newman, & Wye, 1995) and *Standards* (Sanders, 1994), these efforts remain “visible in our introductions but seldom in our analyses,” as the “reliance on measurement indicators as criteria of value and well-being” continues to grow (Stake, 2001, p. 349).

Palmer (1993), an educational philosopher, gives a persuasive analysis of how the objective tradition, with its methodological emphasis, might result in neglecting moral accountability. He believes that “objective, a word central to our way of knowing...has unwittingly fulfilled its root meaning ‘to put against, to oppose:’ it has made us adversaries of ourselves” (p. 21). Within an objective view of knowledge the relationship between the evaluator (expert or subject) and the person being evaluated (object) is not equal. An objective, disinterested relationship is assumed as the person is made the object of analysis by the expert and treated as an object or a commodity. Hence, learning, teaching, and evaluating *together* is not only hampered, but discouraged. We are pitted against each other, partially blinded by a tradition that has forgotten that *who* we are is inseparable from *what*, *why*, and *how* we know and evaluate. As a result, Greene (2001) admits that “we are not very sure about how to *be* in the world, or why” (p. 400).

Even though evaluation as a profession may be unsure of “how to be in the world” people somehow manage to go on learning and evaluating with their *being* intact (Greene, 2001, p. 400). Yet the point is that method is not what allows this; it is something fundamental to our being human. For example, Jacques Lusseyran (1998), left blind after a childhood accident, soon discovered that when he was “happy...serene...and thought well of [people]” he was rewarded with “the bright signal which taught him not only how to see, but also how to live.” He quickly learned that when he was filled with “fear, anger, impatience, seeking gain, jealousy, [and] unfriendliness...[he] literally went into a fog of smoke” (p. 19). To Lusseyran knowing and being were inseparable, which meant “an end of living in front of things and a beginning of living with them” (p. 27). Perhaps his unique way of seeing helped him understand at an early age how it is possible to “multiply words without knowledge” (Job 35:16). He writes of a “student named Pacot,” who “had just been given 100% by the teacher of history. I was astonished, because Pacot’s voice had informed me, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that he had understood nothing. He had recited the lesson, but only with his lips. His voice sounded like an empty rattle, with no substance in the sound” (p. 74).

The teacher evaluated Pacot based on an objective standard of knowledge. Pacot knew, or possessed, the information insomuch that he was able to remember and recite it convincingly, resulting in a good evaluation. Why then, was Lusseyran unconvinced? Traditional conceptions of knowledge as an object, commodity, or end are faulty in understanding how someone could be “learned,” yet not wise, “*supposing* they know of themselves, wherefore their wisdom is foolishness” (2 Nephi 9:28, italics added). Because Pacot did not allow the truth of the matter to touch his life and change him, he not only deceived others regarding his wisdom, but he also deceived himself that he understood and therefore had an advantage over others. Lusseyran, on

the other hand, like the many teachers and evaluators who transform methods within a context of love and responsibility, understood that the acquisition of knowledge as the end goal is superceded by the “reason for men to acquire it” (p. 65). Therefore, because Lusseyran chose to let the truth touch his heart and change him he could discern the truth, seeing “things as they really [were].” His manner of evaluation was according to the truth because he was living truthfully and honestly. Knowledge for him included understanding how to live.

Although the purpose of this study is not to analyze the attempts made by evaluation scholars to remedy the problems of evaluation’s objective tradition, it is important as we consider an LDS perspective to distinguish living before God from *subjectivity* (being) as an alternative to *objectivity* (non-being). In responding to the problems of objectivity, where truth and knowledge as an object is presumed to be disconnected from living people, a common reaction of philosophers and scholars has been to focus instead on the subject or ego [see Heidegger (1993), Levinas (1996), and Kierkegaard (1992, 1995) for essays on truth, being subjectivity, and objectivity]. With the subject at center stage, another extreme view of truth is assumed: that it is relative to the whims and values of the subject, whose project is to selfishly dominate. But both alternatives (objectivist and subjectivist) fail to remember or account for God and our moral obligation to Him. Therefore, neither purely objectivist nor subjectivist views are able to adequately make sense of how to account for morality and responsibility in evaluation or other ways of studying human action.

Evaluation scholars have feared the inclusion of God in evaluation because they have followed the legacy of the natural and social sciences, which attempt to remove the discussion of values from consideration of truth through a scientific process. So, while recognizing that perhaps it is at some level impossible to completely remove values and morality from evaluating

merit and worth, evaluators, following an objectivist tradition, have avoided trying to understand where our values and purposes come from. In reaction to the objectivist approaches, participant-oriented traditions have taken a more subjectivist stance, often treating values as relative to the clients or stakeholders. But they still cannot account for where these values arise or what responsibility we have for our application of them.

Attempting to understand knowledge or truth from either an exclusively objective or subjective perspective is insufficient. The doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints transcends the subject-object dichotomy in that it recognizes that God has everything to do with who we are and our purpose in life, whether we acknowledge Him or not. In living before God, we forget ourselves, going beyond both objective *non-being* and selfish *being*.

The following table summarizes some of the differences between evaluating within an objective tradition, the dominant tradition in evaluation, and evaluating by seeing first with spiritual eyes who we are. Although the objective-subjective debate has entered into evaluation, as mentioned, I have focused mostly in this study on the objective tradition because of its dominance in evaluation practice, and its role in the formation of a technical and methodological focus in evaluation.

Table 1

Comparing Traditional Evaluation with an LDS Perspective

| | Dominant Perspective in Evaluation | LDS Perspective on Evaluation |
|---|--|---|
| What do we evaluate? | <i>Why, how, and who we evaluate is understood in terms of an independent object of evaluation. This evaluand represents the accumulation of knowledge. i.e. program, essay, performance, etc.</i> | Knowledge is inseparable from being. The evaluation of any object is incomplete without considering its relationship to a progressing person. Most significant then is self-evaluating our conversion. |
| Why do we evaluate? | Evaluation is for improvement of the <i>object</i> . i.e., Is the program better? | Evaluation is to help people become who they can and should become. |
| How do we evaluate? | Essential to evaluation is applying the proper method or technique in an objective, impersonal manner. | Evaluation requires that people live to be worthy to receive the help of the Spirit. Methods are secondary. |
| Who evaluates? Who do we evaluate? | Because evaluation is a technical skill it requires an expert. When evaluating other people the people are considered objects of evaluation. | <i>Who people are is essential to what, why, and how they evaluate. We are all evaluating beings, morally responsible for our evaluations of ourselves and others. We need to have charity in order to evaluate well.</i> |

Gospel Insights for Evaluation

The doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints offers many insights into the reasons for acquiring knowledge which help us understand why limiting evaluation to objective knowledge, as in the case of Pacot, remains incomplete. While president of BYU, Elder Dallin H. Oaks (1999) warned the BYU community that “those whose professional preoccupation is the acquisition of knowledge can be quite resistant to the idea that there is something infinitely more important” (p. 83). He continued, “at Brigham Young University we...have been given a more comprehensive challenge than the acquisition and declaration of knowledge. Our reason for *being a university* is to encourage and prepare young men and women to rise to their full potential as sons and daughters of God” (p. 82, his emphasis). Our evaluations then, of administration, programs, departments, faculty, and students should reflect this spiritual purpose. The way we evaluate is an indication of the kind of university we are striving to become. Evaluation that concerns itself with the eternal growth of God’s sons and daughters becomes paramountly a moral rather than merely a technical endeavor.

How then are we to evaluate in a way that reflects BYU’s “reason for being” (Oaks, 1999, p. 82)? A common response within the traditional way of evaluating knowledge would be to search for a method, asking for specific steps to follow. Elder Eyring (2002), in reference to callings to serve in the kingdom of God, explained, “there is a better way to help those who are called than *descriptions of what they are to do*. What they will need, even more than to be trained in their duties, is to *see with spiritual eyes*” (p.75, italics added). He did not say that we should not be trained in our duties, or that methods are not helpful, but that something comes first and remains primary. Our hearts must first be right and pure. Likewise with evaluating within an LDS perspective, there is something prior to evaluation methods. An LDS perspective

requires a higher standard for evaluation. Before we learn how to write a fair test, administer a survey, or apply a grading rubric, we begin with *who we are* and *who we are becoming*, giving context for *why*, *how*, and *what* we evaluate. This is the great advantage we have over the world's traditions of knowledge and evaluation, which misunderstand, by disregarding God, who we are and thus what our evaluative responsibilities are. Brigham Young did not say we shouldn't teach the alphabet or the multiplication tables, but that we need to *be* a certain way first, full of the "Spirit of God" (as quoted in Bateman, 2003, p. 3). Knowledge in an LDS perspective then is inextricably linked with our identity, and evaluation, to begin correctly also, begins with our identity.

The remainder of the paper offers insights for evaluation from the Gospel of Jesus Christ, beginning with God and what He teaches us about our divine nature and purpose, and therefore our responsibilities and blessings. With a greater understanding of our relationship and responsibility before God, we have a context for understanding why, how, and what we evaluate.

Our Divine Nature

We are God's children, given the ability to evaluate, implying that we are responsible for being a certain way in order to evaluate well. Evaluation is therefore primarily a moral endeavor.

Through investigating the objective tradition of knowledge we see that its assumptions have influenced what and how we traditionally evaluate. Some evaluation scholars have worried that by emphasizing what we know we forget about how we ought to be in the world. Yet the LDS doctrines teach that knowledge is intimately connected with who we are. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are privileged to begin with the powerful foundation that there is a God and we are His children. Understanding who God is and how we are in relation to Him puts everything else we do into proper perspective. LDS doctrines teach that as

our Father, God desires that we become like and return to Him, and He has provided the way for this to be accomplished.

Schwandt (2002) suggested that a new understanding of evaluation should “allow us to rehabilitate and cultivate several natural human capacities and thereby allow evaluation to be more continuous with the way we live in the world,” observing that people seem to innately “act in light of their substantive understandings of what it means to be the right kind of person...and to do the right kind of thing” (2002, p. 47, 18). The Gospel of Jesus Christ explains that the capacity to choose right or wrong, agency, was given to Adam and Eve and subsequently to all of us as part of the atoning Plan of Salvation. By the use of agency we make choices based on the desires of our heart. God has given us commandments and the light of Christ so that we can discern good from evil, and therefore use our agency to choose good. God “gave commandments unto men...placing them in a state to act...according to their wills and pleasures,” (Alma 12:31) which they are able to do because they have been “instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil,” (2 Nephi 2:5; see also 2 Nephi 2:26). President Boyd K. Packer (2003) teaches that because “the Spirit of Christ is given to every man,” (Moroni 7:15) “we know what is right and what is wrong. We all know” (par. 31). The spirit of discernment is “built into us” (par. 31; see John 1:9, D&C 84: 46-47).

The Gospel assumes that we are evaluating beings, continually engaged in discerning between good and evil. We have the innate ability then to evaluate choices and discern value as a gift from God if we will have it. The “Spirit enlighteneth” if we “hearkeneth to the Spirit” (D&C 84: 47). Christ, who knows “the end from the beginning,” invites the children of God to use their agency as He does, to be like Him, in relationship with Him, so that they might know what He knows (Abraham 2:8). Joseph Smith (1976) taught that when we are obedient, using

our agency to know first of God and his ways, then our capacity to evaluate and discern is enhanced.

We would say to the brethren, seek to know God in your closets, call upon him in the fields. Follow the directions of the Book of Mormon, and pray over, and for your families...and all things that you possess; ask the blessing of God upon all your labors, and everything that you engage in. Be virtuous and pure; be men of integrity and truth; keep the commandments of God: *and then you will be able more perfectly to understand the difference between right and wrong*—between the things of God and the things of men; and your path will be like that of the just, which shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day (p. 247, italics added).

Because how we use our agency determines how we experience and evaluate the world, we are responsible for what we know and whether we are able to evaluate well; “he that knoweth good and evil, to him it is given according to his desires” (Alma 29:5). Choosing to ignore the instruction of the Spirit can cause us to reinterpret and misinterpret things according to a false standard, including our own identity or being, or the measure of our own creation. Correct desires and a pure heart will help us see and evaluate the world truthfully.

The scriptures teach that in order to see clearly we are required to “lay aside our sins” (2 Nephi 10:20), “become new creatures,” (Mosiah 27:26) and experience “a mighty change...in our hearts” (Mosiah 5:2). Our evaluations must then consider not just *what we know* but *what we become* because of the knowledge we receive. Elder Holland (1996) gives an example of two different ways someone could apply the knowledge they receive. The first man, failing to take the responsibility to *be* like God could “read Goethe or Rilke in the evening, play Bach and Schubert, and go to his day’s work at Auschwitz in the morning” (George Steiner, as quoted in Holland, 1996, p. 148). In this example, the accumulation of knowledge is not connected to a man’s personal responsibility as a son of God, a point that traditional evaluation would not be capable of considering. A second man, striving to be obedient so that he is able to use his agency well would “read Goethe at sundown, play Bach in the evening, and the next morning *die*

for his fellowmen, if necessary” (Holland, 1996, p. 148). The man in the second case strives to let charity, which “never faileth,” become the culmination of his learning (Moroni 7:46). With true knowledge, received in God’s way, comes the responsibility and desire to “love God and neighbor” (Luke 10:27). By beginning with an understanding of *who* we are, the evaluative standard for learning is raised.

There are many ways we could consider who we are becoming through the knowledge we receive. One day we were discussing this issue of evaluating knowledge based on the standards the Gospel requires in an educational psychology class I taught. Faced with the practical dilemma of evaluating her students’ ability to read, one pre-service elementary teacher suggested, “I could have my students prepare a book to read at a nursing home or to students in a lower grade as their reading examination. As I help them learn how to read these books I might use some of the traditional ways of evaluating reading, but only if they contribute to their progress. Maybe having the opportunity to serve others with the knowledge and skills they gain will help them understand why reading is important and motivate them to want to learn. How I evaluate my students reflects what is most important to me.” She wasn’t sure how her idea would work out, but she realized that even thinking about knowledge as it is related to the way we are and the things we do invited her to consider alternative methods of evaluation.

Evaluation for Improvement and Salvation

We evaluate our progress to see how we are doing in our journey of becoming like God, in order to learn what more we can do.

As we come to understand who we are in relationship to God, the purposes of evaluation become clearer. In an LDS perspective knowledge is transformed into much more than an object to be possessed through a technical process. While “Latter-day Saints are fond of quoting the Prophet Joseph Smith’s statement, ‘A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge,’” Elder

Oaks (1991) reminds us that “this is sometimes used to suggest that the pursuit of knowledge is, by itself, a saving activity. That was not what the Prophet said. In context, it is clear that his statement referred to a particular kind of knowledge, gained in a particular way” (p. 72-73). The Prophet further clarifies that “the principle of knowledge is the principle of salvation...through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (Smith, 1980, p. 200). The purpose of knowledge then is to help God’s children develop and fulfill their creation, to become who they are capable of becoming. Evaluation is essential to this endeavor.

Because we are God’s children, with the ability to evaluate, we are responsible to evaluate for improvement and growth on the Lord’s standard: are we becoming more like Him and helping His children to do the same? Evaluation is, therefore, primarily a moral and religious endeavor with the purpose of helping us progress toward salvation. If knowledge is for salvation, incomplete without a change of heart, then evaluation as well is incomplete if it neglects what people become and how they change or does not seek to understand what people can become. Elder Holland (2003) explained that Christ’s “sermons and exhortations were to no avail if the actual lives of His disciples did not change” (p. 37). It isn’t enough to assess merely the acquisition of knowledge through a technical process because in so doing the reasons for acquiring knowledge are neglected. Within this perspective we are able to understand more clearly Elder Holland’s wish that “as with the Master, wouldn’t it be wonderful to measure the success of our teaching by the healing that takes place in the lives of others”(p. 34)?

It’s not uncommon to hear teachers exclaim in exasperation that the only thing their students care about is their grade! At times it feels like every comment begins with hedonistic questions such as, “how many points is this worth,” “will this be on the test,” or “will this affect my grade?” Perhaps this concern stems from a tradition that has focused on objective measures

as the end goal of learning. Too often students care only about a grade because their class is completely built around the grade. They learn for the grade or to get into medical school or to win the scholarship. Knowledge is a commodity, a means to some other end. While honestly desiring to instill a love of learning, teachers are often caught up in a tradition that stresses evaluation of objective knowledge; assigning every assignment a set of points and every activity contributing toward the final grade, assuming that the grade will tell us what the student knows. No wonder students too often care more about their grade than whether they actually learned anything, because this is what we are teaching them to care about.

But what would change if both students and teachers at BYU always remembered that we are children of God, and that learning is a way to progress toward and become like Him? When asked by students what the penalty to their grade would be for not doing something, Dillon Inouye, one of my professors would say, “well, you won’t know it and you therefore will be less able to help others.” What would happen if students truly understood that knowledge is the way to become more like God? They might take more responsibility for their own learning and desire to learn so that their capacity to teach and bless others would be enhanced. It could be that they would want to learn because they realized that as they learn about all things they also learn about God. Evaluation might be sought after and desired as a process of repentance and an opportunity to improve.

Evaluation through the Spirit

God is our Judge and Evaluator through His Spirit. We must be worthy in order to receive the necessary inspiration of the Spirit which helps us evaluate ourselves and others correctly.

If knowledge is ultimately for our salvation, the way to receive it becomes distinct from the objective preoccupation with method. For whom and how we are, our being or condition, influence what we can know and how we experience the world. We soon come to understand

that “learning the mysteries of God and attaining to what the apostle Paul called ‘the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’ (Eph 4:13) requires far more than learning a specified body of facts” (Oaks, 1991, p. 42). It is not enough then for evaluation to use a set of facts acquired through reason, logic, the scientific method, technical expertise, and other traditional ways of knowing, because we are trying to include in our evaluation something beyond what these methods are able to account for. Receiving saving knowledge, or getting “the fullness of God” requires getting it “in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it and that was by keeping all the ordinances of the house of the Lord” through the priesthood (Smith, 1976, p. 308). From the beginning when men called upon God he “conversed with [them]” (Alma 12:30) and taught them that to “know the mysteries of God” (Alma 7:20) they must have faith, repent, not harden their hearts, do good works, be diligent, and keep the commandments of God (see Alma 26:22, Alma 7:20, Alma 12:37, Mosiah 5:4, D&C 93:28). We learn *how* to evaluate by striving to *be* a certain kind of person; worthiness becomes an essential element of evaluation. Mercifully though, God gives us evaluative information as we are prepared and helps us learn how to evaluate more like Him through a process of repentance and change.

As we strive to become more worthy, God will teach us how to evaluate, giving us “divine teaching” through his Spirit as we “go to [Him] in prayer” (Smith, 1980, p. 76). The prophets understand that we learn through “the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before Him” (D&C 76:116; see 1 Nephi 17:3, Jacob 4:8, Alma 38:6, Helaman 7:29). Jacob reminds us “not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand. For...he counseleth in wisdom, and in justice, and in great mercy, over all his works” (Jacob 4:10). As we evaluate in the proper Spirit, we may be confident because, as Christ is the teacher, he is also the evaluator. His perfect example will guide us in all that we do.

To evaluate truly then, we must employ the Spirit's help and guidance. The humble evaluator realizes that "the conversion sought by the Gospel does not result from a physical event or attainment that can be measured by scientific analysis" (Oaks, 1999, p. 80). She cannot evaluate merely with her own eyes and ears, according to traditional logical and empirical methods, because evaluating what someone has become "cannot be measured by mortal means;" it requires the help of the Spirit (p. 80). This does not mean that there isn't a place to assess with effective methods whether the student can compute the math problem, or whether the computer program runs properly. But it does mean that these evaluations are incomplete without considering the personal growth and conversion of the people whose work we are evaluating.

After a poor performance on a physics paper, Elder Eyring (1997) tells of being rejected by his professor "because I was not bright enough, not quick enough intellectually" (p. 32). The professor was attempting to evaluate according to traditional measures of evaluation. "In God's kingdom" continues Elder Eyring,

if you correct me and reveal my weak intellect, I may well be embarrassed, but I will not be discouraged. I will know that my safety is that God is so far my intellectual superior that for him to simplify just a little more for someone like me will be not much more than he must simplify for the brightest human being who lives...So I can drop the pose and habits of the tough-minded intellectual and know that I may listen as a little child (p. 32-33).

As we seek to be instruments of the Spirit in our evaluations the answers will come, vast and various, as to how we can consider the hearts of our students when we evaluate them. Knowing the help we are promised increases our faith and resolve that we too will know how to correct and evaluate in a way that lifts our students.

In evaluating others there is often a place for using traditional methods. Assignments, tests, papers, quizzes, performance reports, and other measures and methods of evaluating can be helpful. These measures should be as helpful as possible, flowing out of our spirituality. And

then, if we are evaluating out of charity and with the Spirit, we will know to what purpose we have created our methods and how best to apply them. For example, C. Terry Warner, a philosophy professor in one of the most challenging classes I've had tried to read each paper taking into account the unique gifts and contributions of each student. He gave us many chances to hand in drafts and helped us find our own voices. He understood Joseph's own standard for correction: "If I esteem mankind to be in error shall I bear them down? No! I will lift them up" (Smith, 1980, p. 229). As a result we felt hopeful and desired to do our best to understand the difficult subject matter and apply it to our own lives because we felt the truth entering our hearts and healing us. Evaluating whether a student possesses certain knowledge is always incomplete without considering as well what the student is becoming with the knowledge she has gained.

Evaluating Ourselves and Others

We are first responsible for evaluating ourselves, which includes learning to be evaluated by God. When we evaluate others we have the responsibility to properly prepare and help them learn how to evaluate themselves. Although we may use traditional methods of evaluation, any thing we evaluate is secondary to the goal of improving the lives of the people we hope to serve.

President Hinckley (1999), in providing a doctrinal root for the Church's sponsorship of Brigham Young University, quoted D&C 88:78-80, which decrees:

Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the Gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand;
Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land and a knowledge also of countries and kingdoms—
That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you.

We are invited to learn *all things* with the expectation and understanding that our knowledge will allow us to serve in God's kingdom. For Latter-day Saints knowledge of God includes knowledge of all things; but it also requires that to know all things we must know who we are.

With this understanding President Ernest L. Wilkinson (1971) cautioned BYU faculty “if you have come here only to teach Greek or nuclear physics, and you do not give your students an assurance that they are God’s children, that they have a divine purpose for being here, and that they are to be engaged in a life of service, you will have failed as a teacher and we will have failed as an institution” (p. 38).

With its emphasis on being and becoming, it is important to understand that an LDS perspective of knowledge does not obliterate knowing things, facts, or what have been called *objects of knowledge*, nor the evaluation of these things. Rather, the context within which we learn them is expanded, giving meaning to the *things* we learn. Elder Maxwell explains that BYU’s role includes the traditional work of “transmitting accumulated knowledge from generation to generation” but that it must “do even more; it must also meet the higher standards of the kingdom of God” (1975, p. 6). So the problem with evaluation’s tradition is not the accumulation and evaluation of facts. It is doing so dispassionately, without understanding its purpose, and without being in relationship to God. The Lord is clear that this is foolish. “My people [are] foolish,” he explains, because “they have not known me;” therefore “they have none understanding” (Jeremiah 4:22). We deceive ourselves if we believe that we can truly know things independently of God, without the conversion that true learning brings. So while an LDS perspective of evaluation would include and enhance the evaluation of *all things*, it would realize that evaluating any *object* could only be done in terms of its relation to living beings. This is dramatically different than the tradition that, with its focus on what is evaluated, turns people into objects as well.

Self-evaluation. Because the gift of agency is available to us, we are responsible, “seeing that ye know the light by which ye may judge,” to “not judge wrongfully” (Moroni 7:19). This

means we are responsible for evaluating our own worthiness and our own learning. The first person that we are responsible to evaluate is our self. Elder Oaks (2000) suggests the scriptures as a place to begin evaluating our own progress. For example, “are we losing our desire to do evil” as King Benjamin’s people cried (see Mosiah 5:2)? Are we “beginning to see things as our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, see them,” what Paul referred to as having “the mind of Christ” (p. 4; see 1 Cor 2:16)?

Self-evaluation requires that we learn how to be evaluated by the Lord, through his Spirit, responding to the questions he asks of us. Dennis Rasmussen (2001) gives an example of how this is done:

There is an old tradition that views man as the being who asks questions...There is another tradition even older that makes a different claim. In this view man is not primarily a being who questions, but a being who is questioned...distinguished not by his power to ask but by his power to hear...When Adam left Eden, the Lord clothed his body with a garment and his soul with a question. Adam, where art thou? Does God not know? On the contrary, only he knows. In my weakness I lose my bearings. Like a child wandering in a forest I follow the whims of the moment and forget the way. I am too caught up by my surroundings to follow the path. Not until a Father’s voice calls do I wonder where I am. How shall I answer? I am here? But where is here? So helpless am I that I cannot say. But deep within I hear his voice and tremble, for finally there are just two places, with him or without him, and just two ways, toward him or not toward him (p. 3-4).

Self-evaluation includes choosing to respond to the questions the Lord asks of us, to prepare ourselves to meet God. Traditional evaluation focuses on the “expert” who asks questions, collects and analyzes facts, and eventually reaches an evaluative conclusion. With the understanding that God is the *expert*, and he is the one helping us to evaluate ourselves, we see why the role of self-evaluation is dramatically increased. He wants us to learn how to evaluate and discern between good and evil as He would, and so He teaches us, through the questions He asks of us, how to evaluate more like Him.

While teaching English as a Second Language in the Missionary Training Center, an elder from Portugal provided a beautiful example of self-evaluation. One afternoon the elder walked into class after we had already begun singing the opening hymn. I noticed during the remainder of class that he was quiet, thoughtful, and troubled. He lingered after class and with all the resolve he could collect said, “Teacher, please forgive me. I was late for class. I’m a missionary for Jesus Christ. I promised I would be obedient. I have the responsibility to learn English so that I can teach the Gospel. Being on time to class shows that I love God, that I’m grateful you can teach me, and that I love the people I will soon teach. I will never be late again.” I was amazed. I hadn’t thought anything of his being two minutes tardy. But he understood who he was and let the Spirit teach him as he evaluated his actions and their consequences. He was never late again and he learned English quickly and well.

Evaluating Others. We are expected to pay attention to our personal responsibility and privilege of self-evaluation before we attempt to evaluate others. If knowledge is always associated with our being, then we must consider who we need to be in order to evaluate others. “Who am I,” we ask ourselves “to judge another” (Hymns, 1985, 220)? As with learning, we are required to use our agency well in order to be able to evaluate well. There is the potential for evaluators to misunderstand and misuse their evaluative *power*, making it absolutely essential that an evaluator be full of the Spirit of love before he attempts to evaluate and then judge another. Because how we use this ability to discern and evaluate is up to us, we are morally and personally responsible for our evaluations of others. The Lord is wary of those who “darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge,” (Job 38:2). He takes his own evaluative role very seriously; “the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he *employeth no servant there*” (2 Nephi 9:41, italics added). Any time God’s children act as His instruments, which we do

when we evaluate others under His direction, He asks that we “search [our] hearts and see if [we] are like God” (Smith, 1980, p. 113). Isaiah taught that one should not “judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears. But with righteousness shall he judge” only as “the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him” (2 Nephi 21:3-4). Because evaluative information is privileged, in that it should be received through the Spirit, we are responsible to communicate it to others only as they are ready and prepared to receive it. In this way we assure that our evaluations will be helpful for the people we are trying to serve.

In Mosiah chapter 26 we read of an evaluative dilemma. A growing opposition used flattery and deception to lead members of the Church “to commit many sins; therefore it became expedient that those who committed sin, that were in the church, should be admonished by the church” (Mosiah 26: 6). The people were brought to Alma, the high priest, to evaluate the situation and make a judgment. But Alma did not know what to do and so he sent the people to King Mosiah. Mosiah declared “I judge them not,” and sent them back to Alma. Alma’s spirit was troubled, he still did not know what to do, and so he “went and inquired of the Lord what he should do concerning this matter, for he feared that he should do wrong in the sight of God” (Mosiah 26:13). After pouring out “his whole soul,” the voice of the Lord explained exactly how Alma was to evaluate the people. Those who repented of their sins should be forgiven and remain in the Church and those who would not should be removed from the Church (see Alma 26: 29-36). Alma understood that evaluating others cannot be done properly without seeking inspiration and help from God.

Helping others evaluate themselves. Because Christ is ultimately our judge, our evaluations are more a desire for understanding than making a judgment. Evaluation is always done *with* someone and not *to* them, as the Spirit is continually helping both participants to

evaluate themselves and each other. A key element of evaluating others in the Lord's way is to teach them and encourage them in their efforts to evaluate themselves by the Spirit as we seek to do the same. As all of us are in need of correction by the Spirit, a teacher's evaluative role could include helping her students understand as well that they are responsible for assessing their own worthiness, and ultimately their own learning and where it is taking them along the path toward salvation.

One of my most inspiring professors, Dr. Dillon Inouye, reminded us as we heard guest speakers from diverse academic disciplines that we had the right to learn by the Spirit and receive revelation whether we were studying physics, math, Shakespeare, music, or religion. He taught us that we were responsible for our own learning. He invited us to record and share the promptings we received as we studied, trying to help us learn how to evaluate ourselves.

Although simple, I had never before considered that God could teach me about chemistry, or that I had the responsibility to assess my own worthiness to learn through the Spirit. As he shared stories of divine learning I began to ask myself if I had experienced similar things, and if not, what I could do to have those kinds of experiences in my learning. Joseph records that as he "labored on the Egyptian alphabet...the principles of astronomy as understood by Father Abraham and the ancients unfolded to [his] understanding" (Smith, 1980, 2:286; Smith, 2002, p. 86-87). Could my mind be enlightened in similar ways as I labored over my studies? Did I consider the responsibility that comes with my learning to bless and serve God's children as Joseph did? Reflecting on these kinds of questions resulted in a learning experience unlike any I had yet encountered in my education. My gratitude for knowledge increased as I shared what I was learning with others.

Evaluation in Charity

When performed with the proper spirit, evaluation essentially becomes an act of charity. We desire to help another person grow, change, heal, and progress on the path toward salvation. Isn't that really what God requires of any teacher attempting to evaluate and assess the progress of his students? Perhaps the best, and most loving, thing for your English student is to receive a low grade on his essay, if while reading it through you remember the Prophet Joseph's counsel that "mercy should go hand in hand with reproof" (Smith, 1980, p. 124) and so you correct with an eye of love, praying to know how you can best help that particular student improve his writing and feel the desire to continue and try again.

President Packer reminded, "many will say they want to learn but feel threatened if there is the slightest element of correction in what they are given" (Packer, 1996, p. 166). But if we realize that evaluation is for healing and growth, motivated by charity, then we desire loving help and correction, for the "judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether—more to be desired...than gold" (Psalm 19:9). We do not feel anxious or fearful. An evaluator filled with charity understands that rank, status, and competition are petty distractions and therefore does not seek after the tempting power associated with evaluation, wary that if "[he gets] puffed up thinking [he has] much knowledge, [he is] apt to get a contentious spirit." In assessing whether learning is occurring in a classroom, we can remember that true knowledge of God and his ways does "away with contention," "doubt," "suspense," and "darkness" (Smith, 1980, p. 183). Rather, it "[lifts us] up" (Smith, 1980, p. 229)!

Conclusion: Evaluation in Practice

I anticipate and understand the desire after pondering some of the insights the Gospel of Jesus Christ has for evaluation to wonder, *so what?* What should *I do* with this? How should it

change *how* I evaluate? I invite us to remember again what Elder Eyring taught—more important than a description of what to do is that we see with spiritual eyes. Evaluating in truth then begins by seeing with spiritual eyes *who* we are because seeing with spiritual eyes is a matter of the heart (Eyring, 1997). Essential to what we do and how we practically apply things is what kind of person we are.

We usually assume that for something to be practical (or useful) it must provide a method or checklist that directs us and shows us precisely what to do. Ironically though, evaluation as a discipline has failed to show us how we ought to “be in the world, or why” because in theory it has forgotten that we are responsible for our evaluations (Greene, 2001, p. 156). In other words there is often a discrepancy between theories and methods and how people actually go about practically *being* or living in the world. How we evaluate reflects who we are and what is most important to us. From the perspective of the Gospel the apparent discrepancy disappears because who we are has to do with what we know and how we evaluate.

Therefore, the insights the Gospel offers into *why*, *how*, and *what* we evaluate are even more practical than any method because they invite us to *strive to become a certain way which subsequently finds how we actually go about practically and continuously evaluating in our daily lives*. What could be more practical than repenting and continually improving and self-evaluating how we use our agency (the choices we base on our value judgments) so that we can evaluate and discern better? So my hope is that in reflecting on some of the insights the Gospel offers for evaluation we begin to listen to the invitations that come for how we need to change and improve to become the people we need to be in order to evaluate and be evaluated in the way the Lord desires, which requires courage and faith.

Questions for Self-Evaluation

As a hopeful aid, I suggest some questions to practically consider as we evaluate our own evaluative endeavors. I do not pretend to present *the* list of self-evaluative questions, because the point is that the Spirit is the evaluator and will whisper to you the questions you need to ask yourself.

How do I evaluate?

What are my values?

What are my desires, what is important to me?

Do I see my responsibility in the way I see and understand the world?

Am I seeking correction from God?

Am I continually evaluating my own worthiness?

Do I take responsibility for evaluating my own learning?

Do I take advantage of my evaluative power?

Are my evaluations of others edifying?

Am I evaluating with charity?

Do my students know that I care more about them than about the grades they receive?

Do my evaluations emphasize what my students are becoming with the knowledge they gain or do I focus only on whether the students can regurgitate the facts?

Do I seek the help of the Spirit in my evaluation?

Do I consider how my evaluations affect others?

Are people afraid to be evaluated by me?

Do my evaluations foster competition or community?

Do I evaluate *with* others?

Do I give enough information that my evaluations are genuinely helpful? Do I give so much that they are discouraging?

How am I helping others learn to evaluate themselves?

Do I give my students opportunities to repent and improve?

Do I apply evaluation methods within the perspective of how my evaluations serve people?

Am I providing opportunities for my students to evaluate themselves?

Am I teaching my students how to evaluate themselves through my example?

Examples Reconsidered

Recall the scenarios from the beginning of the paper and consider how they do or do not reflect the insights for evaluation from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

A student complained that the only feedback she received from her professor was a computer printout with her points for each assignment. With an LDS perspective we see that the

computer printout as a lone objective indicator may not accurately represent what the student has really learned or how she has changed and grown with her knowledge. The evaluation does not provide enough information to help the student know how to improve or how to evaluate her own progress. The professor as evaluator has therefore failed to fulfill his responsibility to communicate evaluative information in a way that will ultimately be helpful and edifying rather than hurtful. It isn't enough then to pass out the computer printout and assume that his responsibility is complete; he must consider the individual students and how his evaluations affect them and their progress.

Another student admitted that his science classmates were scared to help each other because it might undermine their positions on the crucial grade curve. In this example, evaluation is viewed as the *end* goal rather than a *means* of improvement or a process of repentance. By misunderstanding their responsibility to God and to each other, the students desire to receive a "better" evaluation than everyone else makes them enemies, fostering competition and diminishing their desire to really learn and improve. An evaluator striving to live by the Spirit would be wary if his evaluations scared his students from helping one another, an indication that his evaluations are teaching them to be enemies and treat education as a commodity. He would not be content to say that it isn't his fault if his students are unethical, but would seek the Spirit's guidance to know how his evaluations could help the students understand their responsibility to use their knowledge to bless others, even their classmates.

My own students entered class on the eve of their student teaching experience, worried because they had just been told that they were competing for jobs, and would be evaluated based on their ability to prepare, teach, and perform better than their cooperating teachers. In an LDS perspective though we should understand that our value does not come from being better than

others. We would all desire to help each other learn and improve. The student teacher who has been invited to evaluate and improve her own teaching would seek counsel, help, and advice from her cooperating teachers. By not pitting our students against each other or the people who would try to help them through evaluation, we encourage learning for the right reasons.

If charity and love were the motivation for evaluation in each of these examples then they would be incomplete as they stand, not edifying or helpful for true improvement or becoming who we ought to become. All these scenarios would be improved if we took responsibility for the values and standards we imposed upon our students that led to hurtful, rather than helpful, evaluations. True Christ-like power begins when we perceive the full depth and extent of our responsibility as we evaluate our own worthiness and value before God. We would see when our judgment errs, but remember that Christ took upon himself the consequences of our sins and that by so doing has provided a way for us to repent and improve. As we accept Christ, we are given new eyes, new desires, and new understanding. Our evaluations would help lift and enlarge our students rather than doom their opportunities for future success. By serving each other all are lifted and edified.

Summary of an LDS Perspective

We are children of God, endowed with the ability to evaluate. We have been given the light of Christ and the commandments to help us know how to evaluate well. This means that we are evaluating beings and that one of the fundamental purposes of this life is to prove and develop this faculty. With each choice, there come consequences and associated accountability for those consequences; we are therefore morally responsible and accountable for our evaluations—who we are and what we become as a result of our choices is up to us. If this were not the case we would not be able to change and improve, and evaluation would be neither

possible nor helpful. But because we do have the capability and responsibility to evaluate, evaluation is primarily a moral endeavor. And because evaluation is fundamentally moral, we cannot ignore the human connection involved in making moral evaluations, as both objective and subjective traditions would have it.

We must be learning to live and act according to the truth in order to evaluate truthfully. Consequently, it is our primary responsibility to self-evaluate our worthiness, or the kind of people we have become due to the value judgments we have allowed to dictate our lives. To develop such precision on our own would be, according to the scriptures, impossible. Thankfully, however, the plan of redemption provides actual help in our practical endeavors. On our own we could never be fully truthful and cognizant of all the relevant sins, issues, and concerns. But through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the desires (and hence judgments) of our heart can be educated by degrees and ultimately perfected. As we learn to be evaluated by God, we allow Jesus' healing judgment to not only indicate our erroneous reasoning (for which we painfully must acknowledge our accountability), but we are enabled to start afresh, as if we never made such judgments and decisions. Thus, through the gift of the Spirit, Jesus not only helps us assess our own position, but he gives us power we would not otherwise have by healing us from the darkness of our own eyes. We see that evaluation in truth heals the wounded heart and leads to improvement and progression. Prophets teach that this is a continuous rather than episodic or formal practice. It becomes a way of life.

When we evaluate others, we are expected to evaluate in such a way that, with the help of the Spirit, our evaluation will lead to true healing and growth. However, to receive such help, we must first be worthy; our desires must be purified through the gift and power of Christ, which gift fills us with perfect love. Only by possessing pure love are we able to evaluate effectively

and clearly. This is why our ability to self-evaluate is so important; self-evaluation opens our heart to Christ, and once we have allowed him to lovingly evaluate and rescue us, we will be better able to evaluate others in love and in truth.

So, the morality, and hence the practicality and purpose of evaluation includes becoming worthy ourselves by first removing the beam from our own eye in order to help our brothers and sisters remove the mote from their eye, thus becoming like and returning to our Heavenly Father (see Matthew 7:5). We therefore evaluate not only what we and others *know* but what we are *becoming* with the knowledge we have gained. If our condition reflects the essential attributes of charity and love, evaluation becomes an opportunity to genuinely help others progress and improve and results in an edifying experience for all. Evaluating others should include helping them learn how to evaluate themselves, mercifully and out of love. As we learn to self-evaluate our worthiness, our capacity to serve and bless others is enhanced in many different ways, beyond the mere improvement of our evaluations of others. Evaluating this way, we would be better able to fulfill BYU's mission to go forth and serve.

Obviously, we all have much to learn. But Heavenly Father has given us the responsibility to help each other do so; this often includes evaluating and correcting what we find could be improved. At Brigham Young University, evaluation can and should "assist individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life" (BYU Mission Statement, 1981). As we evaluate, let us remember what the purpose of evaluation ultimately is: to help us improve and become more like God, making "weak things become strong" (Ether 12:37). Let us seek to be like the Lord who "deals with this people as a tender parent with a child, communicating light and intelligence and the knowledge of his ways as they can bear it" (Smith, 1976, p. 305). Let us prayerfully seek to "enlarge [our] souls towards others," "let [our] hearts expand," "be

longsuffering and bear with the faults and errors of mankind” because “how precious are the souls of man” (Smith, 1980, p. 118)! As we do so, our evaluative efforts will be enlightened and improved, resulting in the enhanced learning of God’s children.

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Appendix A

Self-Evaluation of Thesis

Per Dr. Williams request, I am including an evaluation of my paper, particularly relevant considering the subject I attempted to address. I will include criteria from my department and committee, BYU Studies as a scholarly journal, and my own criteria in light of the ideas reflected in my paper.

Most students in the Department of Instructional Psychology and Technology complete a development, evaluation, or measurement project to fulfill the requirements for a Master's Degree. The requirements, steps, and expectations for these projects have been laid out extensively and thoroughly, with the final decisions for appropriateness and approval of a project made by a committee of three professors. Less direction is available for a thesis that falls outside of the common requirements, like the paper I have submitted. My committee has been extremely flexible and supportive, and we have worked together to decide what would be an adequate contribution, sufficient for fulfilling my requirements as a Master's candidate. Although none of us felt confined to formal guidelines, I feel I have met appropriate standards of scholarship according to the following criteria.

1. Theoretical dissertations are those wherein the author's theory, model, etc. is formulated through well-developed critical analysis and argumentation, in the absence of empirical data collection. It should be written in clear, professionally appropriate prose; it should be intellectually rigorous and exhibit sound scholarship; it should provide evidence that the author has mastered past coursework relating to the ideas in question (from Dr. Yanchar's proposed guidelines).

Dr. Yanchar suggests an outline or process to help ensure that the argument is rigorous and well thought out, including a literature review which leads to a problem which the paper then attempts to address, offering a solution to the problem. The section of my paper entitled "The

tradition of evaluation as a technical enterprise” is based on an extensive review of evaluation literature. This review, based on critiques from writings in philosophy and evaluation, lead to the formation of a *problem statement*; that evaluation as a technical enterprise has left out being, or the identity and agency of the living people involved in evaluation and has focused mostly on evaluating objects of knowledge. As a result evaluation has not been perceived as a moral endeavor with personal responsibility. I allude to evaluation scholars who view this problem as relevant, searching for alternative ways to construe evaluation. To address this problem I engaged in another review of literature available from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, including scriptures and words of prophets and apostles. I used the insights gained from my study to respond to the problems identified, suggesting that within an LDS perspective evaluation is a moral endeavor.

2. Theoretical dissertations should make a scholarly, rigorous, and substantive contribution to the disciplinary literature in the same manner as customary dissertations which include data collection (from Dr. Yanchar’s proposed guidelines). Dr. Inouye often asks a similar question of students as they prepare their final projects: Have you made some contribution to the discipline?

Throughout the process of writing this thesis I have considered often what contribution I am making. Whether my work contributes toward the improvement of evaluation at Brigham Young University is hard to know. I am confident though, that my thesis addresses a need in the discipline of evaluation to consider different possibilities and different ways of conceiving of evaluation. Evaluation scholars have expressed the need to “decenter the primary discourse of method in evaluation practice” (Schwandt, 2002, p. 2), to “incorporate the vital contributions from other disciplines,” (Rogers, 2001, p. 431) and to “imagine what it might be like to speak about evaluation differently...looking in different places” for help (Schwandt, 2002, p. 1). My thesis decenters the role of method in evaluation, utilizing it only within the context of how

evaluators are living and relating to the people they serve. I have looked to other sources, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for help in understanding the purposes of evaluation.

Schwandt (2002) suggests that one way to contribute to the field of evaluation is to “begin to think about evaluation practice in terms of identity and dialogue, “because we work out our identity in dialogue with others” (p. 6-7). My thesis suggests that evaluators, which include all of us, consider who we are and what our responsibilities are to God, ourselves, and others. My hope is that by reading my thesis, people will feel invited or prompted to enter into dialogue or a deeper relationship with God and his spirit, learning from him how to evaluate their own worthiness and how to help others through their evaluations of them.

Schwandt (2002) also suggests that a reconception of evaluation would envision “evaluators as teachers,” inviting others to learn how to evaluate themselves (p. 130-131). From the perspective the Gospel brings, self-evaluation becomes a fundamental part of evaluation. I suggest in my thesis that teachers try to give opportunities for their students to learn how to evaluate themselves. I have therefore tried to invite the same opportunity for my readers through the examples, scriptures, and stories I include. Dr. Terry Warner (personal communication, June 2003) has said, “stories respect the agency and diversity of backgrounds of people, who, touched by the Spirit, can take away the specific understanding and inspiration they are ready to receive. Stories also invite people to identify with the individual(s) they feature, and to say inwardly, ‘I can do that!’”

3. It must be a project that has the strong potential to be published in a peer-reviewed journal (from Dr. Yanchar’s proposed guidelines).

My committee agreed that submitting my thesis to a journal would serve as an adequate peer review of its scholarship and contribution. I therefore will be submitting a slightly

condensed version to *BYU Studies*, a professional journal published by Brigham Young University. *BYU Studies* requires that papers meet the following criteria (see <http://byustudies.byu.edu/authorguidelines.asp>).

BYU Studies is dedicated to the correlation of revealed and discovered truth and to the conviction that the spiritual and the intellectual can be complementary and fundamentally harmonious avenues of knowledge. This periodical strives to explore scholarly perspectives on LDS topics. It is committed to seeking truth “by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118) and recognizes that all knowledge without charity is nothing (1 Cor.13:2). It proceeds on the premise that faith and reason, revelation and scholarly learning, obedience and creativity are compatible; they are “many members, yet but one body” (1 Cor. 12:20). Contributions from all fields of learning are invited. *BYU Studies* strives to publish articles that openly reflect a Latter-day Saint point of view and are obviously relevant to subjects of general interest to Latter-day Saints, while conforming to high scholarly standards. Articles should be written for the thoughtful nonspecialist. Because *BYU Studies* aims to avoid dogmatism, ideology, and the covert influence of unstated assumption, articles should be well reasoned and significantly documented. They should evaluate the data and authorities both for and against the author’s thesis, and personal opinions should be clearly identified as such.

The goal of my thesis coincides well with the invitation from *BYU Studies* in various ways. I have argued that knowledge from an LDS perspective enlightens and enhances all kinds of knowledge, including my disciplines of evaluation and education. My thesis uses both scholarly arguments and analyses of assumptions in traditional evaluation theory as well an openly Latter-day Saint point of view. I have written specifically to the BYU community and have therefore tried to either avoid or explain the particular language of evaluation specialists. I have documented the quotes and stories I include and I am clear when an example comes from my own experience.

All who venture to write for *BYU Studies* should morally confront certain responsibilities that may be said to comprise a sort of academic code of professional conduct. Some important components of such a code would embrace at least the following precepts: unity, harmony, honesty, thoroughness, humility, and charity (see website for further elaboration).

In accordance with what I suggest in my thesis, the editors of *BYU Studies* suggest that who we are as people is fundamental to what we do or write or share with others. Attempting to share thoughts about the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its relation to evaluation has been an extremely soul-searching process for me. I have tried to consider the responsibilities that *BYU Studies* lays out as well as others. My desire has been that reading my thesis will invite all of us at Brigham Young University to live with more humility and charity in our dealings with each other, which so often include the element of evaluation and correction, as we are all trying to improve and grow. I have hoped that my voice comes through in my writing as hopeful and grateful for all that we have done and are trying to do at BYU with evaluation.

4. When completed, it should provide the basis for a continued program of scholarship (from Dr. Yanchar's proposed guidelines).

With the teachings and writings of the Restored Gospel there is an endless amount of work that could be done. I do not believe that there is one definitive Gospel perspective of knowledge or a set number of Gospel principles that inform a discussion of evaluation and its purposes. I have shared only some of my own interpretations in an articulated perspective with implications. I hope that these ideas might invite others to reflect on their responsibility as evaluating beings, further articulating these beginning reflections as well as contributing many of their own. There are many ways to organize, stress, and present ideas; and what I have presented is one of endless possibilities for how to consider the Gospel in our evaluative roles. I suggest that the stories of evaluation from the scriptures could be studied and shared, looking for insights into how we evaluate. Dr. Williams has suggested that another useful activity would be considering how people actually evaluate in their lives, collecting case studies and looking for insights that will help us understand what is helpful and what is not. Stories and case studies

could be collected from Church history, literature, the scriptures, interviews and observations of living people, etc. I am anxious for professors and teachers and administrators to share experiences of how they have invited their students and others to evaluate themselves and how they have considered the personal growth and conversion of the people they evaluate. I am confident that these kinds of experiences occur daily at Brigham Young University and elsewhere and it would be wonderful to document some of them. We might consider while writing standards for evaluation how to include concepts of agency, responsibility, charity, and service. There is much that could be done.

5. Have I become more converted to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a result of working on this thesis? Have I improved my ability to be evaluated and to evaluate? Have I invited others to evaluate themselves and their worthiness and consider how they might improve their evaluations of others, considering their personal responsibility?

To me these are the most important questions to consider as I evaluate my thesis. They are also the most difficult. I do feel though that my appreciation for the Savior and his Gospel has grown. I am so much more grateful and in awe that he gives us the ability to discern between good and evil, that he teaches us how to evaluate our choices, and that he gives us the perfect example of how to judge and treat others. I believe that through honest study and reflection and prayer we do change. As I've read the scriptures and words of the prophets I've asked myself what I can do to become more like the good examples I have seen. My love of the prophet Joseph has increased as I read how fairly and lovingly he corrected others. I've felt of his great love for God's children and his humility in wanting to treat them as Christ does. His whole life seemed to be dedicated to teaching us how to commune personally with Heavenly Father and learn directly from Him. I've become more aware and grateful for the people who have cared about me as I've tried to work on this project. I've been amazed at the examples of

my committee who have said just the right thing at the right times to steer me in helpful paths and give me the endurance to carry on. They've been so understanding as I've experienced illness etc., and they've taught me how to evaluate while remembering first people and their circumstances and needs. In my teaching and in my relationships I've been more aware of what I say and how I correct and guide, praying for the Spirit's guidance.

Whether my paper invites others to evaluate themselves will be seen. I hope I have provided examples and stories that people can relate to. Perhaps as a result of reading this a professor might pause before grading a test and think about who the person is and what they need. Or maybe a student will feel the desire to take more responsibility for what they are learning and how they are changing and blessing others with their knowledge. I suppose if I help lift anyone up I will have felt like my paper has been a success.

Appendix B

My Thesis Story

Perhaps because of the somewhat unconventional nature of my thesis Dr. David Williams, my committee chair, asked that I include as an appendix my personal story of what lead to my writing this paper and caring about the issues it addresses. I suppose a story never really begins or ends, but I'll attempt to share a few of the highlights.

My undergraduate degree was in Family Science. Early on in my undergraduate education I decided to study Marriage and Family Therapy in graduate school and so directed my education toward that goal. Occasionally I wondered how compatible the theories of therapy and counseling were with the truths of the Gospel. I couldn't help but wonder if we as members of the Church of Jesus Christ had so much to offer a profession that seeks to counsel and heal people and whether we were doing that. But I still wasn't able to articulate well my questions. In a family therapy theories class my senior year my teacher happened to be a PhD student who had studied theoretical psychology under Brent Slife and Richard Williams. We read a few chapters from their book, *What's Behind the Research* (1995), an article by Williams (1998) entitled *Turning Psychology Upside Down*, and an article by Neal A. Maxwell (1976), *The Gospel and the Behavioral Sciences*. I was thrilled as I began to understand better some of the problems with psychology theories.

The next semester, traveling to interviews for graduate school, I remained apprehensive about taking on the responsibility of becoming a marriage and family therapist without really understanding the assumptions and implications of the theories I would be taught, especially in light of the Gospel. But I didn't know what I could do. This same semester I stumbled upon a "speed-reading" class that my friend's uncle, Dr. Dillon Inouye was teaching. It turned out to be

one of the most influential educational experiences of my life. I felt like my perspective about the world enlarged and expanded each week as we listened to guest speakers from diverse disciplines share their expertise. Always though, we were encouraged to learn about the different disciplines with the added light and knowledge the Gospel of Jesus Christ brings to bear. What a new challenge! I began to understand how much we are able to learn with the Spirit's help and guidance and the real purposes of learning. Dr. Inouye talked about how we were all learners and teachers, and that anything we learned should be consecrated to God in the service of his people. During the class, I read *Educating Zion*, a BYU Studies publication that contains a collection of discourses from apostles and BYU presidents about the purpose, mission, and expectations of Brigham Young University (Holland, 1996). I was startled to discover all that was expected of us; my desire to consider how to incorporate the Gospel into my scholarship increased. I was also introduced during this class to the work of Terry Warner. I began to see an alternative to the traditional way of viewing problems and solutions in counseling and education that seemed to resonate with what I knew to be true. And although at the time I had no idea I would eventually write about evaluation, I was introduced in Dr. Inouye's class to the idea that evaluation is the process of repentance, trying to change and improve, and that therefore we have the responsibility to evaluate ourselves.

During the semester I was accepted to a few programs and planned to begin my graduate work in Marriage and Family Therapy in the fall. All these new ideas were brewing within me though and I kept feeling that I wanted to contribute somehow to talking about morality, spirituality, and other aspects of the Gospel, and their place in psychology and educational theories. But again, I didn't know how that would be possible. A few weeks after graduation, my friend called and said that her uncle, Dr. Inouye, was trying to get a hold of me. His actions

exemplify mentoring students with the help of the Spirit. I went to his office and he said, “I thought you might like to talk to me about graduate school.” I shared some of my thoughts and he continued by explaining how any theory has a background, a tradition, and that by understanding where the ideas come from it is easier to make sense of and articulate the problems and benefits of existing theories. He proceeded by giving me a mini lesson on the history of ideas in philosophy and how they have lead to some of the current explanations of human behavior and learning. I told him how these were the kinds of things I felt like I needed to understand better before I could study theories with the expectation that they would guide me in healing and helping people. I expressed my desire as well to consider how the Gospel could enlighten some of the problems we had seemed to inherit in psychological theory.

Dr. Inouye then said he felt like he should present an option to me. He said I could enter his program, Instructional Psychology and Technology (3 months after the deadline), a program I’d never heard of, and take classes from the various disciplines and professors that would give me the kind of understanding and education that I desired. He essentially was offering me the opportunity to design my own graduate program. He was careful not to pressure me, saying that he just felt like he needed to at least present me with this option. It didn’t take long for me to decide that here was the answer to how I could prepare and educate myself in the way I wanted to. As I learned more about Instructional Psychology over the summer, I became fascinated with the idea of studying how people learn and how to teach. I’d always thought that counseling was really teaching. I discovered that educational theories usually were applied theories of psychology.

So the next fall I began my graduate work, taking a few classes from the IP&T department and a few of my choosing from other departments. I took a class from Brent Slife in

theoretical psychology where I continued to learn more about the assumptions and traditions of psychology theory along with the implications of those assumptions. My understanding of some of the limitations of contemporary theories grew. That semester I also began attending a reader's group with a few students and most of the theoretical psychology professors. We usually read articles from philosophers and talked about how the expressed ideas related to psychology theory and practice. In the reader's group I became associated with Dr. Stephen Yanchar who later joined the IP&T department and has served on my committee. These experiences expanded the foundation for much of the work I have done in my graduate work, exploring the philosophical assumptions of evaluation theory, which my thesis addresses. This semester I also took a philosophy class from Terry Warner about different theories of agency. I saw how most philosophical theories had a drastically different perception of agency than that of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It became clearer how limited a theory of psychology or education is without accounting for the agency and therefore responsibility of individual people. Agency became a fundamental issue for me in the remainder of my studies and is alluded to extensively in my thesis with its relation to evaluation.

In Dr. Warner's class I was also introduced to Soren Kierkegaard (1995) through reading *Works of Love*. Kierkegaard's idea of agency was drastically different from the other philosophers we studied. For Kierkegaard, how we use our agency, how we live, is inseparable with how we know and make sense of the world. My introduction continued with a class on Kierkegaard, again taught by Dr. Warner. Kierkegaard's ideas and writing became very influential. He seemed to provide an alternative theory of psychology that included the reality of sin and its affects, responsibility, and living before God. Kierkegaard also had a dramatically different understanding of truth and reality than what I read about in most theories of learning. I

wrote a paper in this class about *Truth as Objectivity or Subjectivity*, beginning to understand better the nuances of the subjective-objective debate in the history of philosophy. These ideas helped me understand some of the limitations of talking about truth as an objective entity, independent of existing people, an idea referred to in the thesis. But for Kierkegaard the answer isn't that truth is completely relative, with no moral absolutes. How we perceive truth though, is inseparably connected with how we live. While studying Kierkegaard, I realized that his ideas were so appealing because they seemed to resonate well with what the Gospel says. I resolved though, to not rely on him, but to actually go to the scriptures and words of the prophets and see what they say about knowledge, truth, agency, and responsibility, which I began to do.

My first year in the graduate program I was introduced for the first time to the discipline of formal evaluation. From previous conversations with Dr. Inouye, who thought evaluation was one of the most important aspects of learning, I was curious to learn more about evaluation, the process of deciding whether something is good or bad, making value judgments, and what it has to do with how we learn and progress. So I took Dr. David Williams' beginning evaluation class. With my emerging knowledge in philosophical traditions and my interest in alternative theories that incorporate truths of the Gospel, I naturally began to explore evaluation within this light. Dr. Williams was enthusiastic and supportive, anxious to hear critiques, suggestions, and insights from the ideas I had been studying. I became very interested in evaluation and its relationship to our learning and growing. Dr. Williams invited us to read and consider lessons we learned from the scriptures and Gospel about evaluation, beginning as well the thoughts leading up to my thesis. I took other classes on evaluation, and then began working on research with Dr. Williams, at first writing ideas about how Kierkegaard's philosophies apply to evaluation. I admit as well that my interest in evaluation grew in large part due to the example of

Dr. Williams. He seemed to represent so well a professor who knew how to evaluate and encourage his students in a way that helped them do their best. I never felt like he was the one evaluating me. He was more anxious to learn himself and so we always worked together. He helped me and I tried to help him. He really wanted to consider what the Gospel has to say about his discipline of evaluation, yet was honest about not always knowing how to go about doing that. Many of my thoughts and ideas formed in conversations with him over the years, trying to think together about where might be some possible beginning points. His example reflects many of the ideas my thesis presents.

With my continual study of philosophy and particularly continental philosophy and the critique of modernism, Dr. Williams and I both agreed that one place to begin might be trying to understand better the philosophical traditions of evaluation. To help with that task I began researching the foundations of evaluation. I also thought it would be important to know what the current status of the field is, researching the diverse contemporary theories and ideas and opinions about where evaluation should go. Particularly helpful was an issue of the *American Journal of Evaluation* in which many influential and prominent evaluation scholars gave their opinions about the current state of evaluation and their desires and predictions for the future (Rogers, 2001). The presentation in my thesis of evaluation's tradition and a critique of that tradition stemmed from this research. Especially helpful has been the work of Thomas Schwandt. Dr. Williams and I had read some of his articles over the years, and were pleased when he recently came out with a book where his thoughts are put together. He has done an excellent critique of some of the limitations and problems of the evaluation tradition that I refer to in my thesis.

The first result of my evaluation research was a paper I presented at the AERA conference in April 2002 titled *Philosophical Metaevaluation*. With the emphasis in evaluation on Standards and Guiding Principles, I, Dr. Williams, and Dr. Yanchar suggested that these standards would be incomplete without including the process of philosophical reflection into the implications and assumptions of evaluation theory and practice. We suggested that this process should be included in what evaluators call “metaevaluation,” or evaluating evaluation. My work for this paper included extensive research into the history of metaevaluation in evaluation, particularly looking at what over the years has accounted for “good” evaluation. My thesis draws on this research in making the conclusion that evaluation has typically preferred technical standards.

While continuing my research in evaluation I was at this time teaching Educational Psychology to students in the Elementary Education program at BYU. While teaching, I continually studied educational theories, including theories of evaluation and assessment. I wanted my students to consider what the Gospel of Jesus Christ revealed about teaching and learning, using the Gospel as a standard for comparing and critiquing other theories of learning. I continually read, and shared with my students, articles, talks, and scriptures about teaching and learning by the prophets and from the scriptures. I read works by Parker Palmer (1993) and other philosophers of education who consider the heart of teachers and argue that caring and being a certain way provides the context in which we use methods. I became more attuned to some of the limitations of traditional theories of learning which seemed too often to neglect agency and responsibility, trying to rely solely on methods and techniques. As a result evaluation neglected agency, and morality as well. My research and experiences while trying to teach other people how to teach contributed greatly to some of the insights my thesis offers.

So, all of this research and thought and conversation contributed toward my thesis. I considered many different ideas, but I knew that my question from before beginning my graduate work had been how I could incorporate the Gospel into what I do. Dr. Williams and I had conversed often about how to talk about the Gospel in terms of evaluation but it always seemed too overwhelming of a task. I continually wondered who I was to try and make any helpful observations. But with the encouragement of my committee I decided to try. I realized there were many ways to consider the Gospel and so tried to incorporate and utilize my own experiences and education. As a result I decided to build on the idea from my years of research that knowledge has traditionally been thought of as an object and therefore evaluation has been understood and applied in terms of that tradition, resulting in its emphasis on technique. What, I wondered, does the Gospel of Jesus Christ say about knowledge? Is it different? If so, what would evaluation become? I anticipated that many of the problems evaluation scholars have critiqued would be remedied if evaluation were understood within a Gospel perspective.

I proceeded in a few ways. First, I continued to study evaluation and its tradition, rereading articles and books as well as looking at new research to try and sketch out a history of the tradition, which is included in the beginning of my article. My committee suggested that I look to see if other evaluation scholars had done similar things and summarize their critiques and suggestions of what more ought to be done. Again, in this effort the work of Schwandt was invaluable. Second, I continued studying what the prophets and scriptures say about knowledge. I read and analyzed scriptures about knowing, knowledge, discernment, judging, revelation etc., looking for insights into what knowledge includes. I wrote down my thoughts and ideas, looked for themes, and talked about what I was finding with others. I read many of Joseph Smith's

writings and participated in a research group that studied him and the School of the Prophets, looking for principles of learning, education, and evaluation in the Lord's kingdom.

Throughout this process my greatest help in reviewing and working out ideas came from my husband Dan Peck, who has also studied philosophy, education, and church history. For almost a year we had daily conversations as I shared insights from my studies and attempted to organize my thoughts. Of course conversations continued with my committee and other peers which helped to shape my ideas. In many moments I admit feeling absolutely overwhelmed. As my notes accrued and time elapsed I felt inadequate. How could I pull anything together? How could I attempt to say anything helpful or useful? It felt like such an enormous responsibility to try and make any statements about what the Gospel has to say about learning and growing and how evaluation helps us on that path. I prayed continually for help and guidance.

Thankfully, my committee and my husband have been perfect examples of helping to evaluate me in a loving, uplifting, and hopeful manner. My committee worried all along that I was trying to do too much. They reminded me that all I was doing was offering a dialogue to begin discussing the ideas about what evaluation in a Gospel perspective includes. They didn't expect that my ideas could or should be exhaustive. They finally suggested that I condense what I have been working on into one article-sized effort that could then be built upon by myself and others at later times. And so that is what my thesis represents—a beginning attempt to consider some of the insights the Gospel of Jesus Christ offers for evaluation. I have written drafts and drafts, organizing and reorganizing, receiving responses and feedback from many, trying to present a clear and organized idea.

Dr. Williams gave me the opportunity in the final stages of writing to share my paper with members of his evaluation class, a few of whom work extensively with evaluation at BYU.

It was exciting for me to see the process of their reactions. They quickly saw how significantly the doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints apply to self-evaluation, but were unsure at first how the Gospel ideals could practically apply to their formal evaluations. But as they talked and reflected with each other, they began to come up with their own ideas specific to their responsibilities and practice, admitting that there is much improvement needed. They began to see that they couldn't evaluate independent of the people involved and that they had a responsibility to help people see the limits of formal evaluations. They recognized the responsibility they have for the interpretation and use of their evaluative information. It is exciting for me to see them reflecting on what they might change to become better, in a sense evaluating their own worthiness as they read the paper.

I have built upon, as evidenced in this "story," many of the experiences that have contributed to who I am and therefore what my questions have been. I have hoped all along that my thesis would at least help me to become a better person, more converted to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and more desirous to live as He does. I have become more mindful and grateful for the privilege we have as Heavenly Father's children to become like and return to Him, and the way He has provided for making that possible. I have tried to seek after His loving correction and evaluation and the evaluation from others that helps me learn and progress on the path toward salvation. I hope that I pay more attention to how I critique or evaluate or judge others, and that I will always consider who those people are and what will be most helpful for them. I've learned more about discouragement, discipline, diligence, faith, hope, and prayer than I ever thought possible. I'm very grateful for the friendships and expertise of my committee and I'm thankful that all along they've cared more about me than anything that I do or write. If that hadn't been the case, I would never have been able to finish this paper.