



*Praxis: Thoughts, ideas and challenges  
when evaluation theory meets practice*

Panel session at the  
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# Panellists Biographies

- **Kim Grey** is the Director, Evaluation and Policy Research Section at the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.
- **Susan Garner** leads the program evaluation practice in Grosvenor Management Consulting.
- **Julie McGeary** is a Senior Evaluator at the Victorian Department of Primary Industries, and currently in the final year of her Master of Assessment and Evaluation studies at Melbourne University.
- **Bradley Shrimpton** is a Lecturer in evaluation and qualitative research methods at the Centre for Program Evaluation, University of Melbourne.



# Definitions of 'Praxis'

- practice: translating an idea into action; "a hard theory to put into practice"; "differences between theory and praxis of communism"  
[wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn](http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn)
- Praxis is the process by which a theory, lesson, or skill is enacted or practiced. It is a practical and applied knowledge to one's actions. It has meaning in political, educational, and spiritual realms.  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Praxis\\_\(process\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Praxis_(process))



# Definition of 'Praxis'

- “...concerned with the competence, sensibility and sensitivity demanded in knowing what is right to do and good to be in a particular situation, given the situation’s unique circumstances, peculiarities, contingencies, and demands.”

(Schwandt 2005, pg 326).



# Question

1. It has been said that many practitioners - particularly 'part-time' evaluators - often do not rely on evaluative theory but are 'intuitive' or 'accidental' evaluators who rely on their pre-evaluation professional background and experience.

Is this true & if so, is it an issue for the evaluation profession?



## Question

2. Do we really need to have a strong grasp of evaluation-specific theory to effectively practice evaluation?



# Question

3. What are the benefits of evaluation theories?



# Question

4. If knowledge of theory is important, what are the impediments to gaining or utilising it and how might these be addressed?





# Question

5. Should we be concerned that most theory is judged to be pragmatic rather than empirically based?



# References

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# Questions

1. Accidental evaluators: Is this true & if so, is it an issue for the evaluation profession?
2. Do we really need to have a strong grasp of evaluation-specific theory to effectively practice evaluation?
3. What are the benefits of evaluation theories?
4. If knowledge of theory is important, what are the impediments to gaining or utilising it and how might these be addressed?
5. Should we be concerned that most theory is judged to be pragmatic rather than empirically based?