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Empowerment Evaluation

DAVID M. FETTERMAN

Empowerment evaluation is the use of evaluation concepts and techniques to foster self-determination. The focus is on helping people help themselves. This evaluation approach focuses on improvement, is collaborative, and requires both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. It is also highly flexible and can be applied to evaluation in any area, including health, education, business, agriculture, microcomputers, non-profits and foundations, government, and technology. It is a multifaceted approach with many forms, including training, facilitation, advocacy, illumination, and liberation.

ORIGINS OF THE IDEA

My conception of empowerment evaluation has many sources. The idea first germinated in the process of putting together my latest book *Speaking the Language of Power: Communication, Collaboration, and Advocacy* (1993b). In developing this collection, I wanted to explore the many ways that evaluators and social scientists can give voice to the people they work with and bring their concerns to policy brokers. I found that, increasingly, socially concerned scholars in myriad fields are making their insights and findings available to decision makers. The scholars in this collection address a host of significant issues, including conflict resolution, the dropout problem, environmental health and safety, homelessness, educational reform, AIDS, American Indian concerns, and the education of gifted children. Our aim is to explore successful strategies, share lessons learned, and enhance our ability to communicate with an educated citizenry and powerful policy-making bodies.

Empowerment evaluation has roots in community psychology and action anthropology as well. Community psychology focuses on people, organizations, and communities working to establish control over their affairs. The literature about citizen participation and community development is extensive. Rappaport's (1987) "Terms of empowerment/exemplars of prevention: Toward a theory for community psychology" is

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a classic in this area. Sol Tax's (1958) work in action anthropology focuses on how anthropologists can facilitate the goals and objectives of self-determining groups, such as Native American tribes.

Another major influence was my work in the national educational school reform movement with colleagues such as Henry Levin. Levin's Accelerated School Project (ASP) emphasizes the empowerment of parents, teachers, and administrators to improve educational settings. Ed Haertel and I have worked together to help design an appropriate evaluation plan for the Accelerated School Project which empowers teachers, parents, students, and administrators (Fetterman & Haertel, in press). The ASP team and I have also mapped out detailed strategies for district-wide adoption of the project in an effort to help institutionalize the project in the school system (Stanford University and American Institutes for Research, 1992).

Dennis Mithaugh's extensive experience working with individuals with disabilities to explore the concepts of self-regulation and self-determination has provided additional inspiration (1991, in press). We are currently working on a two-year Department of Education funded grant about self-determination and individuals with disabilities. We are conducting research designed to empower both providers for students with disabilities and students with disabilities themselves. We are learning about self-determined behavior and attitudes and environmentally-related features of self-determination by listening to self-determined children with disabilities and their providers. Using specific concepts and behaviors extracted from these case studies, we will develop a behavioral checklist to assist providers as they work to recognize and foster self-determination.

Self-determination, defined as the ability to chart one's own course in life, forms the theoretical foundation of empowerment evaluation. It consists of numerous interconnected capabilities that logically follow each other. A breakdown at any juncture can reduce a person's likelihood of being self-determined. They include the ability to identify and express needs, establish goals or expectations and a plan of action to achieve them, identify resources, make rational choices from various alternative courses of action, take appropriate steps to pursue objectives, evaluate short-and long-term results (including reassessing plans and expectations and taking necessary detours), and persist in the pursuit of those goals. It involves the total regulation of an individual's own life.

This individual ability exists in varying degrees and is enhanced or diluted by developmental factors (including age and maturity), type or degree of disability, and environmental conditions. For example, a supportive provider and a supportive school environment generate opportunities and encourage risk taking, exploration, and the development of abilities. The absence of these supportive environmental features limits opportunities, creates obstacles, and fosters dependency and/or despondent behavior.

One of the many heart-warming stories that have emerged from the case study section of the study highlights what self-determination is all about. This story involves a young high school girl who has Cerebral Palsy and is quadriplegic. In elementary school she was classified as a special education, mentally retarded student and grouped accordingly. She knew she did not belong in this special education class. One day during recess, she hid behind some advanced students she had been speaking with and followed them right into their classroom in her motorized wheel chair. She made sure there were plenty of students in front of her to camouflage her entrance. She knew she belonged with them, and she gambled (successfully) that no one would have the nerve to kick her out. No one did, and the teachers quickly learned that she was a gifted and talented student—not a

special education, mentally retarded or remedial education student. This is an example of gutsy self-determination.

We are collecting stories like this from children and young adults with disabilities ranging from visual impairment (including a student with retinitis pigmentosa who is losing his vision as we speak and is just beginning to use the symbolic, stigmatic white cane) to educable mentally retarded students. Their stories and the behavioral checklists generated from them will guide providers as they help less self-determined disabled students take greater control over their lives.

A pragmatic influence on empowerment evaluation is the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's specific emphasis on empowerment in community settings. The foundation has taken a clear position concerning empowerment as a funding strategy: "We've long been convinced that problems can best be solved at the local level by the people who live with them on a daily basis. In other words, individuals and groups of people must be empowered to become changemakers and solve their own problems, through the organizations and institutions they devise....Through our community-based programming, we are helping to empower various individuals, agencies, institutions, and organizations to work together to identify problems and to find quality, cost-effective solutions. In doing so, we find ourselves working more than ever with grantees with whom we have been less involved— smaller, newer organizations and their programs" (1992, p. 6). Their work in the areas of youth, leadership, community-based health services, higher education, food systems, rural development, and families and neighborhoods exemplifies this spirit of putting "power in the hands of creative and committed individuals—power that will enable them to make important changes in the world" (1992, p. 13). For example, project—Kellogg's Empowering Farm Women to Reduce Hazards to Family Health and Safety on the Farm—involves a participatory evaluation component. Sanders, Barley, and Jenness's (1990) work on cluster evaluations for the Kellogg Foundation also highlights the value of giving ownership of the evaluation to project directors and staff members of science education projects.

These influences, activities, and experiences form the background for this new evaluation approach. An eloquent literature on empowerment theory by Zimmerman et al. (1992), Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988), and Dunst et al. (1992) also informs this approach. A brief review of its many facets will illustrate its wide-ranging application.

TRAINING

In one form of empowerment evaluation, evaluators teach people to conduct their own evaluations and thus become more self-sufficient. This approach desensitizes and demystifies evaluation and ideally helps organizations internalize evaluation principles and practices, making evaluation an integral part of program planning. Jean Ann Linney and Abraham Wandersman's *Prevention Plus III*, published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, is an excellent example of how evaluators can teach people to conduct elementary evaluations of their own programs—in this case, primarily alcohol and other drug prevention programs (Linney & Wandersman, 1991). Similarly, Steven Mayer and associates at Rainbow Research highlight the educational value of this approach, producing an evaluation "Toolbox" to help corporations document the effectiveness of their services for affordable housing

residents, a Program Self-Evaluation Tool for Programs Serving Battered Women, and an Act of Empowerment Logbook for program use in documenting participants' achievements. The Charities Evaluation Services (CES), a United Kingdom-wide organization, provides training in self-evaluation and monitoring for members of non- · profit and community organizations. Libby Cooper, the CES Director, emphasizes the need for participative training to ensure that the experiences and expertise of those attending CES courses are acknowledged and developed. CES's work with a Belfast-based women's center focuses on the role women have played as a catalyst for the development of the wider community. They are providing training to help women monitor and evaluate their own work. In Western Ireland, they are evaluating the way an intermediary organization has sought to achieve the integration of people with disabilities. They are providing training to enable disabled people and their providers to participate with staff in the design and management of project services.

FACILITATION

Evaluators can serve as coaches or facilitators to help others conduct their evaluation. For example, the Oakland Unified School District has invited me to help them in this capacity. They are in the process of evaluating themselves in terms of their own five-year plan. They have a District mission, a strategic approach, and a list of desired student outcomes. They have adopted an action-research or empowerment evaluation approach in which they are in charge of the design and execution of their self-evaluation. Superintendent Mesa, an enthusiastic supporter of the empowerment approach, recognizes how the participatory process catches like wildfire. Once staff members begin the process of setting their own goals for a program and identifying their own program performance indicators, there is no end to the program improvements they make.

Gary Yee, a former principal in the district, and Ed Ferran, a district staff member with extensive facilitation experience, are responsible for coordinating the entire effort. They ask each unit to evaluate themselves. Periodically, senior staff members rate themselves unrealistically high, such as an 8 on a 10 point scale in which 10 is excellent, in a decaying urban school system where there is a high dropout rate, truancy, and racial violence. In those cases, the facilitators remind the staff that they will have to document their rating. This reality check helps unit members provide more realistic self-assessments. Once realistic figures are selected, the facilitators ask the staff members to document their rating. Although staff members rarely have a problem providing documentation for their rating, the process of producing this documentation is often new to them. This part of the exercise accustoms them to supporting their judgments. The facilitators then ask unit members how high they would like to rate themselves and what it would take to reach that goal. They also ask what type of documentation they would need to verify that they are approximating or reaching those goals. This process creates a baseline against which to monitor future progress. It also creates goals and milestones to aim for in the future, and highlights the significance of documenting progress toward self-selected goals. This form of empowerment evaluation helps staff members internalize evaluation as a way of thinking about what they are doing on a regular basis. It also puts them in charge of their own destinies, as they select the intermediate goals and objectives required to have an impact on the larger, long-term goals of improving student performance and reducing the

dropout and crime rates. This approach also demystifies the evaluation process. Staff members identify specific activities that will have a direct bearing on an intermediate outcome, rather than having to link their daily activities to poorly understood or global outcomes.

The empowerment evaluation approach is also highly sensitive to the life cycle of the event and/or organization. Goals and outcomes are geared toward the appropriate developmental level of implementation. Extraordinary improvements are not expected of a project that will not be implemented until next year. Similarly, in a treatment or program in its embryonic stage, seemingly meager improvements are given their proper emphasis. Conversely, moderate improvements or declining outcomes are viewed more critically when a program is fully operational and mature. As an empowerment evaluator, I provide general guidance and direction to the effort. I attend sessions with units to monitor and facilitate as needed. However, I always emphasize that they are in charge of this effort. This is critical because unit staff members might otherwise look to me as the expert during the session, which would make them dependent on an outside agent. Instead, they see themselves as the driving force, and the facilitators (who are part of the district) as the agents who give them voice and help them move forward. District staff members must be in a position to take charge of their lives from the onset if they are going to buy into the program and maintain it long after my coaching role has ended. I participated in the first few Cabinet-level meetings in the district with the superintendent and all of the associate superintendents, and provided explanations, suggestions, and advice at various junctures in the meeting to help ensure that the process was given a fair chance. After the first Cabinet meeting, one Cabinet member said "we haven't talked like this in over 20 years. We were actually talking about what we do, who is responsible for what, where we are now, and where we want to go. We even started to talk about what we needed to do to get there (where they want to go)." His statement also highlights the emotional benefits associated with this approach. As an empowerment evaluator, each day provides a real opportunity to participate in an experience that is a revelation to others. The process of taking stock of their school system and charting a path for the future has a significant impact on people's lives. They are suddenly in charge of their own destinies and in pursuit of improving the lives of their students.

An empowerment evaluator serving as a coach also is responsible for helping to clear unnecessary obstacles or identify and clarify miscommunication patterns. For example, during a meeting with a Board member, it was clear that the facilitators and the Board member were not on the same wavelength about the education plan and the evaluation. She wanted to be supportive but she needed to know what they were doing and what the evaluation findings were about a specific project that symbolized the education plan for her. The facilitators had a much grander picture of the education and evaluation plan, and had lost sight of some of these specific, parochial (but financially significant) project concerns. I pointed out that these interests were not mutually exclusive and that the Board member's concern about a specific project was a significant manifestation or symbol of the larger plan. I also noted that it was imperative that the facilitators communicate more effectively what the larger plan is and how the projects fit into that plan. This insight was communicated during the meeting and in a debriefing session afterward. I suggested using an investment portfolio metaphor: The pet or symbolic project could be viewed as one of many educational investments in a diversified portfolio. The facilitators found this metaphor useful in communicating more effectively with the entire Board to secure their support.

A coach can also provide useful information about the creation of facilitation teams (balancing analytical and social skills), work with resistant (but interested) units, the need for refresher sessions to energize tired units, and various protocol issues (such as communicating with the superintendent before addressing outside groups). These simple suggestions can keep an effort from backfiring or being seriously derailed. A coach may also be asked to help create the evaluation design with minimal if any additional support. The Hebrew Union College, for example, asked for assistance in designing an action or empowerment-oriented evaluation. This consultation in conjunction with John Watkin's chapter "Critical Friends in the Fray: An Experiment in Applying Critical Ethnography to School Restructuring," in G. Alfred Hess's book *Empowering Teachers and Parents: School Restructuring Through the Eyes of Anthropologists*, resulted in their reshaping the entire plan. After our discussions and electronic mail communications, they decided to rely directly on congregations throughout the country to conduct their own self-evaluations. The empowerment evaluation coach role ensures that the evaluation remains in the hands of program personnel. The empowerment evaluator simply provides useful information, based on training and past experience, to provide direction and keep the effort on track.

ADVOCACY

Evaluators may also conduct an evaluation for a group, after the goals and evaluation design have been collaboratively established. They may even serve as direct advocates—helping to empower groups through evaluation. Evaluators often feel compelled to serve as advocates for groups that have no control over their own fates, such as the homeless or dropout populations. Advocate evaluators allow participants to shape the direction of the evaluation, suggest ideal solutions to their problems, and then take an active role in making social change happen.

A comparison from the workplace highlights the existing role of self-evaluation and its link to advocacy on an individual level. Employees often collaborate with both supervisor and clients to establish goals, strategies for achieving those goals and gathering relevant data to document progress toward those goals, and realistic timelines. Employees collect data on their own efforts and present their case for their performance appraisal. Self-evaluation thus becomes a tool of advocacy. This individual self-evaluation process is easily transferable to the group or program level.

Evaluators have a moral responsibility to serve as advocates—after the evaluation has been conducted and if the findings merit it. One of my national studies of dropouts included the dissemination of generally positive findings to appropriate policymakers and the preparation of a Joint Dissemination Review Panel Submission. A series of gifted and talented education evaluations culminated in a book recommending that the U.S. Department of Education establish a gifted and talented center. Based in part on this recommendation the Department of Education appointed me to a panel to select a consortium of universities to create the center.

Politically savvy evaluators often work with senators and representatives. For example, based on his evaluation findings in the Chicago School Reform effort, Fred Hess testified before a congressional committee in support of an act to establish a national Demonstration Project of Educational Performance Agreements for School

Restructuring. This act would provide local schools with more flexibility in the use of federal funds, in exchange for commitments to improve student performance. Based on his work in program design and evaluation, Kim Hopper cofounded a local advocacy organization for the homeless in New York City. He has also served as an expert witness in public interest litigation involving the rights of homeless men and women. Margaret Weeks and Jean Schensul also demonstrate how ethnography and evaluation can be used to empower people as a tool of advocacy. Program staff in an AIDS prevention program were able to use the descriptions about injection drug users and prostitutes' attitudes toward needle exchange to better inform policy discussion and decision making. This same descriptive information was used to advocate for better access and to minimize barriers to services for HIV-positive people. Specifically, qualitative data was used to advocate for sustained funding for AIDS prevention programs on local, state, and national levels.

In another example, Linda Parker serves as an advocate for the Coushatta Tribe, in the role of economic development consultant. She combines her knowledge of the government grant systems with a tribal officer's knowledge of his tribe to help accomplish the tribe's objectives. Winning grants (with an evaluation) to serve tribal needs represents a concrete accomplishment in furthering the goals of self-determination.

Advocate evaluators write in public forums to change public opinion, embarrass power brokers, and provide relevant information at opportune moments in the policy decision making forum. Hess wrote an excellent editorial piece about school dropouts in Chicago, highlighting his evaluation findings concerning minority education and school failure. His work helped to catalyze educational and social change in the city. Hopper writes newspaper editorials to respond critically to cultural "givens" or stereotypes about the homeless and as a vehicle to participate in social change on their behalf. In an Op-Ed piece in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, I wrote about lessons learned in a controversial evaluation about environmental health and safety at Stanford University. The evaluation received national attention in the press. This editorial piece focused on typical organizational conflicts of interest that exist within college campuses and the benefits achieved by empowering health and safety workers to ensure safer working environments in higher education (Fetterman, 1990a). I have also written Op-Ed pieces in newspapers across the country to dispel myths about gifted and talented children and to advocate on their behalf (Fetterman, 1990b). In each of these examples, each of us has used the media to build a case for the people we work with—attempting to inform a concerned and educated citizenry.

These actions are in accord with Mill's (1959) position that:

> There is no necessity for working social scientists to allow the potential meaning of their work to be shaped by the "accidents of its setting," or its use to be determined by the purposes of other men [or women]. It is quite within their powers to discuss its meaning and decide upon its uses as matters of their own policy. (p. 177) [Bracketed comments added.]

ILLUMINATION

Empowerment evaluation can also be illuminating. Two cases from the Oakland School District example highlight the illuminating qualities of this process or approach. During

one meeting, the early childhood group decided after a lengthy and somewhat circuitous discussion that they wanted to link their work with student academic outcomes or test data. They had never done this before or even thought about doing it before attempting to identify possible indicators of their performance. Working with various district administrators, the CTBS test data for children in the early childhood program were extracted from the District management information system or data base and compared with data for similar students in the district (who were not in the program). The data documented significantly better performance or educational achievement by students in the early childhood program. Program staff members found this to be an eye-opening or illuminating experience. The next task was to determine whether these findings held up with additional comparison and to dig deeper to identify the specific reasons for the difference. This led to a detailed critical review of their entire program. It also opened doors that they did not know existed, such as access to an existing student data base within the district bureaucracy to help them understand, measure the impact, and improve their program.

School nurses are also using this approach to help them understand their own evolving role in the school district. Nurses are becoming more involved in assessing the life circumstances of the entire student population, rather than simply meeting individual student needs. They view the empowerment evaluation meeting activity as an opportunity to help define what their role will be in the future. In the process of redefining their role, they have designed specific tasks that will help them emerge as life circumstance-oriented health care providers, including conducting a school-wide assessment of the health conditions at the various sites, such as the percentage of students with asthma at each school site.

A meeting with one of the largest and most powerful units in the district resulted in a research epiphany. They thought of themselves as a very successful group, in spite of the district's overall poor performance. When one facilitator asked them to provide some evidence of their effectiveness, they pointed to their work in the area of school climate. After some discussion, they suggested that leadership training was the most significant variable affecting school climate (of the variables they had control over). They claimed to have five leadership teams operating at a high level of effectiveness. After requesting and receiving documentation to support this rating, the facilitator asked if they would have more impact if they had more teams. One member of the unit said, "We could have a dramatic effect if we had more teams and we worked at more schools." She then proceeded, with the assistance of the facilitator, to chart out a growth curve with an x and y axis and a dotted line running through it at a 45 degree angle predicting the type of positive impact anticipated from this increased effort. They agreed to set this new goal for the unit, rearrange their schedules and workloads to accommodate the expanded number of schools, and work toward this goal over the academic year—collecting documentation about their progress throughout the year. This administrator with little or no research background developed a testable, researchable hypothesis in the middle of a discussion about indicators and self-evaluation. It was not only illuminating to the group (and to her), it revealed what they could do as a group when given the opportunity to think about their problems and come up with workable options, hypotheses, and tests.

This experience of illumination holds the same intellectual intoxication each one of us experienced the first time we came up with a researchable question. The process creates a dynamic community of learners as people engage in the art and science of evaluating themselves.

LIBERATION

Empowerment evaluation can also be liberating. Many of these examples highlight how helping individuals take charge of their lives—and find useful ways to evaluate themselves—liberates them from traditional expectations and roles. They also demonstrate how empowerment evaluation enables them to find new opportunities, see existing resources in a new light, and redefine their identity and their future roles.

Empowerment evaluation can also be liberating on a larger sociopolitical level. Johann Mouton, Executive Director of the Centre for Science Development at the Human Sciences Research Council[1] and Johann Louw from the Department of Psychology at the University of Cape Town, invited me to speak about empowerment evaluation and conduct workshops throughout South Africa. These two individuals and the institutions they represent "reject racism and racial segregation and strive to maintain a strong tradition of non-discrimination with regard to race, religion, and gender."[2] The Centre for Science Development is the national funding agency for the human sciences in South Africa, and my empowerment evaluation workshops were conducted under the auspices of its new Directorate: Research Capacity Building, which focuses primarily on building research capacity among black scholars in the country. Over a third of the participants in the workshops were black. This is an historic achievement by South African standards.

When Johann Louw and I first met, he said he was "intrigued and interested [in the approach...] as you can imagine, empowerment is very much on the social agenda in this country" (1993, personal communication). He invited me to work with him, assisting in the evaluation of various programs administered in and by an impoverished black community near Cape Town (see 1993, personal communication). These community members are implementing and evaluating a broad range of community participation health care programs. They are using self-evaluation to monitor and build on their successes and failures. This commendable work takes place despite a context of disenfranchisement, high rates of unemployment, and disease. Acts of violence are also a part of daily life, and killing has become an aspect of the norm. Violence and fear permeate the consciousness of every South African. The newspapers have become a daily record of stonings, stabbings, and shootings. My drive to this community passed directly by Guguletu; Amy Biehl, a Fulbright scholar and Stanford graduate, was stabbed and beaten to death only a few miles from where I worked. (See Fetterman, 1993a for an insight into the culture of violence and the balance between hope and fear in South Africa.) This progressive self-reflective impoverished black community reflects the real spirit of hope that persists despite South Africa's culture of violence. Many other individuals and organizations also participate in this spirit of hope—developing and self-evaluating programs for health education, nutrition, and child care, in some instances using pictograms to help nonliterate audiences evaluate their own programs.[3] As another example, the Independent Development Trust, under the guidance of its director Professor Merlyn Mehl from the University of the Western Cape, is building self-evaluation into the process of reformulating national educational goals.

This is a time when everyone in this new nation is rethinking and re-evaluating everything—from social attitudes to land distribution. The issue of empowerment speaks to the heart and soul of the anti-Apartheid movement and the reconstruction of South Africa. Empowerment evaluation demands that program participants take part in

establishing their own goals and objectives, as well as in determining the strategies required to realize their dreams. It is symbolic that we are being invited to participate in this historic struggle as this emerging nation inches its way toward democracy and that we have a role to play through evaluation.

In essence, empowerment evaluation is the "give someone a fish and you feed her for one day; teach her to fish, and she will feed herself for the rest of her life" concept, as applied to evaluation. The primary difference is that in empowerment evaluation the evaluator and the individuals benefiting from the evaluation are often on an even plane. The evaluator thus serves more as a facilitator and in some cases as an advocate for the group.

CAVEATS AND CONCERNS

Empowerment evaluation is not a panacea. It is one approach among others being used to address social, educational, industrial, health care, and many other problems. As with the exploration and development of any new frontier, this approach requires adaptations, alterations, and innovations. This does not mean that significant compromises must be made in the rigor required to conduct evaluations. Although I am a major proponent of individuals taking evaluation into their own hands and conducting self-evaluations, I recognize the need for adequate research and preparation. These first discussions need to be supplemented with reports, texts, workshops, classroom instruction, and apprenticeship experiences if possible. Program personnel new to evaluation should seek the assistance of an evaluator to act as coach, assisting in the design and execution of an evaluation. Further, an evaluator must be judicious in determining when it is appropriate to function as an empowerment evaluator or in any other evaluative role.

A strict constructionist perspective may strangle a young enterprise; too liberal a stance is certain to transform a novel tool into another fad. Colleagues who fear that we are giving evaluation away are right. We are sharing it with a much broader population. Those who fear that we are educating ourselves out of a job are only partially correct. Like any tool, empowerment evaluation is designed to address a specific evaluative need. It is not a substitute for other forms of evaluative inquiry or appraisal. We are educating others to manage their own affairs in areas they know (or should know) better than we do. At the same time, we are creating new roles for evaluators to help others help themselves.

The issue of objectivity is also a relevant concern. We needn't belabor the obvious point that science and specifically evaluation have never been neutral. Empowerment evaluation is explicitly designed to serve a vested interest—program participants. It is designed to help them become self-determined. In addition, on a methodological level, program participants are typically more in touch with the critical variables associated with their daily life and their effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) than any outside party. As they begin to engage in the self-evaluation process, they quickly learn how to be systematically analytical about themselves and their program—providing both an overall rating for the program and specific ratings for each of the major elements of the program that they identify. They also become accustomed to justifying and documenting the basis for their assessments. They can also be fiercely independent and self-critical once they become a part of the self-evaluative process, often offering harsher criticism than any outside

evaluator may offer. Program participants also recognize that the data must be credible to carry weight, just as the data they provide their supervisor during a self-evaluation must be substantive if it is to be taken seriously. More to the point, even in instances in which individuals rate themselves highly, for example giving themselves a nine on a 10-point scale—it establishes the first baseline to measure future progress. The scale is simply readjusted with tenth-point intervals between nine and 10. The individuals must then determine what activities are required to justify a 9.1 or a 9.5 rating in the future.

Many elements must be in place for this approach to be effective and credible. Participants must have the latitude to experiment, to take risks, and to take responsibility for their actions. An environment conducive to sharing successes and failures is also essential. In addition, an honest, self-critical, trusting, and supportive atmosphere is required. The conditions need not be perfect to initiate this process. However, the accuracy and usefulness of self-ratings improve dramatically in this context. An outside evaluator who is charged with monitoring the process is instrumental to help keep the effort credible, useful, and on track, providing additional rigor, reality checks, and quality controls throughout the evaluation. Without these elements in place, the exercise may be of limited utility and potentially self-serving. With these elements in place, the exercise is a dynamic community of transformative learning.

SPREADING THE WORD

Empowerment evaluation is drawing a great deal of attention. It is the underlying theme of the annual meeting of the American Evaluation Association, as well as the subject of my presidential address. I am also creating a collection about *Empowerment Evaluation*, which will build on the foundation established for this approach and provide case examples and recommendations about the diverse applications of this approach. Evaluators throughout the world, ranging from OXFAM[4] in England to scholars in Israel[5] and auditors in Canada and Texas[6], have expressed their interest in this new approach. It crystallizes what many of these evaluators are already doing—serving as a change agent to help others help themselves, particularly work being conducted at Victoria University of Technology in Australia[7], the School of Social Work at the University of Hawaii at Manoa[8], the Minority Affairs office at the University of Madison System[9], the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill[10], the College of Education at the University of Arizona[11], the Psychology Department at the University of Rhode Island[12], Universite Laval in Quebec[13], Keystone University Research Corporation[14], and the College of Human Ecology at Cornell University[15]. Numerous organizations are working in precisely the same direction at the same time, including such diverse organizations as the Knowledge Utilization Society[16], the Transition Research Institute (funded by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services)[17], The Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University[18], the Independent Sector[19], the Wisconsin School Evaluation Consortium[20], the California Institute of Integral Studies[21], the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention[22], GAO[23] and as discussed earlier universities, foundations, and impoverished black communities in South Africa. The seed of empowerment evaluation has been planted and is taking root—in many forms, in many places, and in many disciplines. Empowerment evaluation is creating a new niche in the intellectual landscape of evaluation. This approach is political in that it has an agenda—to empower people. However, it is not liberal or

conservative ideologically, nor positivist or phenomenological per se. It knows no political or geographic boundaries. It has a bias for the disenfranchised, including minorities, disabled individuals, and women. However, empowerment evaluation can be used to help anyone with a desire for self-determination. It is fundamentally a democratic process. It builds on evaluation's advances in communication, collaboration (Reason, 1988; Oja & Smulyan 1989), utilization (Alkin et al., 1979; Patton, 1986), participation (Choudhary & Tandon, 1988), and advocacy, but it does not replace other forms of evaluation. The ultimate test of any new approach is that as it becomes more clearly defined, useful, and acceptable, it becomes absorbed into the mainstream of evaluation. I look forward to the day when it will be simply one more tool in the evaluator's toolbox.

NOTES

1.   The Centre for Science Development provided complete support for these activities, including the keynote presentation at the national Symposium on Program Evaluation and the Empowerment Evaluation and Qualitative Workshops in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, and Cape Town.

2.   This phrase also represents a self-rating. The key to understanding empowerment evaluation is precisely in the interpretation of this self-rating. It is a form of cultural inter2pretation. Individuals who read this sentence and conclude "I don't believe them" are viewing the present through the lens of the past. Interpreting this statement as the place to begin, rather than a place to conclude, allows you to ask what's next, what will you do to accomplish this, how will you monitor and document it, and what do you plan to do next year to build on successes and failures?

3.   See the Training for Self-Evaluation at Ithusheng Health Centre report (1993) by Hester van der Walt and Lies Hoogendoorn for an excellent example of how to train nonliterate community members and program participants conduct a self-evaluation.

4.   OXFAM was founded in 1942. They work "with poor people regardless of race or religion in their struggle against hunger, disease, exploitation and poverty in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East through relief, development, research overseas and public education at home. OXFAM contacted AEA in December 1992, through the president-elect, communicating their clear interest in empowerment evaluation.

5.   Professor Arza Churchman and her doctoral students, from Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, are working on the development of a theory of empowerment within the context of community planning.

6.   The Texas State Auditor's Office found that virtually no evaluation had been performed of the effectiveness of probation itself or of individual rehabilitation programs in the Texas Adult Probation system. In an effort to shift this mentality of compliance (or non-compliance) to one of effectiveness, the State Auditor's Office set up an evaluation model of probation programs statewide and of specific probation intervention programs, emphasizing the responsibility of entities to perform their own ongoing effectiveness evaluations.

7.   Delwyn Goodrick's work in the areas of AIDS, the evaluation of homelessness prevention, birthing needs, eating disorders, and participatory evaluation for the Commonwealth Department of Finance highlight the utility of the empowerment evaluation approach. See also Wadsworth's self-evaluation and research work as represented by the Action Research Issues Association in Melbourne.

8.   Charles Rapp, Wes Shera, and Walter Kisthardt's work in the area of consumer empowerment highlights the role of ethnography in empowerment research and evaluation.

9. Hazel Symonett's work in the Minority Affairs office at the University of Wisconsin System highlights the power of empowerment evaluation and self-evaluation throughout a university system, as the University designs for diversity in a multi-cultural environment.

10. Charles Usher's child welfare reform initiatives work at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with the Center for the Study of Social Policy is quite consistent with empowerment evaluation. His 1993 report titled Self-Evaluation in the Prince George's County Services Reform Initiative is an instructive and useful example of empowerment evaluation.

11. Amy Schlessman-Frost's work in the area of democratic models and multicultural educational evaluation has clear implications and applications for empowerment evaluation.

12. John Stevenson's efforts with the Community Research and Services Team at the University of Rhode Island have aspired for several years to play the kind of role required to conduct empowerment evaluations. They have been influenced by many of the same sources of inspiration described in this text. They also identify with the action research tradition initiated by Kurt Lewin. They are attempting to build the capacity of local prevention efforts with evaluation skills. They discuss some of the obstacles associated with such efforts, including problems with single training sessions with little or no follow-through.

13. Helene Johnson is an evaluation consultant at Universite Laval, Direction generale du premier cycle. Building on a stakeholder evaluation approach, she conducts periodic evaluations of University programs in a manner that empowers participants—often providing a voice for students in their communication with faculty and administrators.

14. Joyce Miller Iutcovich's work in assessing the needs of rural elderly is based on an empowerment model.

15. William Trochim's application of concept mapping to school districts and supported employment programs for persons with severe mental illness highlights the participatory component of empowerment evaluation, as the content of the map is entirely determined by the group. In addition, see Elizabeth Whitmore, Willem van der Eyken, Barbara Clinton, Jennifer Greene, Doreen Greenstein, and Daniel Selener's views on this subject as presented in the Cornell Empowerment Project.

16. The President of the Knowledge Utilization Society invited me to present a plenary presentation about empowerment evaluation at their Seventh Annual Meeting on April 21, 1993. The theme of the conference was "Using Knowledge to Empower Organizational Change: Working Smarter and Targeting for Results.

17. The Director of the Transition Research Institute at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign invited me to conduct an empowerment evaluation workshop for all the directors of Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services-funded model transition demonstration projects, as well as directors of State Systems for Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities Programs and directors of Regional Resource Centers and project officers, including Michael Ward. The focus of their evaluation technical assistance matches the empowerment evaluation approach—helping people help themselves through evaluation. "The workshop goal is to increase the capacity of directors of model transition demonstration projects to discover, understand, and believe that evaluation activities can lead to self-determination, that is, evaluation practice can and should be integral to program planning and implementation. The evaluation of the workshop documented significant success in each of these areas.

18. James Sanders evaluation work with grassroots community groups while at the Kellogg Foundation highlighted the "concept of evaluation as a human activity that is the responsibility of all who are involved in the project. In addition, he focuses on the internalization of evaluation concepts and practices for self-improvement and capacity building. Zoe Barley and Mark Jenness multi-site evaluation work of community-based programs with the Kellogg Foundation also represents a form of empowerment evaluation. They are conducting cluster evaluations for Kellogg with an emphasis on empowering the science education cluster projects. In addition, I was an invited visiting scholar at Western Michigan University for the express purpose of presenting and exploring empowerment evaluation.

19.   Sandra Trice Gray, Vice President, Leadership and Management and International Initiatives, from the Independent Sector, has developed under her leadership an elaborate vision of evaluation "as a means of achieving organizational effectiveness and renewal. Their approach follows the empowerment evaluation model, ranging from asking groups to identify their own goals to linking evaluation to strategic planning and achievement of a program's mission (see Gray, 1993).

20.   Jake Blasczyk, Director of the Wisconsin School Evaluation Consortium and the Wisconsin North Central Association, is helping school districts put in place long-range plans to reform education. Moreover, he has developed an excellent self-study guide for program evaluation that he is using in 40 percent of Wisconsin's K-12 school districts.

21.   As the Director of Research and Evaluation at the California Institute of Integral Studies, I have been provided with the opportunity to initiate an empowerment evaluation approach to self-assessment and improvement in the School for Transformative Learning. This approach will be used to improve teaching and research. In addition it is designed to be highly interactive in both face-to-face communication at the Institute and through synchronous and asynchronous electronic communication throughout the United States using America Online.

22.   Darlind Davis's Plenary presentation at the 1993 American Evaluation Association annual meeting in Dallas, Texas highlighted the Center's commitment to empowerment evaluation in their work. In addition, this organization was instrumental in publishing *Prevention Plus III*.

23.   Eleanor Chelimsky, Assistant Comptroller General for Program Evaluation and Methodology, has collected evaluative data from program beneficiaries to illuminate a social situation in a way that also assists decisionmakers to understand the particular impacts of a program on relevant parties. In essence, GAO uses empowerment evaluation by giving voice to patients, the disabled, businesspersons, and immigrants, all of whom may be the intended beneficiaries of government programs.

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