Preface

WHY THIS BOOK IS NEEDED

We face a worldwide crisis at this time in history. COVID, economic instability, global warming, political polarization, gender inequality, racial inequity, LGBTQ+ discrimination, anti-Asian and antisemitic attacks, and an ever-expanding list of critical concerns require our immediate attention. We can't wait for government or industry to save us. We must learn to help ourselves and help others help themselves.

This book is designed to help people become more self-determined, more in control of their own destinies. It provides people with the evaluation tools needed to (1) determine and define their mission or purpose; (2) take stock or assess how well they are doing now; and (3) based on their self-assessment, plan for the future by generating goals, strategies, and credible evidence. This book also provides communities with the tools needed to monitor their progress toward their goals and produce real-world outcomes.

The concerns addressed in this book are not only political, economic, and social in nature; they are also ethical and moral issues. Empowerment evaluation helps people think critically about the world around them. It contributes to learning, illumination, and liberation. Empowerment evaluation is inexorably bound to the pursuit of social justice. It confronts the "culture of silence" that undermines and devalues entire groups of people. Social justice and empowerment evaluation are part of an invisible social contract in our nation and the world. This book attempts to make the invisible visible. It also aims to address issues

in the here and now, because justice delayed, including social justice, is justice denied.

AUDIENCE

This book is intended for community activists, community leaders, non-profit directors and staff members, government officials, foundation officers, and industry leaders committed to contributing to their communities, tribal leaders, sovereign nations, evaluators, academics, and anyone concerned with improving the human condition.

It provides a blueprint for action and step-by-step instructions to help build evaluation capacity. Community organizers can use these tools to facilitate change in their communities. Educators can use this book to introduce students to the world of civic responsibility, methodologically sophisticated and sound approaches to contributing to social change and social justice, and conceptual clarity concerning stakeholder involvement approaches to evaluation. Foundation officers, government officials, and industrial philanthropists can use this book to help set change in motion. It provides a detailed portrait of what a healthy and supportive donor relationship looks like with the communities they support.

ORGANIZATION

The book is organized in a manner that allows for multiple uses. The chapters can be read in sequence, particularly for readers who are new to stakeholder involvement approaches or the application of evaluation to social justice concerns. However, for the more seasoned colleague or professional, it allows the reader to zero in on issues of key concern. For example, Chapter 1 presents the definition and scope of empowerment evaluation as well as the connection between empowerment evaluation and Freirean or liberation pedagogy; Chapter 2 explores the theory, concepts, principles (including principles of social justice), and steps of empowerment evaluation; and Chapters 3 and 4 provide real-world social justice-oriented empowerment evaluation case examples, focusing on food justice in the United States and eliminating tuberculosis in India.

Community members, funders, and evaluators can use the tech tools in Chapter 5 to facilitate empowerment evaluations remotely and exponentially expand a community's impact. These tools can be used to reach

underserved and often "silenced" populations. Colleagues and community members who are already using empowerment evaluation may only be looking for answers to common questions raised by people immersed in real-world applications. Many of these questions are addressed in Chapter 6, including: "Is empowerment evaluation used for learning or for accountability?" and "Can you use empowerment evaluation to advocate for a program?" Chapter 7 is invaluable for anyone searching for an extensive list of examples of how empowerment evaluation has been used in the fight for social justice. Examples include helping minority youth stay away from tobacco; providing comprehensive sex education to reduce unintended teen pregnancy and HIV/STI rates; raising test scores and increasing student learning in impoverished, formerly segregated rural schools in academic distress; and bridging the digital divide in communities of color. My philosophical position is that one size does not fit all; therefore I have organized the book to respond to multiple and diverse needs.

PEDAGOGICAL FEATURES

I have taught in many countries and for many decades, in the classroom (virtual and face-to-face), in workshops, and in webinars. My mother was also a professor. Teaching is in my blood. If I have learned anything, it is that multiple modalities are needed in order to be effective and help people maximize their potential. In that spirit, I have presented the material in multiple formats, including case examples, sidebars, and glossaries. The case studies apply the concepts and steps in real-life projects and initiatives. They allow the reader to step beyond the theoretical and into the world we live in, attempting to address substantive issues. Sidebars help summarize critical points and crystallize ideas in a few words. Glossaries are needed to help keep track of people, places, and practices in a world of acronyms and complex concepts. In addition, my web page at *drdavidfetterman.com* offers more information and resources pertaining to empowerment evaluation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to express my appreciation to thousands of empowerment evaluators around the world. They have helped me take an idea and place wings on it. Together, we have charted the future of empowerment

evaluation by taking calculated risks, applying the approach in real-world settings, constructing a solid theoretical and methodological foundation, producing results, building capacity, and consistently demonstrating our commitment to helping people help themselves.

I am indebted to Lee Cronbach, one of my mentors at Stanford. He generously shared his work with me, including his unpublished manuscripts. He guided me through political and methodological battles. Lee fostered my lifelong commitment to evaluation. I also recognize and value the influence of so many guiding stars in my life, but particularly as a young scholar, Eleanor Chelimsky and Henry Levin.

Abraham Wandersman and I have partnered in the field for over two decades, helping to establish the approach and make it a part of the intellectual landscape. His collegial commitment to quality and his friendship are treasured beyond measure.

I would also like to thank the publishers of the following sources for permission to reprint passages in part or whole:
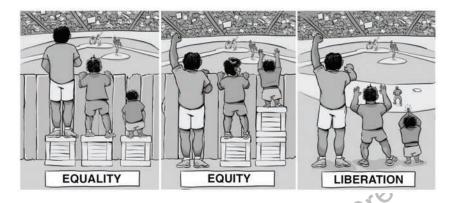
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Introduction

From Inception to Institutionalization

> *The sounds of the culture of silence can be deafening but must be heard.*

Empowerment evaluation is grounded in an emancipatory tradition. It is designed to help people learn to confront the status quo by questioning assumptions and prescribed roles, unpacking myths, rejecting dehumanization, and no longer blindly accepting the "truth" about how things are or can be. Empowerment evaluation helps people think critically about the world around them.

Empowerment evaluation is also inexorably bound to the pursuit of social justice. Social justice is fundamentally about fairness. It involves respecting and protecting everyone's human rights. Social justice applies to a wide variety of areas, including health care, education, employment, housing, and safety. It requires access to essentials; being heard (and not silenced), including hearing marginalized and vulnerable voices; participation; and equity. A few of the most pressing social justice issues include racial equity, gender equality, and LGBTQ+ rights. See Figure 1.1.

The interwoven threads of social justice and empowerment evaluation are visible in each chapter of this book. For example, in this chapter, the relationship between empowerment evaluation and Freirean pedagogy is explored.

Freirean pedagogy is a teaching philosophy that invites educators to encourage students to question the status quo, critique existing power structures, and assert their rights. It is a philosophy of liberation in which people are responsible for taking charge of their own lives and leading the effort to liberate themselves. It is the opposite of traditional pedagogies that are often referred to as the "banking model of education," which

FIGURE 1.1. Equality, equity, and liberation. *Source:* Interaction Institute for Social Change. Artist: Angus Maguire.

views students as empty vessels to be filled with facts and knowledge. Freirean pedagogy views the learner as a co-creator of knowledge.

Chapter 1 highlights how empowerment evaluation contributes to learning, illumination, and liberation. It also discusses how empowerment evaluation attacks the "culture of silence" that undermines and devalues entire groups of people. Chapter 2 focuses on the essentials of empowerment evaluation and highlights how social justice is one of empowerment evaluation's principles. It makes the case that evaluation can and should be used to address social inequalities in society. The case examples in Chapters 3 and 4 focus on social justice issues: food justice and eliminating tuberculosis. Chapter 5 demonstrates how to use tech tools to invite participation, help silenced voices to be heard, and exponentially expand a community's impact. Chapter 6 responds to questions ranging from "Is empowerment evaluation used for learning or accountability?" to "Can you use empowerment evaluation to advocate for a program?" Chapter 7 concludes the book with a clear commitment to social justice and highlights concrete case examples. They include tobacco prevention and cessation initiatives, schools in academic distress, sex education programs, bridging the digital divide in communities of color, tuberculosis elimination, and fighting for food justice. Social justice and empowerment evaluation are part of an invisible social contract in our nation and the world, and this book attempts to make the invisible visible.

The purpose of empowerment evaluation is empowerment. It aims to cultivate and enhance self-determination and self-efficacy. Empowerment evaluation helps people help themselves by taking more control

over their lives and improving their life trajectories. Empowerment evaluation is typically an ongoing or formative stakeholder involvement approach, where people take responsibility for monitoring and evaluating their progress, with a focus on results, outcomes, and impact. It can also be summative in nature, helping a group make go–no-go decisions concerning the continuation or elimination of specific programs or initiatives.

> Empowerment evaluation helps people help themselves.

DEFINITION

Empowerment evaluation is the use of evaluation concepts, techniques, and findings to foster improvement and self-determination (Fetterman, 1994). It is an approach that "aims to increase the likelihood that programs will achieve results by increasing the capacity of program stakeholders to plan, implement, and evaluate their own programs" (Wandersman et al., 2005, p. 28). It is the "Give a person a fish, and you feed them for a day. Teach a person to fish, and you feed them for a lifetime" concept applied to evaluation. It cultivates a sense of ownership and is mainstreamed as part of the planning and management of a program or organization. In essence, empowerment evaluation is a tool to help people produce desired outcomes and reach their goals.

> "Give a person a fish, and you feed them for a day. Teach a person to fish, and you feed them for a lifetime."

SCOPE

Empowerment evaluation has become a global phenomenon, reaching the four corners of the earth in less than a couple of decades. It is operating in over 18 countries, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, Finland, India, Israel, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It is a change process that has supported people and communities in improving their lives in places ranging from small townships in South Africa where sustainable community health initiatives were created to large-scale Silicon Valley corporations, including Hewlett-Packard and Google, where the process helped to build tech and small-business capacity in communities of color.

Empowerment evaluation has been used by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services of the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) to foster self-determination. Likewise it has branched out to many additional areas, including schools in academic distress (Fetterman, 2005b), accreditation in higher education (Fetterman, 2012), minority tobacco-use prevention (Fetterman, Delaney, Triana-Tremain, & Evans-Lee, 2015), and medical education (Fetterman, 2009a; Fetterman, Deitz, & Gesundheit, 2010). It has been used by Peruvian women artisans to build sustainable businesses (Sastre-Merino, Vidueira, Díaz-Puente, & Fernández-Moral, 2015), by teachers to evaluate their own performance (Clinton & Hattie, 2015), and by fourth and fifth graders to enhance diversity and inclusion (Langhout & Fernandez, 2015). Empowerment evaluation has been applied to night ministries as well as rabbinical colleges. It can be found operating in child abuse prevention programs as well as in after-school program collaborations.

Hewlett-Packard's (HP) $15 million Digital Village initiative received national and international attention in 2001. It was designed to bridge the digital divide in communities of color. The Tribal Digital Village, one of the HP Digital Villages composed of 18 Native American tribes, used empowerment evaluation to guide its self-reflection and assessment, inform decision making, and construct strategic plans. It helped the Digital Village build technological and economic infrastructures on their reservations (Fetterman, 2013a). Specifically, the Tribal Digital Village used empowerment evaluation to build one of the largest unlicensed wireless systems in the country as well as operate a digital printing press (as an alternative to gaming). The former head of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) praised their efforts. The media also showered empowerment evaluation with accolades given its role in support of this social justice initiative (*www.drdavidfetterman.com/general-5-12*).

Stanford University School of Medicine's empowerment evaluation represents another well-recognized contribution to educational transformation. Stanford's curriculum was rooted in a traditional Flexnerian model, which called for 2 years of science and then 2 years of clinical work. However, medical students typically want to work with patients right away. There is no logical reason to delay the process of having medical students work with patients, in some cases if only to learn they are not a good match for the profession. Empowerment evaluation was used to help inform curricular decision making, transforming Stanford's curriculum into a more clinical mode from day one (Fetterman et al.,

2010). In addition, there were unintentional redundancies and a less-than-optimal curricular progression that needed attention. The process was placed in the hands of faculty, students, staff members, and administrators in order to help them participate in the systemic changes. Patients were also involved in the courses to enhance the clinical dimension.

Course and clerkship ratings were one measure of student satisfaction with the curricular transformation. In comparing evaluation results before and after the stakeholders began using this approach (and in essence took control of their own evaluation), we found that the average student ratings for required courses improved significantly ($p = .04$; student's one-sample t test). The approach also helped students prepare and pass accreditation review (with flying colors). In essence, empowerment evaluation provided all participants with a mechanism to cultivate ownership, guide curricular decision making and reform, and produce desired outcomes. Their use of empowerment evaluation helped set a higher standard for medical schools throughout the country.

Empowerment evaluation has also been used to facilitate evaluations remotely in BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) communities, including addiction studies programs (Fetterman, 2022) and tobacco-prevention initiatives (Fetterman, Delaney, et al., 2015). The Feeding America empowerment evaluation work, presented in Chapter 3, highlights the social justice dimension of this stakeholder involvement approach. Feeding America is using empowerment evaluation to help food banks across the United States combat food insecurity and establish food security and food justice from a racial equity perspective. Similarly, a United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded empowerment evaluation effort to eliminate tuberculosis in India is explored and unpacked in Chapter 4, highlighting principles of social justice, inclusion, capacity building, and accountability.

Empowerment evaluation is not limited by type of program. In addition to the long list of programs mentioned earlier, it has even been used in reaching for the stars, contributing to the NASA/Jet Propulsion Laboratory's efforts to educate youth about the prototype Mars rover (Fetterman & Bowman, 2002).

EMPOWERMENT EVALUATION AND FREIREAN PEDAGOGY

Empowerment evaluation contributes to learning, illumination, and liberation, as much as to accountability. It has a synergistic relationship

with Freirean pedagogy (Freire, 1974, 1985). They are both forms of transformative education. They create environments conducive to people empowering themselves. They rely on cycles of reflection and action to contribute to transformation. They both attack the "culture of silence" (acquiescence to a pervasive system of beliefs that undermine and devalue entire groups of people). Empowerment evaluation and Freirean pedagogy share a common belief that:

> "Every person, however . . . submerged in the 'culture of silence,' can look critically at his or her world through a process of dialogue with others" (Shaull, 1974, p. 13).

> Every person, however . . . submerged in the "culture of silence," can look critically at his or her world through a process of dialogue with others, and can gradually come to perceive his personal and social reality, think about it, and take action in regard to it. (Shaull, 1974, p. 13)

This stands in juxtaposition to educational approaches that are designed to reproduce the status quo. As Shaull (1974) explains:

> There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p. 15)

Empowerment evaluation and Freirean pedagogy are both dedicated to the concepts of community and collaboration, as well as to self-determination, social justice, and sustainability. Empowerment evaluation and Freirean pedagogy are aligned in principle and practice.

TWO STREAMS

Empowerment evaluation in practice is typically applied along two streams. The first is practical and the second transformative. Practical empowerment evaluation is similar to formative evaluation. It is designed to enhance program performance and productivity. It is still controlled by program staff, participants, and community members. However, the focus is on practical problem solving, as well as on programmatic improvements and outcomes.

Transformative empowerment evaluation (Fetterman, 2015a) highlights the psychological, social, and political power of liberation. People learn how to take greater control of their own lives and the resources around them. The focus in transformative empowerment evaluation is on liberation from predetermined, conventional roles and organizational structures or "ways of doing things." In addition, empowerment is a more explicit and apparent goal. Freirean pedagogy is most closely aligned with transformative empowerment evaluation in that it is committed to helping people confront the culture of silence about the status quo and raise consciousness about their role in the world (as compared with "false consciousness"[1]).

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

A brief glimpse into the major phases of empowerment evaluation's development demonstrates how (with some evaluation community soul searching, missteps, detours, and resistance) the approach ultimately triumphed, compelling all of us to "walk our talk." It also highlights an empowerment evaluator's receptiveness to critique and dialogue. The result of decades of discourse is enhanced conceptual clarity and methodological specificity.

Empowerment Evaluation's Introduction to the Field: Einstein and Arrow

The roots of empowerment evaluation influenced its practice (see Christie & Alkin, 2013; Alkin & Christie, 2004). Empowerment evaluation was introduced in a presidential address at the American Evaluation Association (AEA; Fetterman, 1994). The empowerment evaluation approach was painted with broad strokes focusing on its definition, conceptual roots, and facets—including facilitation, advocacy, illumination, and liberation.

Albert Einstein, an actor, helped me introduce the approach. I taught him about evaluation and empowerment evaluation in preparation for

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[1]The culture of silence is designed to indoctrinate and condition people to think of themselves as useless, without value, and incapable of making a meaningful contribution to society.

his presentation. People thought he was brilliant. His evaluation presentation or performance was sprinkled with Einstein aphorisms like:

- "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."
- "No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it."
- "Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere."
- "The whole of science is nothing more than a refinement of everyday thinking."
- "Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new."
- "The only source of knowledge is experience."

These quotations were in alignment with empowerment evaluation principles and practices. They spoke to the need to take a leap of faith and trust in people's innate cognitive abilities to solve their own problems, grounded in their own experience.

A second plenary speaker helped to introduce the approach. He was Kenneth Arrow, a Nobel laureate from Stanford University. We had spoken about empowerment evaluation while I was developing it. Encouraged by what he heard, he jumped at the chance to share his comments about this burgeoning approach to evaluation. He spoke eloquently about the increasing importance of evaluation in society and the significance of empowerment evaluation in our global sphere. His credentials added to the credibility and legitimacy of the endeavor, but empowerment evaluation's credibility ultimately rested on hard-headed arguments and examples.

Our presentations stimulated conversations and arguments that spilled out into the hallways during the conference. We were asking colleagues fundamental questions. We were asking them to question everything they had been taught and long since taken for granted. What is evaluation? What was the purpose of evaluation? Who is in charge? Who are we as evaluators?

It was a heady time. The attention, the excitement, and the wonder were palpable. The new approach created a tremendous amount of

intellectual and emotional excitement and commentary. It was an idea "whose time had come." The approach was embraced by evaluators from around the world. The possibilities seemed endless. We had no idea what the magnitude of the impact of this new approach would be in the field and in the world. The ripples were almost instantly felt worldwide, in large part owing to the development of the Internet (Fetterman, 2001b). We had tapped into a need to actualize underutilized human potential.

Empowerment Evaluation in Turmoil: The Debates

Where else but in this extended family of evaluators can you expect both an attack and an embrace in the same breath? The AEA is a place where evaluators can be vulnerable, open ourselves up for critique, and learn from the experience. The magnitude of the upheaval that followed, however, was unanticipated. The empowerment evaluation approach was met with excitement, applause, and hope. However, it was also met with disdain and fear (and more than a little microaggression). It made many evaluators rethink what evaluation was and what it meant to be an evaluator. Basically, it put the association and our colleagues to the test. Were we giving evaluation away or building evaluation capacity to help people conduct their own evaluations? Were we the external experts or coaches and critical friends?

Introducing empowerment evaluation to the field touched a nerve among many traditional evaluators, resulting in highly charged exchanges in *Evaluation Practice* (Fetterman, 1995; Stufflebeam, 1994). Stufflebeam (1994), Scriven (1997), and Sechrest (1997), for example, called empowerment evaluation a "movement" because of the rapid pace and global scope of adoption. Stufflebeam was worried that empowerment evaluation might violate the standards (as if there was only one right way to conduct an evaluation). He also thought it was not objective and explicitly stated it was "not where we should go in the future."

Some of the arguments in the journals reached a feverish pitch. A few were so pointed and personal that one of the editors, Blaine Worthen (1997), had to assert civility standards and take a stand against ad hominem remarks.

The empowerment evaluation camp responded to each of the issues raised, typically in a point–counterpoint manner in the journals. We also were aware of the larger implicit issues at play. We explicitly raised the issue of positions of privilege.

Empowerment evaluation is grounded in my work with the most marginalized and disenfranchised population, ranging from urban school systems to community health programs in South African townships. They have educated me about what is possible in communities overwhelmed by violence, poverty, disease, and neglect. They have also repeatedly sensitized me to the power of positions of privilege. One dominant group has the vision, makes and changes the rules, enforces the standards, and need never question its own position or seriously consider any other. In such a view, differences become deficits, rather than additive elements of culture. People in positions of privilege dismiss the contributions of a multicultural world. They create rational policies and procedures that systematically deny full participation in their community to people who think and behave differently.

Evaluators cannot afford to be unreflective about the culturally embedded nature of our profession. There are many tacit prejudgments and omissions embedded in our primarily Western thought and behavior. These values, often assumed to be superior, are considered natural. However, Western philosophies have privileged their own traditions and used them to judge others who may not share them, disparaging such factors as ethnicity and gender. In addition, the systematically exclude other ways of knowing. (Fetterman, 1995, p. 190)

Wild's comments (1997, p. 172), in a book review, captured the tone of the times when empowerment evaluation was first introduced. "This is a significant addition to the library of evaluation, and the writers should be congratulated for bringing together such a solid collection. Fetterman et al. have nailed their theses to the door of the cathedral. Now the question is, how tolerant is the establishment of dissent?"

> "Fetterman et al. have nailed their theses to the door of the cathedral. Now the question is, how tolerant is the establishment of dissent?" (Wild, 1997).

Empowerment Evaluation: A Time to Collect Our Thoughts

The more common critiques were sincere and sought to understand the concept, seeking greater clarity. Our exchange, in the same evaluation journals, allowed us to collect our thoughts, respond to misconceptions, learn from our antagonists, and commit what we were learning to paper (and to digital formats as well).

The introduction of empowerment evaluation to the AEA and the resulting dialogues led to the first collection of literature about this approach, beginning with *Empowerment Evaluation: Knowledge*

and Tools for Self-Assessment and Accountability (Fetterman, Kaftarian, & Wandersman, 1996). The book highlighted the work of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, a well-recognized philanthropic organization, and the Accelerated Schools Project, a national educational reform movement, both of which adopted empowerment evaluation. Demonstrating the breadth and depth of empowerment evaluation, this book presented case examples that ranged from battered women's shelters to HIV-prevention initiatives. In launching a new approach to evaluation, the book also represented a fundamental developmental stage in empowerment evaluation.

A second book, *Foundations of Empowerment Evaluation* (Fetterman, 2001a), raised the bar in empowerment evaluation. While it respected other approaches, the book provided a clear three-step approach to empowerment evaluation. In utilizing case examples, including a high-stakes higher education accreditation self-study, the book also applied particular standards to empowerment evaluation, including utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy standards (see Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994). *Foundations of Empowerment Evaluation* made several additional contributions, including:

1. Explaining the role of process use (as people conduct their own evaluations).
2. Comparing collaborative, participatory, and empowerment evaluation.
3. Discussing similarities with utilization-focused evaluation.
4. Discussing the multiple purposes of evaluation, including program development, accountability, and knowledge.

This collection was followed by a number of articles and contributions to encyclopedic and leading texts in the field (e.g., Fetterman, 2004a, 2004b; Wandersman et al., 2004). Empowerment evaluation, at that stage of development, had become a part of the intellectual landscape of evaluation (Fetterman, 2004a, 2005a).

Empowerment Evaluation Principles in Practice (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005) represented a milestone in the development of empowerment evaluation. In pursuit of additional conceptual clarity, it elaborated on the existing definitions of empowerment evaluation, emphasizing capacity building, outcomes, and institutionalization. In addition, the book made explicit the 10 principles guiding the approach. The principles are as follows:

1. Improvement
2. Community ownership
3. Inclusion
4. Democratic participation
5. Social justice
6. Community knowledge
7. Evidence-based strategies
8. Capacity building
9. Organizational learning
10. Accountability

These principles were developed to guide empowerment evaluation from conceptualization to implementation and served as a lens through which to focus an evaluation.

Empowerment Evaluation in the Digital Villages: Hewlett-Packard's $15 Million Race Toward Social Justice (Fetterman, 2013a) represented a quantum leap in the empowerment evaluation and social justice space in targeting a technologically sophisticated social justice issue: bridging the digital divide in communities of color. The story documented the implementation of a large-scale, multisite, ethnically diverse, comprehensive community initiative and its corresponding empowerment evaluation. The project was high profile from the beginning; its launch included a former president of the United States, HP's Chief Executive Officer, and a human rights activist. The book thrust the project into the national spotlight.

The Digital Villages comprised 18 Native American tribes and lower socioeconomic Black, Latinx, and Pacific Islander neighborhoods. Each community had explicit goals, specific strategies, and agreed-upon evidence to document its progress and outcomes.

Empowerment evaluation became internalized and institutionalized as part of the project's planning and operations. In the process, it too was thrust into the limelight. Successes and missteps became larger than life. The successes ranged from building the largest unlicensed wireless system in the country to exponentially expanding employment and skills training centers. Less than optimal performances included the inability to coalesce and create partnerships and allowing site participants to uninvite the host to a site visit when they needed to be encouraged to

trust the funder and ask for assistance. We all could have served as better mirrors for that site.

Overall, however, the Digital Villages was a success story. Significant goals and enhanced economic opportunity in disenfranchised American communities were accomplished. The Digital Villages became a part of civil rights and social justice history in America. The project was also an opportunity to demonstrate how evaluation can contribute to the pursuit of social justice.

The second edition of *Empowerment Evaluation: Knowledge and Tools for Self-Assessment, Evaluation Capacity Building and Accountability* (Fetterman, Kaftarian, & Wandersman, 2015) began as a "simple" revision of *Empowerment Evaluation: Knowledge and Tools for Self-Assessment and Accountability* (Fetterman et al., 1996), the book that helped launch the empowerment evaluation approach. However, in the process of creating a "simple" updated revision, every single chapter was replaced. In addition, principles and tools that did not exist when the approach was first launched were added. The revision was so radical that even the title of the book was changed to explicitly include the term *evaluation capacity building*. Nevertheless, the book highlighted the theory, principles, concepts, and steps of empowerment evaluation. Case examples included Peruvian women using the approach to improve their craft-making skills and market their crafts online, teachers using empowerment evaluation to improve their teaching and learning methods, Native Americans using the method to bridge the digital divide in communities of color, fourth- and fifth-grade students using the approach to make their school become more welcoming, and community health care activists implementing tobacco-prevention projects designed to keep minority youth away from tobacco. This collection of case histories represented a transformative leap that was literally decades beyond the first endeavor.

The response was enthusiastic and overwhelmingly positive. Lois-ellin Datta, a luminary in the field of evaluation, who was one of the first to review the book, concluded: "Read this 2015 edition, particularly for readers new to evaluation who want, in one place, a compendium of what empowerment evaluation is about, a statement of its principles, a set of case examples in diverse settings, and an understanding of where Fetterman, Kaftarian, and Wandersman are *now* in their thinking" (2016, p. 3). She also commented on the maturation of the arguments and exchanges that contributed to the collection: "Each critique was responded to by Fetterman, not a man to be intimidated, in a dialogue that over the decades seems marked by growing mutual understanding,

preciseness, and respect. . . . Thus, the context of the 2015 edition is the continuation of clarification, refinements, and examples, even if the conversation has now moved far from hallway near riots toward appreciative acceptance" (2016, p. 2).

Stewart Donaldson summed up the overarching sentiment about the book and the approach in the Foreword: "One of the greatest evaluation innovations of the past two decades has been the development of a professional and systematic approach to self-evaluation called empowerment evaluation" (2015, p. x).

Collaborative, Participatory, and Empowerment Evaluation: Stakeholder Involvement Approaches (Fetterman, Rodríguez-Campos, Zukoski, & Contributors, 2018) helped place empowerment evaluation in the context of a stakeholder involvement approach to evaluation. The book identified the essential features of each of these stakeholder approaches to evaluation, defining and differentiating among them. It has helped evaluators select the most appropriate approach for the task at hand, and has also served to educate funders and community members as they select the most appropriate approach for them. The book provides an overview of each approach, including a definition, essential features, conceptual framework, advantages, the role of the evaluator, guiding principles, and the steps associated with applying each approach. Each approach is followed by two case examples.

> "One of the greatest evaluation innovations of the past two decades has been the development of a professional and systematic approach to self-evaluation called empowerment evaluation" (Donaldson, 2015, p. x).

The empowerment evaluation examples include an evaluation in Google, a corporate tech giant, and a nonprofit organization that managed a comprehensive sex education initiative. Colleagues from the AEA's Collaborative, Participatory, and Empowerment Evaluation Topical Interest Group had been calling for a book defining the differences between stakeholder involvement approaches in actual practice for over a decade. This collection further contributed to conceptual clarity. Once again, Lois-ellin Datta (2018) reviewed the contributions in this book and summed up her laudatory comments in the following passage:

> This valuable book both shows and tells on the hot topic of collaborative, participatory, and empowerment approaches. Each "essentials" chapter gains impact from two chapters illustrating what the principles look like in actual evaluation practice. Beautifully explanatory, memorably demonstrated! The authors emphasize understanding in order to select the most

appropriate stakeholder approaches for the situation at hand. Far from claiming the exclusive benefits of any single approach, the book is infused with the spirit of working together. The chapter on commonalities powerfully lays out the features of stakeholder involvement at macro-, mid-, and microlevels of analysis, creating a strong theory-to-practice bridge for newcomers as well as experts. I wish I could gift-wrap this book and send it express to evaluation practitioners in fields from agronomy to zoology.

In addition to all of these books on empowerment evaluation, classic debates with Michael Scriven, Michael Patton, Marvin Alkin, and Stewart Donaldson, to mention only a few, exemplified the honest and simultaneously critical dialogue required for us to grow, evolve, and transform (Donaldson, Patton, Fetterman, & Scriven, 2010; Patton, 1997a, 2015; Scriven, 1997).

Empowerment Evaluation: Institutionalized

Our "21st-birthday party" panel at the AEA represented the culmination of decades of dialogue (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2017). Donaldson (2017; see also 2015) commented that empowerment evaluation was "an approach that has literally altered the landscape of evaluation." Michael Patton (2017) explained what was "exemplary is its openness to dialogue, reflective practice and process use." Michael Scriven (2017) stated, "There is much to admire about empowerment evaluation." Their earlier critiques (often razor sharp) helped us enhance our conceptual clarity and methodological specificity. As Edmund Burke (in *Reflections on the Revolution in France,* 1790), said, "He [or she] that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skills. Our antagonist is our helper."

Today, six books later, empowerment evaluation is now practiced worldwide. Our projects focus on health, education, and the general welfare of communities. We address social justice issues ranging from food security/insecurity (and food justice) to the elimination of tuberculosis throughout India.

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Numerous empowerment evaluators have been recognized and received awards for their use of empowerment evaluation, including Abraham Wandersman (2008 Outstanding Publication Award), Margret Dugan (1995 Guttentag Award for a promising scholar), Shakeh

Kaftarian (1996 Myrdal Award for Evaluation Practice), and myself (1995 Myrdal Award for Evaluation Practice; 2000 Lazarsfeld Evaluation Theory Award). Another indicator of its institutionalization is the existence of the Collaborative, Participatory and Empowerment Evaluation Topic Interest Group division of the AEA. Liliana Rodríguez-Campos and I are co-chairs of this stakeholder involvement approach to evaluation division.

Empowerment evaluation is a part of the intellectual landscape in evaluation, in large part because it works. In addition, it has been integrated into the field because our colleagues were able to rise to the occasion and (with some detours, bumps, and bruises) apply core evaluation values to our efforts to improve the human condition.