From time to time, articles are published in EP that evoke comments from readers. **In Response** *is reserved for this dialogue. Contributions should be to the point, concise, and easy for readers to track to targeted articles. Comments may be positive or negative, but if the latter, then at least relatively nice! Please keep length of comments to minimum essential.*

In Response to Dr. Daniel Stufflebeam's: Empowerment Evaluation, Objectivist Evaluation, and Evaluation Standards: Where the Future of Evaluation Should Not Go and Where It Needs to Go, October 1994, 321-338.

DAVID M. FETTERMAN

Empowerment evaluation is an innovative approach to evaluation that has been adopted in higher education, government, inner-city public education, and foundations throughout the United States and abroad. It is being used in a wide range of programs, including substance abuse prevention, accelerated schools, adult probation, and doctoral programs. Descriptions of programs using empowerment evaluation appear in my presidential address and in "Steps of Empowerment Evaluation: From California to Cape Town" (Fetterman 1994c). (For those interested, two forthcoming works also detail programs using this approach: *Empowerment Evaluation* by Fetterman, and *Empowerment Evaluation: Knowledge and Tools for Self-Assessment and Accountability* edited by Fetterman, Kaftarian, and Wandersman, both published by Sage.) In addition, this approach has been institutionalized within the American Evaluation Association as part of the Collaborative, Participatory, and Empowerment Evaluation Topical Interest Group.[1] Despite its increasingly wide use, empowerment evaluation is not a panacea; it is not designed to replace all forms of evaluation. It meets a specific evaluation need: to help programs evaluate themselves to improve practice and foster self-determination. It may also influence other forms of evaluation and audit[2] to adopt a more collaborative and participatory tone.

This approach is still evolving: there is much to learn, explore, refine, and improve. As with other forms of evaluation, we constantly learn more about the craft as we practice it. Nevertheless empowerment evaluation has solid foundations in collaborative and participatory evaluation. Moreover, it is modeled after action anthropology and community psychology, and grounded in the instructive tradition of action research.

David M. Fetterman • Professor, Director of Research and Evaluation, California Institute of Integral Studies, Director, MA Policy Analysis Program, School of Education, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305.

MYTHS AND MISPERCEPTIONS

Any innovative approach—no matter how widespread—is subject to misperception and misrepresentation. Empowerment evaluation is no exception, as evidenced by Dr. Stufflebeam's recent article "Empowerment Evaluation, Objectivist Evaluation, and Evaluation Standards: Where the Future of Evaluation Should Not Go and Where It Needs to Go", appearing in this journal (1994). But such myths and distortions arise from distance and lack of information. Often, we project our worst fears and insecurities onto those whose behaviors and customs we do not understand. I remember the surprise and relief of workshop participants in a midwest state years ago, when after meeting me and my family, they found that Jews did not have horns. Contact and interaction can dispel such misunderstandings and myths, which otherwise create a gulf between us and understanding. This article and several forthcoming works may serve to assure Dr. Stufflebeam that empowerment evaluation has no horns and poses no threat to the discipline of evaluation. Indeed, this new approach may serve to revitalize the field with new perspective and a broader scope of application.

New developments in evaluation have always drawn fire: witness the decades of debate about qualitative approaches. I remember being in the minority (an *n* of 1 as an anthropologist) in ERS, which for a time was similar to being a member of a pariah group. Prominent leaders in the field condemned the use of qualitative approaches and dismissed the work of qualitative evaluators. Unfounded fears emerged in critiques of qualitative evaluation efforts, charging that the approach was pseudo evaluation and thus undermined the credibility and legitimacy of the field. Charges that empowerment evaluation is pseudo evaluation and threatens "legitimate" evaluation are thus a familiar refrain. We have heard them before; they are part of an intolerant tradition from our own past.[3] Kuhn's (1962) insight is quite relevant here. He explained that it is not unusual to observe lifelong resistance (to a new paradigm) particularly from those whose productive careers have committed them to an older tradition of normal science (p. 151).

Many qualitative researchers, myself included, have devoted a good portion of our professional careers to making the case for the utility of qualitative approaches in evaluation. (See Eisner 1985; Fetterman 1984, 1988b, 1988c, 1989b, 1993a, 1993b; Fetterman & Pitman 1986; Goetz & LeCompte 1984; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Patton 1990; Reichardt & Cook 1979; Smith 1981; Stake 1995; Yin 1984 for a small sample of books devoted to this topic).[4] In addition to providing theoretical and methodological arguments, many of us have provided concrete examples of what qualitative methods and methodologies could do in evaluation in international, national, state, and local evaluations. My election as president of the American Evaluation Association was a reflection of the shift toward tolerance and acceptance of qualitative approaches. Despite the fears of many, qualitative approaches did not replace quantitative approaches. The field was not tarnished, misdirected, or discredited by this methodological newcomer? Indeed, many formerly all-quantitative researchers have written that the adoption of that innovation served a need and enriched us all.

Ethnographic evaluation, in particular, has been useful in clarifying contextual factors that enable us to interpret data meaningfully and to communicate effectively with policy decision makers. This approach generated data that were useful in dispelling myths about inner-city minority youth, gifted and talented children, homelessness, AIDS, and

environmental health and safety issues, among many others (see Fetterman 1993b, 1994b; Hopper 1993; Hess 1993; Weeks & Schensul 1993).

Debate about empowerment evaluation will likely follow a similar course. In the spirit and tradition of sharing knowledge and dispelling myths and distortions, this discussion focuses on the remarks of Dr. Stufflebeam. It concludes with a few insights about the tone and context of this discussion.

GOALS AND ROLES

Myth: Empowerment Evaluation is conducted by an individual evaluator who has lost sight of the single goal of evaluation: the systematic investigation of the worth or merit of an object. There are two parts to this misconception. The first part is that there is a single evaluator who comes in to conduct the evaluation on or for the group. The second part is a byproduct of the first misconception: that empowerment evaluation has only one goal; all other functions represent various roles evaluators can play.

Empowerment evaluation is a group activity, not an individual pursuit. Throughout his discussion, Stufflebeam makes constant reference to the individual evaluator: "there are no a priori reasons why any professional should not provide such help"; "Clients who believe or claim that such constructive services from an evaluator constitute evaluation are deceiving themselves or others"; "Unfortunately, there are many persons who call themselves evaluators who would be glad to sell such service", and so on. The referent to the evaluator is wrong and is related to much of the confusion and misperception. It is not the evaluator who is the focus of the activity, but the group. An evaluator does not and cannot empower anyone. People empower themselves, often with assistance and coaching. Program participants conduct their own evaluation—they are the facilitators. An evaluator typically serves as a coach. The selection of inside facilitators increases the probability that the process will continue and be internalized in the system and creates the opportunity for capacity building. With an outside evaluator, the evaluation can be an exercise in dependency rather than an empowering experience. The evaluation process too often ends when the evaluator leaves, leaving participants without the knowledge or experience to continue on themselves.

In empowerment evaluation the context has changed: the investigation of worth or merit and plans for program improvement becomes the means by which self-determination is fostered, illumination generated, and liberation actualized. Value determination and plans for program improvement are conducted by the group with the assistance of a trained evaluator and are at the heart of every step of empowerment evaluation. In addition, actualizing or approximating these further goals stimulates the ongoing and cyclical process of reflection and self-evaluation. Roles (as defined by Stufflebeam and Scriven), such as training, also become an integral part of the evaluation process. Empowerment evaluation, by design, institutionalizes systematic evaluation.

Thus the argument that roles and goals are confused in empowerment evaluation is itself confused by using the wrong referent. There is value in distinguishing between the two for many forms of evaluation (if you accept the assumption of a single goal in evaluation). I typically recommend advocacy in ethnographic evaluation after the evaluation has been conducted and only if the findings merit it (Fetterman 1988a, 1993a). This distinction, however, cannot be applied in the same manner to empowerment

evaluation and remain meaningful given the shift in focus from the individual evaluator to the group. Training, facilitation, advocacy, illumination, and liberation are all facets—if not developmental stages—of empowerment evaluation. They add to and enrich rather than dilute or detract from an evaluator's dedication to determining worth or merit and recommending program improvements. Cronbach's developmental focus is relevant and on target, concerning the focus of empowerment evaluation. The focus is on development, improvement, and lifelong learning for a program.

Other disciplines have adopted alternative approaches that reflect a "truth in advertising" format resembling empowerment evaluation terminology and practice. For example, administrative, action, and advocate ethnography are clear and distinct forms of ethnography (Fetterman 1989b). The field of psychology has developed similar distinctions and labels that immediately inform the consumer about the purpose or thrust of the approach. This approach can be fruitfully applied to evaluation to ensure that consumers know what they are buying. A focus on a single goal in evaluation camouflages the underlying focus, which is dictated by such factors as professional training, intent, context, sponsorship, political persuasion, and even personality. Moreover, as more evaluators participate in the development of a program (as auditors have already done for some time), the value of this role/goal distinction becomes less apparent or useful, and accurate labeling of the effort becomes paramount.[5]

Even training, which might seem an area in which this distinction might be usefully applied is not simple and clear cut. In empowerment evaluation, training is a part of the evaluation process. Training is not conducted in the abstract or for a lone evaluator. It is used to map out the terrain, highlighting categories and concerns, as well as making preliminary assessments of program components, while illustrating the need to establish goals, strategies to achieve goals, and forms of documentation to indicate or substantiate progress toward those goals. Training a group to conduct a self-evaluation can be considered equivalent to developing an evaluation or research design (since that is the core of the training), which would normally be considered a part of an evaluation. Training becomes an integral part of the evaluation process—it is ongoing throughout the evaluation process as new skills are needed and requested to respond to new levels of understanding. Training becomes part of the self-reflective process of self-assessment (on a program level), recognizing when more tools are required to continue and enhance the evaluation process. This self-assessment process is pervasive in an empowerment evaluation—built into every part of a program, even to the point of reflecting on how its own meetings are conducted and feeding that input into future practice.[6]

Empowerment evaluation is hard to conduct, often because issues, goals, and roles are more fluid than in other forms of evaluation. However, I would argue that goals and roles are naturally intertwined in traditional forms of evaluation as well. The separation is useful for pedagogical purposes, but artificial in practice and potentially misleading if it prevents an evaluator from reflecting on the evolving interrelationship that influences practice. In addition, program participants are the primary evaluators in empowerment evaluation—not the outside evaluator. Immersion in and control of evaluation increases the probability that program participants will internalize and institutionalize evaluation as part of their day-to-day planning and management. The shift in the referent point from individual evaluator to group makes Dr. Stufflebeam's obvious distinction concerning roles and goals inappropriate and off-target in this context.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Myth: Empowerment Evaluations will produce public relations exercises or worse, rather than objective evaluation findings. Confusion about roles in empowerment evaluation underlies misperceptions about feared abuses of evaluation findings, such as serving as a public relations exercise or, worse, covering up highly corrupt activity.

The process of conducting an empowerment evaluation requires the appropriate involvement of stakeholders. The entire group—not a single individual, not the external evaluator or an internal manager—is responsible for conducting the evaluation. The group thus can serve as a check on its own members, moderating the various biases and agendas of individual members. As is the case in traditional evaluation, no individual operates in a vacuum. Everyone is accountable in one fashion or another and thus has an interest or agenda to protect. A school district may have a five-year plan designed by the superintendent; a graduate school may have to satisfy requirements of an accreditation association; an outside evaluator may have an important but demanding sponsor pushing either timelines or results, or may be influenced by training to use one theoretical approach rather than another. It is naive to offer the "objectivity" of an outside evaluator as an absolute, untouched by real-world constraints and individual biases.

In a sense, empowerment evaluation minimizes the effect of these biases by making them an explicit part of the process. The model of a self-evaluation in a performance appraisal is a useful comparison. An employee negotiates with his or her supervisor about job goals, strategies for accomplishing them, documentation of progress, and even the timeline. In turn, the employee works with clients to come to an agreement about acceptable goals, strategies, documentation, and timelines. All of this activity takes place within corporate, institutional, and/or community goals, objectives, and aspirations. The larger context, like theory, provides a lens in which to design a self-evaluation. Supervisors and clients are not easily persuaded by self-serving forms of documentation. Once an employee loses credibility with a supervisor it is difficult to regain it. The employee thus has a vested interest in providing authentic and credible documentation. Credible data (as agreed on by supervisor and client in negotiation with the employee) serves both the employee and the supervisor during the performance appraisal process.

Applying this approach to the program or community level, superintendents, accreditation agencies, and other clients require credible data. Participants in an empowerment evaluation thus negotiate goals, strategies, documentation, and timelines. Credible data can be used to advocate for program expansion, redesign, and/or improvement. This process is an open one, minimizing the dangers Dr. Stufflebeam apprehends. Rather than covering up an illicit or ineffective activity or serving as a public relations campaign, this approach places a check on precisely that kind of activity. It provides an infrastructure and network to combat institutional injustices. It is a highly (often brutally) self-critical process. Empowerment evaluation is successful because it adapts and responds to existing decision making and authority structures on their own terms (see Fetterman 1993b). It also provides an opportunity and a forum to challenge authority and managerial facades by providing data about actual program operations—from the ground up. The approach is particularly valuable for disenfranchised people and programs to ensure that their voice is heard and that real problems are addressed.

Empowerment evaluation is being used in a variety of institutional contexts and communities; however, it is rooted in programs for people who have been systematically

disenfranchised, dismissed, and disregarded. It is in many respects a tool of advocacy for them. Typically, empowerment evaluations disclose highly critical insights about leadership, management, and daily operations (including a program participant's own practices). Evaluation and feedback are taken seriously. Characterizing empowerment evaluation as a tool for a client to pay a lot of money for a good empowering evaluation, one that conveys the particular message, positive or negative, that the client/interest group hopes to present, irrespective of the data is simply not in touch with reality—and certainly no more likely than in traditional evaluation. Many of the projects are conducted pro bono or as part of an evaluator's existing responsibilities because these groups want to improve themselves, but do not have the funds to hire an external expert evaluator. In addition, the message emerges based on the data that are highlighted, discussed, dissected, and synthesized in a public forum—both positive and negative—to improve program practice. The public or sponsor, like the employer in the self-appraisal example, is not easily fooled and certainly not served by self-serving, shallow public relations efforts (in empowerment or any other form of evaluation). Dr. Stufflebeam's concerns are not based in the logic or practice of empowerment evaluation—or founded in any data. To the contrary, existing data highlight the power of this approach to serve as a countervailing force concerning such practices.

RELATIVISTIC EVALUATION

Myth: Empowerment evaluations are relativistic and can assist autocratic actions of Machiavellian decision makers. Numerous examples have already been provided concerning the challenging role an evaluator can play as a consultant or a coach (see Fetterman 1994a,c). Outside evaluators can help facilitators (who are members of the group) ask challenging questions, question assumptions, clarify comments and conclusions, synthesize findings, as well as refine goals, strategies, and forms of documentation. They also challenge self-ratings. In one instance, a superintendent provided a high rating of his own efforts in the school district. The facilitators and other program participants challenged him, given the high incidence of racial violence and the number of guns in the schools. This peer pressure was useful and influential, and the superintendent eventually modified his self-rating. However, above and beyond this process, providing a self-rating itself was instructive and useful. It provided the first baseline for evaluating program development and improvement in the future (Fetterman 1994a).

Empowerment evaluation does not simply determine merit and worth at a given point in time (a significant task in its own right); it also takes part in the process of program improvement. Merit and worth are not static entities; populations shift, goals shift, knowledge about program practices and their value change, and external forces are highly unstable. However, by internalizing and institutionalizing self-evaluation processes and practices, a more dynamic and responsive approach to evaluation can be created. A rich source of data is created as well to allow more complete external examination.

The charge that heightened uncertainty that may emanate from relativistic evaluation can actually assist biased, autocratic actions by Machiavellian decision makers...(who)...thrive in situations where degrees of freedom in decision making are unlimited (p. 326) is inflammatory. Worse, it seriously underestimates program participants' capabilities, and ignores the context and conduct of empowerment

evaluations. It is also layered with untenable and erroneous assumptions. There are no substantive situations in which degrees of freedom in decision making are unlimited. There is always a context and a set of parameters—technical, financial, political, social, personal, and so on. Program participants—including those with little formal educational training—are capable of appreciating the limitations and boundaries of decision making. In fact, the challenge is to get them to lift the limits—to question some of those cultural assumptions about the acceptable or possible parameters and limitations. Even the most fractious and poorly governed groups are capable of coming to a consensus on critical issues associated with improving their program, particularly with guidance and assistance—but not control—from outside the group.

In addition, empowerment evaluation is a fundamentally democratic process. It is purposely constructed to invite (if not demand) participation, examining issues of concern to the entire community in an open forum. This places a check on the Machiavellian archetype—an atypical managerial stereotype from my perspective, as most managers are trying to solve problems in a reasonable and ethical manner.

EXTERNAL EVALUATION

Myth: Empowerment evaluation and external evaluation are mutually exclusive. Empowerment evaluation and external evaluation are not mutually exclusive approaches. In fact, they enhance each other. In a recent empowerment evaluation design developed in response to a school's accreditation self-study requirement, a series of external evaluations are planned to build on and enhance self-evaluation efforts. Participants agreed on the value of an external perspective to add insights into program operation, serve as an additional quality control, sharpen inquiry, and improve program practice. External evaluators may even help determine the merit and worth of various activities. An external evaluation is not a requirement of empowerment evaluation, but it is certainly not mutually exclusive.

Simple misunderstandings such as this highlight the importance of learning about another culture, asking questions, observing, and trying to elicit the insider's view—before evaluating it.

STANDARDS

Myth: Empowerment Evaluation may violate the **standards**. Empowerment evaluation is consistent with the spirit of the *standards* and is designed to institutionalize evaluation. Dr. Stufflebeam's critique of empowerment was an opportunity to highlight and promote the Joint Committee's Program Evaluation Standards. Unfortunately, it also illustrated how the *standards*, developed for educational evaluation, can be inappropriately implemented, resulting in misevaluation.

First, an evaluation or in this case an entire evaluation approach was condemned without significant input from participants concerning the construction or orchestration of the effort. In addition, no data are cited or specific examples given. Instead, significant and faulty assumptions are made, permeating the entire discussion, and the approach is publicly condemned—in the name of the *standards*. This data free conclusion was made despite that after these charges were made in draft form, I provided—in the one phone

conversation we shared on the topic—specific examples and clarified many of the issues raised, attempting to rectify many of the faulty assumptions. This information was not reflected in the published article. Contrary to all evaluation practice, Dr. Stufflebeam has leaped to an assessment without conducting an evaluation. I understand and appreciate the time and work Dr. Stufflebeam and others have committed to developing and promoting the *standards*. However, any system of standards must be sufficiently open and flexible to accommodate data. The *standards* committee has left itself open to many charges of unresponsiveness, much as Dr. Stufflebeam's article showed unresponsiveness to my input about empowerment evaluation.[7] This fundamental disregard for the data sets a dangerous precedent. I believe that when data do not match the theory, you do not disregard the data—you modify the theory.

To date the Joint Committee's Program Evaluation Standards (1994) have not been accepted by the American Educational Research Association or the American Evaluation Association. In fact, the American Evaluation Association developed its own Guiding Principles for Evaluators because the standards were not adequate to meet the diverse needs of the membership and the profession. Claims by Dr. Stufflebeam such as the Joint Committee Standards are arguably *the* evaluation standards of the education field in North America are at best premature. They are not the only relevant standards in the field. However, this posture does provide an insight into the ease with which applications are already extended beyond their intended domain.

This application of the *standards* to Empowerment Evaluation is not likely to extend their influence, but it is revealing about the dangers of their misuse. Ethnographers, like other social scientists, are sensitive to linguistics and language. Dr. Stufflebeam's phrase "Not to require some level of credible examination of evaluations against appropriate standards is a clear violation of the Joint Committee's *Metaevaluation* standard" caught my attention. The word *is* suggests that these *standards* have been adopted and are enforceable, although no recognized professional association has adopted them.[8] In addition, the word *violation* indicates that the *standards* are to be used as a policing agent. Rather than use the *standards* to serve as a constructive tool to improve and refine theory and practice, Stufflebeam cites them to summarily and publicly dismiss an entire approach. If this is how one of the architects of the *standards* intends to enforce them, I have grave reservations about their underlying intent and impact (above and beyond the ease with which they are overextended to areas outside educational evaluation[9]). In addition, Stufflebeam conjectures about confusing helping people with rendering an assessment (in the context of his discussion about empowerment evaluation) and speaks about "a serious breach of professional ethics", referencing the *standards* in the footnotes (see page 324, Note 3). In highlighting the *standards'* position on an obvious ethical matter of helping a client publish a positive noncritical image and claiming it as a defensible evaluation, Dr. Stufflebeam again condemns empowerment evaluation without data or serious inquiry. Conjecture can be useful but it too involves ethical considerations: Sacrifice comes too easily in the name of the *standards*. In this conjecture, the *standards* are presumed to be the ethical code for all evaluators. While I laud Dr. Stufflebeam's zeal to improve evaluation, I worry that his own commitment to the *standards* will lead him to dismiss out of hand any approach that does not conform to them. Such orthodox implementation of the *standards* does not bode well for the future of evaluation. New approaches and developments are essential to respond to a rapidly changing environment and to yield new knowledge.

One recommendation, in light of this discussion, is that additional consideration be given to the use and application of the *standards*. Will they be used to guide or to enforce standards and ethical codes? Who will be the judge and jury? Will there be separation of duties? What sanctions are envisioned? Who will enforce them? Specifically, mechanisms and procedures should be established to ensure due process if they are to be used as enforcement mechanisms. An additional set of questions needs to be posed if the *standards* are to be used in a more constructive and productive manner. How widely should they be applied?

Another recommendation is that the *standards* and the procedures be sensitive to the developmental stage of an approach. It is well known that using the same criteria to evaluate a program at its start-up phase that are used to assess its mature operation phase will typically generate a misevaluation. The same principle applies to judgments about developments and approaches in evaluation. Sensitivity to the developmental cycle or life cycle of an innovation, such as empowerment evaluation, can improve the accuracy and usefulness of observations and evaluations.[10] Knowledge about the goals and ethos of a program or the intent of an innovation also enhances the value of an evaluation—minimizing the risk of misleading conclusions and faulty interpretations based on data free assumptions. In evaluation, immersion and time in the field as well as testing of hypotheses increase the probability of securing useful knowledge, as compared with single or episodic visits. Similarly, reading more than one article, engaging in a dialogue, and spending some time experiencing this form of evaluation might have produced a more accurate appraisal and a more fruitful exchange.[11]

In spite of the myths and misperceptions that have been generated and the manner in which the *standards* have been misapplied to empowerment evaluation, there is no a priori reason not to apply the *standards* appropriately. The *standards* are useful and can serve to improve both empowerment evaluation and be refined in the process, assuming they are an evolving and adaptive entity as well. I have attempted an initial application of the *standards* to this evolving evaluation approach, demonstrating that empowerment evaluation is consistent with the spirit of the *standards* (see Appendix A). As the approach develops, this application will be revisited and revised.

CONCLUSION

Empowerment evaluation is not a recommendation for the future, it is a statement about the present—a crystallization of many similar approaches. Empowerment evaluation has already taken hold in government, foundations, and academe. It has been adopted in programs throughout the world because it is needed and works; it is responsive to fundamental needs and helps to improve program practice.

Empowerment evaluation's fluidity is frightening for external evaluators who have not lived with program participants, but natural for those who work in and with social programs on a daily basis. It is a little like fuzzy logic[12] in the computer industry—at first shunned because it was not an objective—yes or no—binary patterned response to questions. However, fuzzy logic is similar to the learning process. It evaluates a situation in degrees rather than as an absolute. It takes samples of the environment on an ongoing basis to determine what the environment is at any given point in time. A body of water may be a puddle, a swamp, a pond, a lake, or a cloud, depending on the moment it is

perceived. Fuzzy logic takes the rules directly from the data, much like grounded theory. It is more relaxed about definitions than traditional computer programming, which depends on binary logic. A fuzzy logic approach probes the environment, continually recording data, and responding accordingly at any given time—since reality continually changes. Empowerment evaluation is similar to this new logic in many respects. It constantly samples the program environment and feeds back information and evaluative interpretations into the system. It is designed to operate in a world of continual and perpetual change. Empowerment evaluation has a high threshold or tolerance for chaos and ambiguity. It is responsive to rapid and unexpected changes in program design and operation—because it is continually collecting, describing, reflecting on, and feeding back information about a group or organization as if it were a living, breathing organism.

FALSE DUALITIES IN THE MULTICULTURAL WORLD OF EVALUATION

I embrace elements of the traditional world of evaluation that Dr. Stufflebeam eloquently espouses. I have also appreciated many of his efforts concerning the development of the *standards*. However, I do not embrace his apparent belief that there is only one way of viewing, interpreting, and valuing evaluation or his intention to impose that way on all others. I do not agree with his assumptions as evidenced in his critique of empowerment evaluation or with his interpretation of evaluation. Evaluation is not a monolithic entity. There are many kinds of evaluation, serving multiple needs and concerns. Acknowledging only one acceptable conception of evaluation is ethnocentric. The various interpretations of psychology, anthropology, education, and physics testify to the fact that more than one conception of reality can exist without undermining the field. In fact, the many forms serve multiple needs and concerns, and together are enriching.

I do not accept the dualistic world view presented as truth. The false dichotomies of qualitative versus quantitative, objectivist versus empowerment evaluation are unnecessarily and unrealistically narrow perceptions of evaluation.[13] For example, not all evaluations conforming to the *standards* are objectivist or empowering. A modest or cursory effort by Dr. Stufflebeam would have revealed that his own context, input, process, product (CIPP) model is being used to guide an empowerment evaluation—demonstrating that the approaches are neither incompatible nor mutually exclusive. Differing needs and contexts require differing evaluative responses. The focus should be on the problem or issue; methods and methodologies should follow, not precede. Moreover, a singular approach to evaluation is not responsive to the needs and demands of program participants and clients who live in a rapidly changing, highly unstable environment.

OBJECTIVIST EVALUATION

Program participants no longer hesitate to question either the authority of the outside expert or the pretense of objectivity, nor should they. I also challenge the assumption that evaluation is objective, neutral, or free from values. According to Dr. Stufflebeam,

> Objectivist evaluations are based on the theory that moral good is objective and independent of personal or merely human feelings. They are firmly grounded in ethical

principles, strictly control bias or prejudice in seeking determinations of merit and worth, invoke and justify appropriate and (where they exist) established standards of merit and worth, obtain and validate findings from multiple sources, set forth and justify conclusions about the evaluand's merit and/or worth, report findings honestly and fairly to all right-to-know audiences, and subject the evaluation process and findings to independent assessments against the standards of the evaluation field. Fundamentally, objectivist evaluations are intended to lead to conclusions that are correct—not correct or incorrect relative to a person's position, standing, or point of view (p. 326).

I understand and appreciate this idealistic view of reality; however, anyone who has recently had to roll up their sleeves and get their hands dirty in program evaluation or policy arenas is aware that evaluation, like any other dimension of life, is political, social, cultural, and economic. It rarely produces a single truth or conclusion. In the context of a discussion about self-referent evaluation, Stufflebeam states that "As a practical example of this, in the coming years U.S. teachers will have the opportunity to have their competence and effectiveness examined against the standards of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and if they pass to become nationally certified" (p. 331). Regardless of one's position on this issue, evaluation in this context is a political act. What Stufflebeam considers an opportunity (if they pass), some teachers consider a threat to their livelihood, status, and role in the community. This is a screening device in which social class, race, and ethnicity are significant variables. Such an objective evaluation is a highly rationalized system to systematically disenfranchise a portion of the population—justified because this fragment of the process is detached and technically separate from any social, political, or economic forces that precede or follow. The goal is improvement, but the questions of for whom and at what price remain valid. Evaluation in this context or any other is not neutral—it is for one group a force of social change, for another a tool to reinforce the status quo. To pretend that it is all in the name of science or that it is separate or above politics or mere human feelings—indeed, that evaluation is objective—is to deceive oneself and to do an injustice to others. Fortunately such "objectivity" is not essential to being critical. For example, I support programs designed to help dropouts pursue their education and prepare for a career; however, I am highly critical of program implementation efforts. If the program is operating poorly, it is doing a disservice both to former dropouts and to taxpayers. Patton (1994) might be right "that the world will not end in a subjective bang, but in a boring whimper as voices of objectivity drifting off into the chaos" (p. 312).

Even a cursory review of the culturally diverse interpretations of the term "moral good" highlights how this belief in an absolute is fundamentally and irretrievably flawed. Further, to suggest that the "moral good" is both objective and "independent of personal or merely human feelings" betrays the human condition. There is nothing *mere* about human feelings. They are a part of our daily decision making processes. Much of what is vital in human life is left out when human feelings are "removed" from the equation. In addition, morality is precisely about human feelings and emotions. One needs only to scratch the surface of the "objective" world to see that it is shaped by values, interpretations, and culture. Whose ethical principles are evaluators grounded in? Do we all come from the same cultural, religious, or even academic tradition? Such an ethnocentric characterization flies in the face of our accumulated knowledge about social systems and evaluation. Similarly, assuming that we can "strictly control bias or prejudice" is naive, given the wealth of literature available on the subject, ranging from discussions about cultural interpretation to reactivity in experimental design.[14]

Positions of Privilege

Empowerment evaluation is grounded in my work with the most marginalized and disenfranchised populations, 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, they systematically exclude other ways of knowing. Dr. Stufflebeam is convinced that there is only one position and one sacred text in evaluation, justifying exclusion or excommunication for any "violations" or wrong thinking. Scriven's (1991, p. 260) discussion about perspectival evaluation is instructive in this context, highlighting the significance of adopting multiple perspectives, including new perspectives.

Conversely, I would argue that we need to keep open minds, including alternative ways of knowing—but not empty heads. Skepticism is healthy; cynicism, blindness, and condemnation are not, particularly for emerging evaluative forms and adaptations. New approaches in evaluation and even new ways of knowing are needed if we are to expand our knowledge base and respond to pressing needs. As Campbell (1994) states, we should not "reject the new epistemologies out of hand....Any specific challenge to an unexamined presumption of ours should be taken seriously" (p. 293). Evaluation must change and adapt as the environment changes, or it will either be overshadowed by new developments or— as a result of its unresponsiveness and irrelevance—follow the path of the dinosaurs to extinction. People are demanding much more of evaluation and are not tolerant of the limited role of the outside expert who has no knowledge of or vested interest in their program or community. Participation, collaboration, and empowerment are becoming requirements in many community-based evaluations, not recommendations. Program participants are conducting empowerment and other forms of self- or participatory evaluations with or without us (the evaluation community). I think it is healthier for all parties concerned to work together to improve practice, rather than ignore, dismiss, and condemn evaluation practice; otherwise we foster the development of separate worlds operating and unfolding in isolation from each other.

Rigid adherence to a model in the face of real-world constraints and values potentially threatens to undermine and erode the credibility of the work associated with it. It is my hope that this does not happen in the context of the *standards*. There is much valued work associated with that ongoing effort. Ideally, we have learned something about the dangers of throwing the baby out with the bathwater from our qualitative and quantitative squabbles.

There are multiple ways of knowing and evaluating that transcend our fractious discussions about methods and methodologies. These conceptual developments have permeated the intellectual landscape of every field, challenging the status quo and forcing us all to enter an extraordinarily exciting, albeit uncertain future.[15]

To make my own bias explicit, I believe that evaluation is basic—like reading, writing, and arithmetic. I believe that evaluation should be a fundamental skill; an integral part of any educated citizens repertoire. I also believe that anyone can learn the basic skills of evaluation, as demonstrated with empowerment evaluation. This does not deny the education and expertise required of professional evaluators; it simply reaffirms the right of every citizen to use evaluation to foster self-determination within a context of social justice. We need every tool we can find to respond to the pressing social and environmental problems we face. Evaluation has an instrumental role to play in helping us respond to our problems, adapt, and build the future. The exploration and development of new frontiers requires adaptation, alteration, and innovation. This does not imply that significant compromises be made in the rigor required to conduct empowerment evaluation. A strict constructionist perspective may strangle a young enterprising new venture, and too liberal a stance is certain to transform a novel tool into another fad. The artful shaping of this adaptation process will contribute to the enrichment and refinement of evaluation and empowerment.

APPENDIX A

Applying the *Standards*

The *standards* are useful and can serve to improve both empowerment evaluation and be refined in the process, assuming they are an evolving and adaptive entity as well. I have attempted an initial application of the *standards* to this evolving evaluation approach.

Utility Standards. Empowerment evaluation requires the involvement of as many as possible of the people involved in or affected by the evaluation so that their needs can be addressed. The group evaluates its own program, with the help of facilitators (members of the group being evaluated) and coaches (such as external or internal experts in evaluation) who provide assistance in the design and execution of the (often iterative) evaluation plan. Coaches can also provide workshops and other forms of training to ensure capacity building. Empowerment evaluation is an open, democratic, group process. Trustworthiness is enhanced as a function of group participation—everyone is given a chance to be heard, and plans are routinely adjusted to accommodate a member's concerns, including conflicting views and minority reports. In addition, members of the group are responsible for every stage of the evaluation, from planning to reporting findings and recommendations.

All participants provide information about key program elements and concerns. For example, in an ongoing empowerment evaluation of a graduate school program, faculty, staff, students, and administrators are directly involved in the process at every stage. They list and prioritize pertinent questions about the program. In addition, the concerns and perspectives of external bodies, such as an accreditation agency, are also solicited. In fact

an accreditation agency's standards (and previous critiques of the program) serve as powerful context within which to construct an empowerment evaluation. Program participants focus on perspectives, procedures, and the rationale for interpreting findings during the planning stage and throughout the evaluation. As new knowledge and/or insights emerge and are fed back into the program, evaluation processes and procedures may need to be retooled and refined. Their continuing participation increases the likelihood that members will accept and internalize the bases for value judgments. However, since people change (often as a result of this experience), the group must revisit its value judgments at various junctures throughout the process—in some instances a lifelong process.

The proposals and reports generated from an empowerment evaluation typically describe the program being evaluated, including its context and purposes, procedures, and findings of the evaluation. Interim communications are routine in empowerment evaluation; they serve to take the pulse of the group at critical phases in its daily operation. Not all forms of communication require a reiteration of the program description and procedures, however, for example, as a member of one group using empowerment evaluation, I used a burnout thermometer to take the pulse of other program participants who were complaining about job burnout. Everyone was asked to mark their level of burnout on a thermometer drawn on a poster board. It proved to be a powerful visual display of the group's feelings of being burned out by work overload and job stress at that point in time. It also provided a baseline for comparison with perceptions throughout the year. In addition to traditional memoranda and reports, this form of data provided rapid turn-around of information, insights, and interpretations, enabling participants to use the information in a timely manner. All information generated is designed to be fed back into the system to encourage follow-through by stakeholders. This often requires presenting the same information more than once and in multiple forms. Peer pressure is a powerful force in holding people accountable for what they have or have not done with the evaluation findings and recommendations. The process of encouraging follow-through is also greatly facilitated by an existing governance structure or hierarchy (informal and formal).

Feasibility Standards. Empowerment evaluation is a practical approach to evaluation. Program participants are encouraged to use existing data bases and tools, rather than reinvent the wheel. For example, most programs maintain budget information, attendance, and attrition records. These forms of information are invaluable in any evaluation, there is no need to create a new mechanism to capture these data. This approach keeps disruption to a minimum. However, empowerment evaluation also requires program-level introspection and norming concerning how individuals rate program elements—initially a time consuming process. Self-evaluation can seem deceptively simple and non-intrusive if this upfront effort is overlooked. It is an invaluable investment, however, because the norming process helps build a foundation of understanding about what program participants concerns are and how they define a high or low rating. Empowerment evaluation by the group or program means that all viewpoints are represented, including radically divergent points of views and values. Involvement by as many people as possible from each strata or interest group minimizes, but does not eliminate, the power of any specific group to shape or bias the evaluation effort. However, this open process greatly reduces the likelihood that any subgroup will attempt to curtail

evaluation operations, especially senior management. In fact, the group buy-in associated with this approach makes it virtually impossible for senior management to curtail it, once initiated. In addition, a lengthy audit trail documents the process and procedures. Cooperation (or, more accurately negotiation) is the norm in empowerment evaluations. This evaluation approach is efficient because it relies on existing resources and provides invaluable information routinely, ranging from the credibility and/or accuracy of budget projections to the degree of success in achieving the group's intended outcome and impact.

Propriety Standards. By their nature and the requirement of group involvement, empowerment evaluations are designed to be service-oriented—assisting organizations as they address and effectively serve the needs of the full range of targeted participants. Formal agreements exist in empowerment evaluation; however, they are necessarily different from those in the *standards*, which are designed for individual external evaluators. In empowerment evaluation, the group creates its own agreements—often in writing or job descriptions—concerning the evaluation plan, specific procedures, responsibilities of participants for the various component of the self-evaluation, and timeline. These elements are open to renegotiation as priorities and people change. Empowerment evaluations are designed and conducted in a manner that respects and protects the rights and welfare of human beings. In one such effort, a formal human subjects committee approval process was deemed appropriate and an informed consent document was generated and disseminated.

Empowerment evaluations are grounded in a profound respect for human dignity and worth. This respect is the basis for encouraging program participants to take charge of their own lives using evaluation as one tool. Every effort is taken to ensure that program participants do not threaten, undermine, or harm each other. However, empowerment evaluations are extremely self-critical. The process of reflection and dialogue associated with empowerment evaluation can be quite difficult and routinely uncomfortable. Basic assumptions, never mind preliminary findings, are questioned at almost every meeting. In this regard, the process can be threatening. Ideally, an atmosphere of trust is created to facilitate open and honest self-critique. Periodically, additional precautions and reminders are needed to maintain a secure, safe environment, free from emotional or intellectual "cannibalism".

Empowerment evaluations are designed to be thorough[16] and fair. Everyone has an opportunity to identify and engage each of the issues. In addition, there are no topics too sacred to address, typically, the most sacred, unspoken concerns emerge as the highest priority items. Documentation is always required to support a high or low rating about a program assessment, and is scrutinized. Precision is important; however, it is second to usefulness. Strengths and weakness are evaluated in order to build on strengths and improve areas of concern.

Empowerment evaluation is not exhaustive (only exhausting). Documents and views are examined as completely as possible, given time and resources. Concerns are prioritized and reprioritized routinely by the group to adjust and be responsive to program priorities. Items routinely placed on the "bottom" of the list are flagged, and a task force is convened to respond to the items and reflect on why they have been routinely listed as less significant than other concerns. The task force is also responsible for making recommendations to the group concerning its findings. Many of these findings and recommendations can be easily understood and implemented. However, systemic findings are considered and acted on by the group as a whole.

All members of a group or program are entitled to a full set of findings and recommendations, as well as most interim communications. Some communications have a limited distribution list because they are designed to test a hypothesis or place a check on a preliminary interpretation or finding. Once closure is reached on a specific topic, such communications are more broadly disseminated. Similarly, there are some personal and personnel issues that do not receive full disclosure to respect individual privacy.

Empowerment or self-evaluations are highly sensitive to conflict of interest and diligently guarded against it. In one project, a member of a distance learning group was also the owner of the electronic communications system used by the program. The conflict of interest had to be discussed and debated, particularly because complaints about the program were reframed as the group's problem or fault—instead of being a design problem. In other words, his dual role made him unresponsive to the group's concerns. The group, including this individual, agreed that it was necessary for him to excuse himself from certain decisions about the program. Avenues were made available for continued discourse, but decisions were kept at arms' length. This was a direct result of a self-evaluative and reflective process. This example also highlights the role of consensus and group process in synthesizing divergent roles, perspectives, and findings, and initiating corrective steps to improve program practice.

The group is responsible for any allocation or expenditure of resources—primarily their own time. All discussions and decisions, including the allocation of resources, are typically open to all parties involved. The *standard*, once again, was written from a different frame of reference; however, the emphasis on sound accountability procedures, as well as prudent and ethically responsible fiscal behavior, is a useful reminder.

Accuracy.   Empowerment evaluation uses a program description as both an exercise in defining where program participants are and where they would like to go in the future. It also serves as a baseline to measure change over time. For this purpose, the same description associated with **Report Clarity** in the **Utility Standards** is used in initial proposals and reports about the program. However, program descriptions are often altered during an empowerment evaluation (or any evaluation for that matter), reflecting new aspirations and directions, based on the formative feedback received from the process. A concerted effort is made to describe the unfolding process of how a program defines itself as it responds to new environmental constraints and new populations. In some cases, the initial definition is included in reports as part of the historical development of a program, providing a useful guide to the evolution of the program while remaining faithful to its newly developed identity. Slavishly adhering to a program definition that is no longer relevant would produce a mismatch and a misevaluation.

This does not mean that a program is never accountable. A self-evaluation is in the best position to document the process of such changes. Autocratic or whimsical changes that do not reflect planning and evaluation of program conditions, markets, consumers, and participants are reported in self-evaluations.

Context is critical in empowerment evaluation. The developmental life-cycle of a program, for example, is highlighted. New programs are not held to the same evaluative standard as mature programs. Environmental conditions, as well as political, economic, and cultural factors, are considered paramount in self-evaluations. Contextualization enables program participants to interpret data meaningfully and to anticipate specific influences on program operation. Programs do not exist in a vacuum. The expectation

that a program is expected to break even financially in its second year of operation is a significant contextual variable that will shape program behavior during the first year. Similarly, violence, unemployment, and hunger are significant contextual variables in an inner-city or a township, adding another dimension (and certainly an added degree of difficulty) to the development and operation of any program.

Empowerment evaluations, like many participatory forms of evaluation, are typically described in some detail. In fact the purposes and procedures often need to be repeated at various junctures because of turnover, procrastination, and the need for a refresher. A selected member of the group or a team of individuals develop and share an evaluation schedule. The process and flow of events are monitored by the group (and the facilitators). Significant milestones are celebrated and critiqued throughout the evaluation.

Empowerment evaluation workshops highlight the significance of defensible information sources. Program participants are always asked to provide documentation or evidence to support any rating. A participant who rates leadership a 3 (on a 10-point scale, in which 10 is high) is challenged to provide evidence in two directions: First, to provide evidence to substantiate a low rating, then to provide documentation to support a 3 rating instead of a 1 or 2 rating. This process of challenging co-workers concerning defensible information continues throughout the effort. After a certain period of time, some sources become routinely acceptable. However, even the most basic sources can be challenged at any time.

The same process that is applied to securing defensible information sources is applied to securing valid and reliable information. This process often requires much soul searching when groups have significantly varying backgrounds. However, commonsense ground rules are usually established concerning information-gathering procedures.

Teams responsible for collecting, processing, and reporting systematically review their information. In addition, everyone has the opportunity to challenge any phase of the effort. When errors are found, and they are found even when the process is operating effectively, they are corrected as quickly as possible. Data are rarely viewed as quantitative and qualitative in most empowerment evaluations—they are simply data. Data may be numerical or statistical as easily as narrative and descriptive. Program participants focus on the quality of the data, as well as issues of authenticity and trustworthiness. The distinctions are generally left to the academics.

Conclusions need to be justified at every turn in an empowerment evaluation, and stakeholders are typically a vocal and highly critical part of the process. Positive and negative findings are equally challenged as either self-congratulatory or cynical. In either case, examples are requested, procedures re-examined, and conclusions either revised or their limitations noted.

Reporting procedures invite, rather than guard against, personal feelings and biases. Empowerment evaluation records the multicultural, pluralistic, human condition of any group or program. These elements of human life are considered vital to understanding how a program is working. They are not left out simply because they may contaminate or distort, or because they cannot easily be quantified. These factors are taken into consideration and reported to guard against distortion or omission, to ensure evaluation reports fairly reflect the evaluation findings. It is a radically different approach to accomplishing the same objective stated in the *standard* concerning **Impartial Reporting**.

Empowerment evaluations are often reviewed and evaluated. No program is free from external pressure or review. In one case, an accreditation agency served as the meta-

evaluator, reviewing and critiquing the self-evaluation plan. In another example, the program sponsor required an external examination and review of the evaluation plan and execution. In an inner city school self-evaluation, the superintendent hired an external evaluator to review and evaluate the self-evaluation process and findings. However, not all programs have the time or resources to conduct a summative meta-evaluation by an external evaluation team. Many programs run on a shoe-string budget and adopt an empowerment evaluation because they do not have the resources to hire external evaluators. A summative meta-evaluation becomes an unreasonable burden in those cases. (Pro bono efforts and exchanges of services have been used in some cases to accommodate these economic factors, for example, one external peer group or team evaluates a program in exchange for a similar review of another program in their organization.)

Typically, the *standards* would be applied to an individual evaluation effort—whether an empowerment evaluation or another approach. However, applying the *standards* to empowerment evaluation in general is a useful exercise. It helps to elucidate many facets about the approach and provides some insight into the strengths and weakness of the *standards* themselves.

NOTES

1. TIG chairs are David Fetterman and Jean King. All interested evaluators are invited to join the TIG and attend our business meetings, which are open to any member of the association.

2. The Texas State Auditor's Office is already successfully using empowerment evaluation (Keller, 1994, personal communication; in press).

3. There are undertones of the qualitative/quantitative debate influencing this discussion as well, particularly as they relate to the *standards* and the objectivist view of evaluation. This is ironic, as both qualitative and quantitative approaches have a significant role in empowerment evaluation.

4. I do not suggest that there is a homogeneous or monolithic approach to qualitative approaches. In fact, I have devoted a book precisely to this topic titled *Qualitative Approaches to Evaluation in Education: The Silent Scientific Revolution* (1988b) to demonstrate the (intracultural) diversity in the field. See also many articles by Stake and House.

5. Another useful labeling distinction in ethnographic evaluation is "the application of ethnographic concepts and techniques" as compared with conducting a full-blown ethnography. This delimits the effort in clear and precise terms.

6. In anthropology and folklore this is called a folk culture or more specifically an evaluation folk culture.

7. One area of unresponsiveness concerns the issue of the definition of evaluation. I find Stufflebeam's definition focusing exclusively on establishing merit and worth too narrow. At minimum, it should include making recommendations for program improvement. (See Reichardt, 1994; Shadish, 1994; and Smith, 1994 in this regard). In empowerment evaluation the definition would be extended to include emancipatory facets, including illumination and liberation. In addition, inclusion of a qualitative methods component in the *standards* is not sufficiently responsive to the role of the larger qualitative conceptual lens which is often phenomenologically based, recognizing "multiple realities". (See Fetterman, 1989a, b).

8. Sponsoring admirable efforts, including the *standards*, is not the same as adoption. The issue of enforceent is also another matter entirely.

9. Stufflebeam acknowledges that The Program Evaluation Standards were developed for use in educational evaluation and thus "may not be totally applicable to the range of evaluations intended to be covered by empowerment evaluation" and then dismisses this caveat as "a minor

worry". Moreover, in spite of the acknowledgement, he proceeds to apply them as if they were law, rather than a potentially useful guide or opportunity to test and refine the *standards* (or the process of applying them). Caveats and acknowledgements are always appreciated; however, the seriousness of the limitations acknowledged make the value of the application questionable if not simply misleading.

10.   Scriven has highlighted the dangers of professional evaluators dampening "the creative fires of a productive group" during early developmental stages. The same concerns might apply to this early critique, particularly concerning expectations associated with the *standards*. However, I have viewed this critique as a useful opportunity to refine the approach and hopefully the *standards*. Dr. Stufflebeam's critique is more accurately a useful example of how to generate a misevaluation by failing to take the time to understand the basic assumptions and practice of the approach and proceeding with a data free critique of a new development in evaluation.

11.   A view of Dr. Stufflebeam's criticisms from another level of analysis reveals a fascinating, although common pattern. The same exact topics—and in some cases words—used in his book *Systematic Evaluation* (1985) are used in this critique. This critique provided Dr. Stufflebeam with an opportunity to highlight the same points he has been making for years. Empowerment evaluation is used as a foil or scapegoat for many of his concerns. However convenient the selection of this approach appeared, a minimum of homeword would have revealed that this was an inappropriate case example. Moreover, his life-long arguments would have been more persuasive and salient had he relied on data—an actual case example of an empowerment evaluation.

12.   I have selected the example of fuzzy logic because it is a useful metaphor, compared to traditional artifical intelligence and Dr. Stufflebeam's conception of evaluation. In addition, the term fuzzy logic, like empowerment evaluation, seems like a contradiction in terms or an oxymoron, as Patton points out in his discussion about empowerment evaluation (1994). The traditional artifical intelligence researcher, and I suspect some evaluators, would jump at the term fuzzy logic to refer to it as muddled thinking because it is not as simple, linear, or traditionally logical. Fuzziness, like feelings and emotions, disturbs researchers or evaluators who pride themselves on acknowledging only cold, hard facts (as if they existed in some pristine state, uncontaminated by people, politics, and places). This to me is more of a test of the researcher or evaluator than the concept, suggesting their own limitations to explore, understand, and appreciate another culture or world view.

13.   Ironically, there is no technical reason why an objectivist approach could not be adopted within an empowerment evaluation. I would not recommend it, because I do not think it captures the richness of human interaction. Also it may frame the effort in such a way that the evaluator is either insensitive to or abdicates responsibility for the larger context in which the evaluation is considered—socially, culturally, politically, and economically.

14.   See Fetterman (1982) for additional discussion about reactivity. See also Conrad (1994).

15.   Rosenau (1992) provides useful terms that may guide our understanding and reconstruction of postmodern thought and evaluation. She highlights the role of the "affirmative post-modernist" who combines elements of post-modern thought with an action-oriented responsibility for the world, as compared with the "skeptical post-modernist" who abandons almost any conceptualization in a fragmented world.

16.   The term thorough is somewhat vague. Empowerment evaluation, like much sponsored evaluation, is pragmatic. A sincere effort is made to be thorough, but program participants have other things to do and typically apply the law of diminishing returns to any inquiry. Since any facet of the evaluation can be re-evaluated (and often is) in an empowerment evaluation, a mechanism exists to ensure thoroughness on critical issues. The issue of compliance with the thoroughness standard should, however, raise a flag for any practitioner concerning the need to get the job done in a professional manner and keep within a budget. The question is often: what is realistic and practical, given the time and resources available? In addition, who will determine if I have met the *standard*, given real-world constraints?

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