Measuring the Psychological Outcomes of Empowerment Evaluation's Practices and Principles

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This study contributed to a small body of research on empowerment evaluation, viewed here as a social intervention. It examined its processes and principles to determine whether historically conceptualized empowerment and self-determination outcomes resulted from a sample of 131 empowerment evaluations. Objectives included: determining implementation fidelity to each empowerment evaluation model; determining evidence of empowerment evaluation process principles; determining whether empowerment evaluation outcome principles resulted from sampled evaluations; and determining whether variation in empowerment and self-determination was explained by interaction between model fidelity and percentage of steps implemented, process principles in evidence, outcome principles in evidence, and evaluator characteristics. Results indicated that, as hypothesized, individual empowerment and self-determination were the likely outcomes of the sample evaluations, that empowerment and self-determination outcomes were more likely when the empowerment evaluations were conducted by female evaluators living and working in an African country, and that a new instrument, Survey on Empowerment Evaluation Practice, Principles, and Outcomes (SEEPPO) was a successful first attempt at assessing the processes, principles, and outcomes of empowerment evaluators' practice.

Keywords: social intervention, empowerment theory, self-determination theory, empowerment evaluation, research on evaluation, individual empowerment, collective empowerment, individual self-determination, collective self-determination

INTRODUCTION

The importance of representing those with the least personal or collective power is embodied in the psychological well-being constructs of empowerment and self-determination. As defined by originalists Israel, Checkoway, Schultz, and Zimmerman (1994), empowerment is "people's ability to gain understanding and control over personal, social, economic, and political forces to act on improving their life situations" (p. 152). Vanderslice (1984) summarized empowerment as "a process through which people become able to influence people and organizations affecting their lives and the lives of those they care about" (p. 2). Similarly constructed, self-determination is distinguished by its interconnected capabilities including: identifying and expressing needs; establishing goals, setting expectations and a plan to achieve them; identifying resources; making rational choices from alternative courses of action; taking appropriate steps to pursue objectives; evaluating short- and long-term results; and persistently pursuing goals (Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1986, 1989, 1991; Bandura, Adams, & Beyers, 1977). Ultimately, the rationale for empowerment and self-determination is advancing human dignity, social emancipation,

and sustainable individual and group (i.e., collective) development. In this study, based on empowerment theory, the individual empowerment construct was operationalized as four sub-constructs: evaluation self-efficacy (i.e., belief in one's ability to conduct evaluations), evaluation knowledge (i.e., the systematic process of assessing the value, impact, and effectiveness of programs, projects, or policies), evaluation skills (i.e., the ability to make reasoned judgments, draw measured conclusions, and offer recommendations for action), and evaluation capacity (i.e., the ability to conduct, use, and learn from evaluations) (Zimmerman, Israel, Schulz, & Checkoway, 1992). Likewise, based on Koestner, Ryan, Bernieri, and Holt's (1984) self-determination theory, the individual self-determination construct was operationalized as three sub-constructs: evaluation autonomy (i.e., freedom from external control over what and how to evaluate), evaluation relatedness (i.e., meaningful connections to others during an evaluation), and evaluation competence (i.e., efficacious performance of evaluation-related behaviors). Empowerment and self-determination have also been considered at an organizational level but neither the community psychology literature (empowerment theory) nor humanistic psychology literature (self-determination theory) was instructive in their operationalization. However, based on Lennie's (2005) work organizational empowerment was operationalized as shared leadership and organizational self-determination was operationalized as collective decision-making.

As a stakeholder-involved evaluation approach, empowerment evaluation resonates with many in the evaluation and higher education communities respectively for its strong values orientation (Miller & Campbell, 2006). For example, empowerment evaluation has been used in higher education to enhance institutional effectiveness, promote student learning outcomes, and support faculty development through participatory and capacity-building evaluation approaches. This method enables stakeholders (e.g., administrators, faculty, staff, and students) to define goals, collect data, and use evaluation findings for continuous improvement. Specifically, Fetterman (2012) described its empowerment evaluation's application in medical education in which students and faculty collaboratively assessed teaching practices and curricular design. Similarly, Lamm et al. (2013) implemented empowerment evaluation within university cooperative extension programs to build internal evaluation capacity and improve programming. Fetterman (1999, 2001, & 2004) suggested that empowerment evaluation should result in power shifts as individuals participate in decision-making about evaluations conducted within their organizations when, previously, they were minimally or wholly uninvolved, and organizations should be better able to garner resources and influence institutional and public policies concerning their programs based on evaluation findings. In the empowerment evaluation literature, individual and organizational power is signaled by possessing evaluative capacity, taking action to improve the probability of programs succeeding based on conducting and using evaluations, and mainstreaming evaluation steps into programming. Empowered and self-determined outcomes are a reasonable and likely result because of a reliance on empowering and self-determining processes: evaluators work directly with program or organizational stakeholders to facilitate the evolution of the evaluation as stakeholders work as a collective to retain control of all evaluation-related decisions (Goodman, 2001). Hence, empowerment evaluation is viewed as a social intervention because it is an emancipatory process that identifies and eradicates factors contributing to disempowerment and increases self-determination through a sense of connectedness to a larger social collective (e.g., an organizational evaluation team) and a commitment to a vision of social justice (Bennett, 1987; Lennie, 2005; Narayan, 2005a; Narayan, 2005b; and Vanderplaat, 1995).

Soon after empowerment evaluation was introduced into the evaluation field, Levin (1996) wrote that most evaluators, when determining whether empowerment evaluation does what it claims to do, focus on whether participants learn evaluation skills and successfully develop, launch, and utilize their evaluations rather than measuring any resulting empowerment and self-determination effects. Likewise, Anderson (1996), Gore (1992), Lennie, (2002), and Lennie et al. (2003) each called for closer examination of evaluations claiming to have produced empowerment and self-determination. Noted evaluation commentators also raised concerns about empowerment evaluation: vague contingencies for practice (Cousins, 2005; Smith, 1999; Worthington, 1999); a lack of rigor and propriety (Sechrest, 1997; Stufflebeam, 1994); and an absence of evidence from empirical studies showing it leads to empowered or

self-determined outcomes (Patton, 2005; Worthington, 1999). To this last concern, Smith (2007) averred that a primary, practical criterion for judging empowerment evaluation's processes, principles, and outcomes, to the extent they are understood, is whether they work in practice as conceptualized in theory. In his review of the empowerment evaluation cases discussed by Fetterman and Wandersman (2005), Cousins (2005) maintained that the quality of empowerment evaluation implementation, hence processes, principles, and outcomes resided in the extent to which persuasive evidence could be provided examining the claims made about all that it purportedly can do (p. 202). Providing such evidence is difficult, Cousins noted, given variation in the implementation of the empowerment evaluation case examples reviewed. Likewise, Patton (2005) stated those same cases failed to document empowerment evaluation accomplishing its intended and hoped-for outcomes (p. 410). In a later piece, Smith (2007) added that evidence of empowerment evaluation effectiveness discussed in those cases was suggestive, not preponderant, and therefore inconclusive. In his closing remarks, Cousins (2005) called for stronger evidence of empowerment evaluation success from actual empirical studies (p. 207). Accordingly, as Lennie (2005) states, efforts to that end must adopt a more critical approach using rigorous methods.

Objectives

Empowerment and self-determination are not done to or for others; rather, social interventionists, in this case, evaluators, create conditions in which empowerment and self-determination are likely to occur. Conceptually, it was thought that fidelity to one of the three empowerment evaluation models' steps (i.e., three-step, ten-step, and five tool) and the presence of empowerment evaluation's process and outcome principles would influence whether, and the extent to which, evaluation participants achieved empowered and self-determined outcomes. However, no prior empirical research indicated that individual and collective empowerment and self-determination would result from the steps implemented and the principles evident during, and resulting from, an empowerment evaluation; research in the form of meta-analyses only hinted at the existence of these relationships. Likewise, no prior research indicated that empowerment and self-determination could be determined from an evaluator's demographic, academic, and professional characteristics. Therefore, four research questions were posed:

1. What was the extent to which evaluators adhered with fidelity to the three-step, ten-step, or five-tool empowerment evaluation models?
2. What was the extent to which empowerment evaluation process principles (i.e., community ownership, inclusion, democratic participation, community knowledge, evidence-based strategies, and accountability) were evident during empowerment evaluations?
3. What was the extent to which empowerment evaluation outcome principles (i.e., improvement, organizational learning, social justice, and capacity building) resulted from empowerment evaluations?
4. To what extent could variation in empowerment and self-determination be explained by: a) interaction between empowerment evaluation model fidelity and percentage of model steps implemented; b) the process principles in evidence; c) the resulting outcome principles; and e) evaluator-specific variables?

RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

This minimal risk, single-phase, quantitative survey research study followed Claremont Graduate University's Institutional Review Board's Definition of Minimal Risk Research, and was considered exempt from review based on HHS regulations, 45 CFR, Part 46.101 (b)(2) and (b)(3) for the protection of human participants. Specifically, research on individual or group characteristics or behavior including, but not limited to: research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. The online Survey on Empowerment Evaluation Practice, Principles, and Outcomes (SEEPPO) developed as the first and only known measure of empowerment evaluation processes, principles, and outcomes consisted of 92

Likert-type and open-ended items grouped into nine sections. The 29 items in section one asked evaluators to report the specific empowerment evaluation steps they implemented during their most recent empowerment evaluation. Section two, consisting of 12 items, asked evaluators to report on the evaluation-related behaviors of those with whom they directly worked specific to empowerment evaluation model step implementation. Section three's five items asked evaluators to report on changes in the evaluation-related values of those with whom they worked by comparing values observed at the evaluation's beginning to those observed at the evaluation's natural completion. The 16 items in section four asked evaluators to report on changes observed in the evaluation-related behaviors of those with whom they worked in terms of their empowerment (i.e., evaluation knowledge, evaluation skills, evaluation capacities, and evaluation self-efficacy) and self-determination (i.e., evaluation competence, evaluation autonomy, and relatedness to others during the evaluation) by comparing behaviors at the evaluation's beginning to those observed at the evaluation's natural completion. In section five, 14 items asked about changes observed within the organizations with which evaluators worked by comparing organizational capacities (e.g., protecting its funding, conducting evaluations, meeting accountability requirements, etc.) at the evaluation's beginning to those observed at the evaluation's natural completion. The single item in section six asked whether those individuals within the organization who wanted full engagement in the evaluation were included at the level and intensity they desired. The two items in section seven asked evaluators to report on who they were accountable to during the evaluation (e.g., those with whom they directly worked or the general public).The item in section eight asked evaluators to report on the evaluation model they used (e.g., the three-step model, the ten-step model, the five-tool model, a combination of different models, or an empowering model not necessarily called empowerment evaluation) based on the steps of the model(s) implemented. The 12 items in section nine asked evaluators to provide demographic information (e.g., country they are from and country in which they conduct most of their empowerment evaluations), report on their professional evaluation practice, academic preparation, and professional characteristics.

SEEPPO item development was based on: 1) constructs found in the literature regarding the three empowerment evaluation models, the ten empowerment evaluation principles, and the purported empowerment and self-determination outcomes for empowerment evaluation participants; and 2) theoretical constructs found in the community and humanistic psychology literature regarding empowerment and self-determination respectively. The survey underwent two content validations, one each by empowerment evaluation experts at Michigan State University who coauthored the study upon which this study was based (see Miller, 2005; Miller & Campbell, 2006). Comments were incorporated into the final survey which underwent further beta testing with colleagues ahead of sending the link to evaluators. The survey response burden was, on average, 17 minutes. Confidentiality was ensured through Surveygizmo's SSL secure 256-bit encryption function that protected sensitive data as it moved along communication pathways between respondents' computers and Surveygizmo servers (see Granello & Wheaton, 2004). Data was secured in a password-protected laptop and individual data was assigned a unique identifier.

Sampling was non-probabilistic, purposive, and independent of probability theory's rationale given uncertainty in the number of evaluators who conduct empowerment evaluations (Sudman & Blair, 1999). The sole criterion for inclusion was an evaluator having conducted an empowerment or empowering evaluation (i.e., it may have been an empowerment evaluation by definition but not necessarily called an empowerment evaluation) within the past five years. A no less important consideration behind the sampling strategy was to increase the likelihood of obtaining a large enough sample size to ensure a response rate in which statistical power would be greater than .80. Ostensibly, a sample size between 58 and 74 per research question would have been sufficient to run the regression analyses and achieve the power benchmark. With a large sample size and power of .80 or higher, if there was an effect size greater than .20, it would likely have been detectable at the $p < .05$ level. With regression analysis as one of the analytical strategies for this study, the rule of thumb for obtaining a sample size adequate enough to determine a gross index explaining variation is the following formula: $N > 50 + 8(k$ number of predictors). Because this study used between one and 10 predictor variables, it was estimated that no less

than 130 study participants would have been required to run the regression analysis as part of the analytical strategy. In regression the ratio of sample size to number of predictors needs to be kept small so the analysis is not capitalizing on chance. An initial sample of 232 evaluators likely to have conducted empowerment evaluations was obtained through the American Evaluation Association's Collaborative, Participatory, and Empowerment Evaluation Topical Interest Group's moderator, from the evaluation literature including conference presentations, and snowball sampling. The sampling frame was considered complete at 615 evaluators after reconciling names and contact information. Dillman's (2000) four-step process guided survey implementation with further guidance offered by Cook, Heath, and Thompson (2000) regarding factors increasing survey response rates. One week after the call for empowerment evaluators was posted the study was launched by: 1) directly contacting evaluators through email, Linkedin's InMail, and Facebook messaging; and 2) diffusely via American Evaluation Association eGroups; Listservs; and Linkedin, Yahoo, and Facebook evaluation-specific groups. A letter of invitation (i.e., study's purpose; its novelty and salience in evaluation research; it's importance for individuals, organizations, and communities; its risks and intended benefits; its voluntary, confidential, and anonymous nature; the Institutional Review Board's minimal risk finding; and Surveygizmo link) was either sent directly to evaluators or posted online. This process was repeated three more times over one month, resulting in 521 respondents.

Given 131 of 521 respondents, after following very specific rules for data cleaning, provided usable data the response rate was considered 25%. Of the 99 (76%) evaluators who reported demographic, academic, and professional characteristics, a majority were English speaking (58.3%), White non-Hispanic (59.8%), and female (67%) who, on average, worked in the field of evaluation for 15 years and had been conducting empowerment evaluations for 11 years. A slim majority (52%) lived and conducted empowerment evaluations in a North American country, nearly 20% lived and conducted empowerment evaluations in an African country, and the remainder was broadly diffused. Many held a terminal (48.5%) or master's degree (38.4%), the two most prominent majors were in social science (46.8%) and public health (12.8%). The three most frequently reported primary professions were monitoring and evaluation (27.4%), research (17.9%), and academia (12.6%). Last, the three most common areas of professional expertise were monitoring, evaluation, and research (21.1%); development or social justice (12.6% respectively); and action or community-based research, health, and social science (11.6% respectively).

After data cleaning and determining which data was usable, the SEEPPO instrument was parsed into seven scales and their respective subscales according to the research question they answered thereby capturing the full range of steps and principles evaluators either engaged in (i.e., steps) or attended to (i.e., principles). Subsequently, scales, subscales, and the SEEPPO's internal consistency were estimated using Cronbach's alpha (a). Given 131 respondents, these statistics provided a sense of scale reliability without conducting a full factor analysis due to data limitations; a greater than .70 indicated a scale or subscale had acceptable internal consistency. Scales, subscales, and their reliability coefficients included: a scale for three combined empowerment evaluation models (a = .910) and one subscale each for the ten-step (a = .857), five-tool (a = .813), and three-step (a = .694) models; (b) a scale for the six combined empowerment evaluation process principles (a = .892) and one subscale each for the community ownership (a = .810), democratic participation (a = .694), and community knowledge (a = .800) process principles [given one item each for the inclusiveness and evidence-based strategies process principle subscales reliability was not calculated; the accountability process principle subscale had a low a (.502) and Pearson Correlation (r = .361) because the scale was constructed from only two survey items]; (c) a scale for the four combined empowerment evaluation outcome principles (a = .952) and one subscale each for the improvement (a = .871), organizational learning, (a = .851), and social justice (a = .938) outcome principles (given only one item for the capacity building subscale reliability was not calculated); (d) a scale for individual empowerment constructed from evaluation knowledge, evaluation capacity, evaluation skills, and evaluation self-efficacy items (a = .880); (e) a scale for individual self-determination constructed from evaluation competence, evaluation autonomy, and relatedness items (a = .893); and (f) a scale for organizational (i.e., collective) empowerment and self-determination constructed from evaluation self-efficacy and evaluation competence items (a = .943). Beyond reliability, it is clear

that a validation study of SEEPO is necessary to determine if it is a viable tool for measuring empowerment evaluation outcomes. The reliability statistics do, however, indicate its validity potential.

For this study, the evaluator was the unit of analysis based on Miller and Campbell's (2006) systematic examination of 47 empowerment evaluations which looked at evaluator adherence to empowerment evaluation principles and the extent to which empowered outcomes were attained. Although evaluators were unique cases they were aggregated to answer the research questions. The first three research questions were exploratory so analyses used descriptive statistics and several indices (explained below) to determine: 1) the extent to which evaluators adhered with fidelity to the steps of the empowerment model implemented, 2) the extent to which the empowerment evaluation process principles were evident, and 3) the extent to which the outcome principles resulted from the evaluations reported on. These data would subsequently be added into the regression models to answer the fourth research question.

Model fidelity was estimated as the number of steps within a given model evaluators reported implementing. The least complicated measure of fidelity was computing individuals' mean Likert-scaled scores for each of the seven, three-step model items; for each ten, ten-step model items; and for each of the seven, five-tool model items to create an average fidelity score index. Creating the index, without guidance from the literature given silence on empowerment evaluation model fidelity, likewise on its measure, was done by counting the number of items responded to by each individual, adding together each individual's item scores, and dividing the total score by the number of items created for each model. Dummy variables were created for each individual: a one was assigned if the average individual score was greater than three and a zero was assigned if the average individual score was three or less. As a rule, an average score over three indicated an evaluator's inclination towards the agreement end of the scale (i.e., model fidelity) and an average score of three or less indicated inclination towards the neutral to disagreement end of the scale (i.e., no model fidelity); one represented model fidelity and zero represented no fidelity. For example, an evaluator chose two fours (i.e., "agree"), one three (i.e., "neither disagree nor agree), two twos (i.e., "disagree"), and two ones (i.e., "strongly disagree") as responses to the seven three-step model items for an average score of 2.43 (i.e., 17 total points divided by seven items); the score, less than three, indicated no fidelity to the three-step model. A simple calculation was then performed to determine the percentage of individuals across all evaluators who adhered with fidelity to the model.

Evidence of the empowerment evaluation process and outcome principles referred to the number of principles (and their respective components) evaluators reported observing or engaging in. The least complicated measure of principal evidence was computing average individual Likert-scaled scores for each of the six process principles, likewise for each of the four outcome principles to create an average evidence score index. Again, without guidance from the literature, given silence on the concept of process and outcome principle evidence, likewise on its measure, the index was created by counting the number of items responded to by each individual, adding together that individual's item scores, and dividing the total score by a number of items. Dummy variables were created for each individual: a one assigned if the average individual score was greater than three and zero assigned if the average individual score was three or less. As a rule, an average individual score greater than three indicated an evaluator's inclination towards the agreement end of the scale (i.e., evidence of principles) and an average score of three or less indicated inclination towards the neutral to disagreement end of the scale (i.e., no evidence of principles). Therefore, a one represented principal evidence and a zero represented no principal evidence. For example, an evaluator chose: four fives (i.e., "strongly agree"), three fours (i.e., "agree"), one three (i.e., "neither disagree nor agree), two twos (i.e., "disagree") and a one (i.e., "strongly disagree") as responses to the community ownership process principle items for an average score of 3.64, (i.e., 40 total points divided by eleven items); the score, greater than three, indicated evidence of the community ownership process principle. A simple calculation was then performed to determine the percentage of evaluators reporting evidence of a principle.

The data used to answer research question four, based in part on the results of research questions one-three as noted above, was analyzed using linear regression to determine the extent to which variation in

the four empowerment sub-constructs, overall empowerment construct, three self-determination sub-constructs, individual self-determination construct, and organizational empowerment and self-determination construct could be explained by: 1) interaction between empowerment evaluation model fidelity and percent of steps within each model implemented; 2) evidence of process principles; 3) evidence of outcome principles; and 4) evaluator characteristics. The empowerment construct and sub-constructs, self-determination construct and sub-construct, and the organizational empowerment and self-determination constructs were the dependent variables. The interaction between model fidelity and percentage of steps implemented; the process principles; the outcome principles; and the evaluator characteristics that correlated highest with the dependent variables were used as independent variables and entered stepwise into each model. Because SEEPPO comprised Likert-scale items, indices were obtained for dependent and independent variables across all evaluators. The beta weight (i.e., b weight) associated with each factor in each domain was used as reference to determine the relative importance of constructs. The r square values generated from each equation registering the relative importance of the contribution of factors from each domain were compared and error components estimated for each model.

RESULTS

Descriptive analysis techniques were used to determine: 1) empowerment evaluation models implemented; 2) extent of fidelity to the three empowerment evaluation models; 3) evidence of the process principles; 4) evidence of the outcome principles; and regression analysis was used to determine 5) the extent to which variation in empowerment and self-determination was explained by: (a) model fidelity and percentage of steps implemented; (b) evidence of the six process principles; (c) evidence of the four outcome principles; and (d) evaluator characteristics.

Empowerment Evaluation Models Implemented

Ninety-six percent of evaluators (n = 126) implemented a combination of the three-step, ten-step, and five-tool models. The remaining ~4% implemented a combination of the three-step and ten-step models, a combination of the three-step and five-tool models, and separately, the three-step or five-tool models.

Research Question One: Empowerment Evaluation Model Fidelity

Most evaluators adhered with fidelity to a three-step, ten-step, or five-tool model whether implemented separately or in combination. Specifically, a majority (92.2%, n = 119) of evaluators who implemented the three-step model adhered with fidelity to its steps, indicating they helped evaluation participants: 1) establish a mission statement for their program; 2) assess the current state of their program at the evaluation's beginning; 3) specify their program's goals as they planned for its future; 4) specify their strategies to achieve their program's goals; 5) specify credible evidence they wanted to collect as they planned for their program's future; 6) use evaluation tools to determine whether their strategies were working; and 7) do a second assessment of the state of their program at evaluation's end and comparing the results to the first assessment. Likewise, a majority of evaluators (90.6%, n = 115) who implemented the ten-step model, adhered with fidelity to its steps, indicating they helped evaluation participants: 1) conduct a program needs and resource assessment; 2) specify their program's target population; 3) specify desired outcomes for their program's target population; 4) determine how they would incorporate evidence-based best practices into their program; 5) determine how their program fit with similar other programs; 6) determine capacities needed to put a quality program in place; 7) determine how they would implement their program; 8) determine how to assess program quality; 9) determine how to incorporate continuous quality improvement strategies into their program; and 10) determine how to sustain and institutionalize their program if successful. Last, a majority of evaluators (79.7%, n = 102) who implemented the five-tool model adhered with fidelity to its steps, indicating they helped evaluation participants: 1) collect their program evidence; 2) establish a "culture of evidence" within their program; 3) justify individual positions program performance; 4) establish a cycle of reflection and activity within their program; and 5) cultivate a community of learners within their program; evaluators did not,

however, help programs designate a "critical friend" to communicate how they might improve their program or facilitate discussions about collected data.

Research Question Two: Process Principles in Evidence

The average evidence score index indicated that most evaluators reported evidence of the community ownership, inclusiveness, democratic participation, community knowledge, evidence-based strategies, and accountability empowerment evaluation process principles. Specifically, a majority of evaluators (93.8%, n = 120) reported evidence of the community ownership process principle, indicating they created an evaluation context in which evaluation participants: 1) took full ownership of the evaluation; 2) decided the evaluation's purpose; 3) decided the evaluation's design; 4) decided evaluation implementation; 5) decided how they would use evaluation findings; 6) used evaluation findings for programmatic decision-making; 7) used evaluation findings for program improvement; 8) used evaluation findings to influence policy; 9) reviewed their program's results; 10) used evaluation findings to refine their program; and 11) collectively made decisions about the evaluation. Most evaluators (74.2%, n = 72) reported that the inclusiveness process principle was evident, indicating everyone who, if they wanted to be, was fully engaged in the evaluation. A majority of evaluators (82.5%, n = 94) reported the democratic participation process principle was evident, indicating evaluation participants: 1) valued deliberation processes with other program members; 2) valued processes emphasizing authentic collaboration with other program members; and 3) ensured transparency of the evaluation process. Likewise, a majority of evaluators (79.3%, n = 92) reported the community knowledge process principle was evident, indicating the collective wisdom of evaluation participants was reflected in: 1) tools they developed for the evaluation; 2) evaluation procedures; 3) evaluation findings dissemination strategy; 4) data interpretation; and 5) use of evaluation findings. Most evaluators (74.2%, n = 72) reported that the evidence-based strategies process principle was evident, indicating that participants engaged with data-based evaluation evidence. Last, a majority of evaluators (70.2%, n = 66) reported the accountability process principle was evident, indicating evaluators felt they were accountable to both evaluation participants and the general public.

Research Question Three: Outcome Principles Evidence

The average evidence score index indicated a majority of evaluators reported evidence of the improvement, organizational learning, social justice, and capacity building empowerment evaluation outcome principles. Specifically, a majority of evaluators (90.5%, n = 95) reported the improvement outcome principle was evident, indicating evaluation participants: 1) used evaluation skills for program improvement; 2) used evaluation knowledge for program improvement; 3) improved their interpersonal communication skills; 4) improved their interpersonal collaboration skills; 5) valued making program improvements; 6) saw value in evaluation; and 7) valued using evaluation findings for improvement. A majority of evaluators (85.9%, n = 85) reported the organizational learning outcome principle was evident, indicating evaluation participants: 1) became part of a community of learners; 2) were involved in a cycle of reflection and activity; and 3) routinely reflected on how their program was conducted. Further, the organizations for which evaluators worked: 1) changed their culture for the better, and 2) were better able to use evaluation as a tool for organizational learning. A majority of evaluators (86.2%, n = 81) reported the social justice outcome principle was evident, indicating organizations for which they worked were better able to: 1) meet accountability requirements; 2) obtain a more equitable share of resources; 3) bring in more resources; 4) obtain greater opportunities; 5) influence public policy; 6) increase their funding; 7) protect their funding; 8) ameliorate social inequalities for target populations; 9) create valuable opportunities for target populations; 10) help their target population make important decisions; and 11) have greater bargaining power. Last, a slight majority of evaluators (57.7%, n = 56) reported the capacity building outcome principle was evident, indicating organizations for which evaluators worked were better able to routinely carry out their own evaluation steps, and evaluation participants were better able to teach others evaluation skills.

Research Question Four: Variation in Empowerment and Self-Determination

In explaining variation in empowerment and self-determination by model fidelity, a significant F statistic at the $p < .05$ level indicated model fidelity and the percentage of steps implemented across models ($F_{2, 94} = 4.158$; $p = .019$) were good fits for the data and able to explain variation in evaluation capacity as an indicator of empowerment. Likewise, the unstandardized β Coefficients indicated that for every unit of positive change in model fidelity the 3.51 increase in evaluation capacity was significant ($t = 2.493$; $p = .014$) at the $p < .05$ level showing a main effect for model fidelity.

In explaining variation in empowerment and self-determination by the process principles, significant F statistics at the $p < .05$ level indicated the inclusion process principle ($F_{1, 71} = 4.068$; $p = .047$) and community knowledge process principle ($F_{1, 87} = 4.126$; $p = .045$) were good fits for the data and able to explain variation in evaluation knowledge as an indicator of empowerment. The unstandardized β Coefficients indicated that for every unit of positive change in the inclusion process principle the 1.32 decrease in evaluation knowledge was significant ($t = 2.017$; $p = .047$) at the $p < .05$ level and for every unit of positive change in the community knowledge process principle the .42 decrease in evaluation knowledge was significant ($t = 2.031$; $p = .045$) at the $p < .05$ level. The inclusion process principle alone explained variation in and would likely have significantly increased evaluation capacity as an indicator of empowerment, individual empowerment, and evaluation competence as an indicator of self-determination. The R Squared statistics revealed 8.2% of variation was explained by the inclusion process principle and a significant F statistic at the $p < .05$ level indicated the inclusion process principle ($F_{1, 71} = 6.310$; $p = .014$) was a good fit for the data and able to explain variation in evaluation capacity as an indicator of empowerment. The unstandardized β Coefficients indicated that for every unit of positive change in the inclusion process principle the 2.13 decrease in evaluation capacity was significant ($t = 2.512$; $p = .014$) at the $p < .05$ level. The R Squared statistics revealed 5.7% of variation was explained by the inclusion process principle and a significant F statistic at the $p < .05$ level indicated the inclusion process principle ($F_{1, 72} = 4.317$; $p = .041$) was a good fit for the data and able to explain variation in individual empowerment. The unstandardized β Coefficients indicated that for every unit of positive change in the inclusion process principle the 1.71 decrease in empowerment was significant ($t = 2.078$; $p = .041$) at the $p < .05$ level. The R Squared statistics revealed 5.9% of variation was explained by the inclusion process principle and a significant F statistic at the $p < .05$ level indicated the inclusion process principle ($F_{1, 72} = 4.552$; $p = .036$) was a good fit for the data and able to explain variation in evaluation competence as an indicator of self-determination. The unstandardized β Coefficients indicated that for every unit of positive change in the inclusion process principle the 1.76 decrease in evaluation competence was significant ($t = 2.134$; $p = .036$) at the $p < .05$ level. Last, the improvement, organizational learning, social justice, capacity building, and four combined outcome empowerment evaluation principles could not explain variation in any of the empowerment and self-determination constructs and sub-constructs, individual or organizational.

Evaluators' demographic, academic, and professional characteristics explained variation in evaluation knowledge, individual empowerment, evaluation competence, evaluation autonomy, and relatedness to others. The R Squared statistic revealed 28.3% of variation in evaluation knowledge was explained by evaluator characteristics, and a significant F statistic ($F_{10, 56} = 2.241$; $p = .030$) at the $p < .05$ level likewise indicated evaluator characteristics were a good fit for the data and able to explain variation in evaluation knowledge as an indicator of empowerment. The unstandardized β Coefficients indicated evaluation knowledge was significantly higher ($t = 2.090$; $p = .041$) at the $p < .05$ level when empowerment evaluations were conducted in Africa. The R Squared statistic revealed 34.8% of variation in individual empowerment was explained by evaluator characteristics, and a significant F statistic ($F_{10, 53} = 2.829$; $p = .007$) at the $p < .05$ level likewise indicated evaluator characteristics were a good fit for the data and able to explain variation in individual empowerment. The unstandardized β Coefficients indicated empowerment was significantly higher ($t = 2.343$; $p = .023$) at the $p < .05$ level when empowerment evaluations were conducted in Africa. The R Squared statistic revealed 29.7% of variation in evaluation competence was explained by evaluator characteristics, and a significant F

statistic ($F_{10, 56}$ = 2.369; p = .020) at the p < .05 level likewise indicated evaluator characteristics were a good fit for the data and able to explain variation in evaluation competence as an indicator or self-determination. The unstandardized β Coefficients indicated evaluation competence was significantly higher (t = 2.407; p = .019) at the p < .05 level when empowerment evaluations were conducted in Africa. The R Squared statistic revealed 29.9% of variation in evaluation autonomy was explained by evaluator characteristics, and a significant F statistic ($F_{10, 56}$ = 2.390; p = .019) at the p < .05 level likewise indicated evaluator characteristics were a good fit for the data and able to explain variation in evaluation autonomy as an indicator of self-determination. The unstandardized β Coefficients indicated evaluation autonomy was significantly higher (t = 2.121; p = .038) at the p < .05 level when empowerment evaluations were conducted in Africa. Last, the R Squared statistic revealed 38.5% of variation in relatedness was explained by evaluator characteristics, and a significant F statistic ($F_{10, 51}$ = 3.188; p = .003) at the p < .05 level likewise indicated evaluator characteristics were a good fit for the data and able to explain variation in relatedness as an indicator of self-determination. The unstandardized β Coefficients indicated relatedness was significantly higher (t = 2.306; p = .025) at the p < .05 level when empowerment evaluations were, again, conducted in Africa.

Last, no significant variation was found when the independent variables were entered into the regression models in which organizational and self-determination were the dependent variables. Model fidelity; the process principles in evidence; the outcome principles in evidence; and the interaction between model fidelity and percentage of steps implemented, process principles, outcome principles, and evaluator characteristics had no effect at an organizational level on building the evaluation capacity, evaluation skills, evaluation knowledge, and evaluation self-efficacy as indicators of empowerment, and relatedness, autonomy, and evaluation competencies as indicators of self-determination. Plausible reasons are explored below in the limitations section.

DISCUSSION

Findings suggested that most evaluators implemented the three-step, ten-step, and five-tool empowerment evaluation models and their respective steps with fidelity. Notably, model fidelity and percentage of steps implemented were able to explain variation in evaluation capacity. If empowerment evaluation models were adhered to with fidelity and evaluators made a concerted effort to build the evaluation capacity of evaluation participants then increases in evaluation capacity, as one aspect of individual empowerment, were a plausible outcome. The specific steps across the three models likely to have increased evaluation capacity would have included working with evaluation participants to: (a) assess the current state of their program at the evaluation's beginning (three-step, step two); (b) specify the credible evidence to collect as they planned for their program's future (three-step, step three); (c) use evaluation tools to determine whether their strategies were working (three-step, step three); (d) determine how to assess their program's quality (10-step, step eight); (e) determine how continuous quality improvement strategies would be incorporated into their program (10-step, step nine); (f) collect their own evidence about their program (five-tool, tool one); (g) designate a critical friend to facilitate discussions about data they collected (five-tool, tool two); and (h) establish a culture of evidence within their program (five-tool, tool three). As this was the first empirical study on empowerment evaluation hence no previous measures of empowerment evaluation model implementation and fidelity to same there were no comparative findings in the extant literature.

The inclusiveness process principle explained variation in and would likely have increased evaluation knowledge, evaluation capacity, and individual empowerment. To Vanderplaat (1995), evaluations emphasizing group participation and mutual support recognize a communicative dimension to social change. Not only do empowerment evaluators solicit evaluation participants, but they continually ensure participants feel included throughout the evaluation's process. Because the evaluator communicates about evaluation design and methods, and collaborates with participants to impart evaluation knowledge, and build evaluation capacities and competencies, an individual's feelings of inclusion may translate into

stronger motivation to develop knowledge about evaluation and the capacities and competencies necessary to conduct their own evaluations (Goodman, 2000, 2001).

The outcome principles could not explain variation in and would likely not have increased the empowerment and self-determination sub-constructs and constructs. Outcome principles are synonymous with the empowerment and self-determination sub-constructs and constructs, but apparently only emerge in the latter phases of an empowerment evaluation. Having attained evaluation skills and an ability to use them for a complex and specific purpose likely means an individual has already achieved a modicum of empowerment (i.e., evaluation skills and self-efficacy) and self-determination (i.e., competence). At the organizational level, the organizational learning outcome principle as operationalized in this study indicated to evaluators that organizations in which they worked were better able to use evaluation as a tool for organizational learning. Arguably, being able to use evaluation, regardless of purpose, speaks to the empowerment outcome of self-efficacy and the self-determination outcome of competence but at a collective level.

The ten evaluator demographic, academic, and professional characteristics entered separately into the regression model highly correlated with the empowerment and self-determination sub-constructs and constructs explaining variation in evaluation knowledge, individual empowerment, evaluation competence, evaluation autonomy, and relatedness. However, empowerment evaluations conducted in Africa likely increased empowerment and self-determination the most. One plausible explanation is that those with whom evaluators worked in Africa were likely eager to embrace the liberating effects of empowerment evaluation given the international development community's unwillingness to foster the empowerment and self-determination of indigenous peoples through evaluation (and by extension, monitoring) endeavors in which they would likely play a significant role (Power, Maury, & Maury, 2002). As Fetterman stated in 1996 as empowerment evaluation was emerging as an evaluation approach, local people no longer tolerate the limited role of outside experts; rather, they seek more participation, collaboration, and empowerment. The findings reflect, regardless of model implemented or evaluator characteristics, indigenous Africans seem to want to increase their knowledge about evaluation, develop competencies necessary to conduct evaluation, develop their ability to take full ownership of all evaluation decision making, and do so as a collective with coaching from the empowerment evaluator in contrast to the international development zeitgeist as it relates to monitoring and evaluation. Green et al. (1995), as confirmed by Dakubo (2004), and Macaulay and Nutting (2006) found that collective engagement and participation in a community-based research process such as empowerment evaluation was critical in ensuring community members were co-leaders and full partners in responding to community health concerns through strengthening the communities problem-solving capacity. This type of process incorporated indigenous community knowledge, built on existing community strengths and resources, and integrated the knowledge gained with actions to improve community health through an empowering process. Culturally, in many African societies collective work and relationships are important. Therefore it was not surprising that those with whom evaluators in this study worked felt a certain level of relatedness to others so fully engaged in the evaluations reported on. Credence is given to this idea given that relatedness was lower when empowerment evaluations were reportedly conducted in non-African countries.

Recommendations

Three primary recommendations came from this study regarding empowerment evaluation models likely to foster empowerment and self-determination, principles that have a role in empowerment and self-determination, and future empowerment evaluation research. First, implementing empowerment evaluation model steps with fidelity and attending to the inclusion process principle are important factors in increasing evaluation capacity as an indicator of empowerment. Therefore evaluators should ensure everyone who wants to be fully engaged in the evaluation is included, and those included are able to build evaluation capacity by specifying program goals as they plan for the future of their program (three-step, step three); specifying strategies to achieve program goals (three-step, step three); specifying credible evidence to collect as they plan for the future of their program (three-step, step three); specifying desired

outcomes for their program's target population (10-step, step three); determining how to incorporate evidence-based best practices into their program (10-step, step four); determining how their program fits with similar other programs (10-step, step five); determine capacities needed to put a quality program in place (10-step, step six); determining how they will carry out their program (10-step, step seven); establishing a culture of evidence within their program (five-tool, tool three); justifying individual positions about the performance of their program (five-tool, tool three); and designating a critical friend who will facilitate discussions about collected data and communicate how they might improve their program (five-tool, tool two). Second, attending to the community knowledge and inclusion process principles appear to be important factors in increasing evaluation knowledge as an indicator of empowerment. Specifically, evaluators should ensure everyone who wants to fully engage in the empowerment evaluation can do so and that those engaged can use their collective wisdom to develop evaluation tools, evaluation procedures, and dissemination strategies for evaluation findings; interpret data; and use evaluation findings to their ends. It appears that of the six process principles, inclusion is one of the most important to attend to as it not only increases evaluation capacity and knowledge, but also increases overall individual empowerment and evaluation competence. Last, five future lines of inquiry are recommended: 1) measuring the empowerment and self-determination of empowerment evaluation participants before, during, and post-evaluation; 2) developing and validating, or adapting instrumentation to measure the empowerment and self-determination of empowerment evaluation participants at the three prescribed intervals; 3) creating and testing a theory of change model showing the likely pathways from: model steps to the process and outcome principles, to individual empowerment, individual self-determination, and organizational empowerment and self-determination; 4) testing the relationship between the empowerment evaluation models and both types of empowerment evaluation principles; and 5) figuring out a better way to operationalize organizational empowerment and self-determination then examining their relationship to the independent variables used in this study.

Strengths

In terms of strengths, this was the first study addressing the many criticisms of empowerment evaluation to: 1) determine which steps of the three empowerment evaluation models were applied in practice; 2) operationalize the steps of the three empowerment evaluation models; 3) define empowerment evaluation model fidelity, develop a model fidelity index, and measure model fidelity to determine how closely evaluators adhered to the steps of the models implemented; 4) operationalize empowerment evaluation process and outcome principles, develop an index for determining evidence of the principles, and determine whether principles were evident during and resulting from the empowerment evaluations reported on; 5) adapt the theoretical sub-constructs and constructs of empowerment and self-determination theory to empowerment evaluation; and 6) explain variation in empowerment and self-determination by empowerment evaluation model fidelity, evidence of the empowerment evaluation principles, and evaluators' demographic, academic, and professional characteristics. Equally important, this study answered Lennie's 2005 clarion call to adopt a more critical approach using rigorous methods to address concerns about empowerment evaluation's implementation and outcomes.

Limitations

Three plausible limitations to this study included threats to construct validity, survey error, and social desirability bias. Threats to construct validity likely included inadequate preoperational explication of constructs (e.g., empowerment, self-determination, empowerment evaluation models and principles), and restricted generalizability across those constructs (Perry & Backus, 1995); adequate understanding of the constructs is always necessary if valid outcome measures are to be selected. For example, the organizational empowerment and self-determination constructs were each expressed by the same 13 outcome principle items and collapsed into a single construct. Several potentially erroneous assumptions were made in creating the construct. First, collective empowerment and self-determination represent similar, if not equal, concepts. Second, the outcome principle items were the best representation of

collective empowerment and self-determination. Last, the knowledge, capacity, and skills empowerment sub-constructs, autonomy, and relatedness self-determination sub-constructs could not be operationalized for a collective of individuals.

Survey error would likely have resulted from issues in coverage, sampling, non-response, and measurement (Dillman, 2000). A source of coverage error could have resulted from inaccuracies in the lists of evaluators compiled for the sampling frame as lists may have contained evaluators who should not have been sampled based on the inclusion criteria. Somewhat disconcerting was a lack of information about how those lists were maintained and updated, and whether they contained correct names and email addresses. Sampling error likely resulted from only collecting data from a subset rather than everyone in the sampling frame due mainly to feasibility constraints (e.g., time and budget). It wasn't unreasonable to think that all sampled evaluators would respond to SEEPPO even with adherence to Dillman's four contacts precept. Nonresponse error could have been attributable to flaws in the sampling strategy as indicated by inaccuracies in the sampling frame leading to noncontacts, survey access issues due to technology challenges, or English as second language. Survey fatigue was also a potential source of error as the frequency of missing data increased as respondents progressed through the 92-item survey, especially for items after the empowerment evaluation models (~item 80). Sources of measurement error could have included: misinterpretation of the instructions; difficulty retrieving relevant information; reading comprehension if English was the second language; the influence of preceding questions; miss clicking a response choice within Surveygizmo, or encountering online technical difficulties.

Last, according to Nederhof (1985), social desirability bias results from self-deception and other-deception. Self-deception would have occurred if respondents believed a statement to be true even though it was inaccurate. In this study, self-deception was the likely source of bias for two reasons: 1) survey items asked evaluators to only report on socially desirable behaviors so any response greater than three would have shown them in a more favorable light, and 2) given the purported importance of the study to the evaluation and organizational fields, evaluators wanted to report they created conditions necessary to foster evaluation participant empowerment and self-determination.

CONCLUSIONS

This study attempted to determine whether individual and organizational empowerment and self-determination were likely outcomes of empowerment evaluations reported on by131 evaluators provided models were implemented with fidelity, empowerment evaluation principles were evident, and evaluators had certain characteristics. Five conclusions are drawn. First, findings indicated, taking potential limitations into account, individual empowerment and self-determination were the likely outcomes of the evaluations reported on with model fidelity, the inclusiveness and community knowledge process principles, and evaluator characteristics appearing to explain some of the variation in empowerment and self-determination (i.e., if an evaluator implements with fidelity all the steps of any of the three empowerment evaluation models, includes evaluation participants, encourages participants to use their collective wisdom in conducting the evaluation, and has certain characteristics then individual empowerment and self-determination are a likely result of the evaluation, findings notwithstanding). Second, findings support Wandersman et al.'s (2005) contention that evidence of all ten principles in combination (i.e., process and outcome) distinguishes empowerment evaluation from its cousin evaluation approaches both conceptually and in practice; given evidence of all ten principles, the evaluations reported on were, by definition, empowerment evaluations. Third, evaluators adhered with fidelity to the steps of models implemented without privileging one model over another by choosing steps across all three models; this reflects case studies regarding empowerment evaluation implementation (Cousins, 2005). Fourth, evaluators' personal, academic, and professional characteristics did not fully factor into the empowerment of individuals and organizations. However, evaluation knowledge, individual empowerment, and all three individual self-determination sub-constructs (i.e., competence, autonomy, and relatedness) appeared to correlate with empowerment evaluations conducted by female evaluators living and working in Africa. Last, SEEPPO was a successful first attempt at providing a practical tool for

empowerment evaluators interested in assessing the processes and outcomes of their work, less so actual empowerment and self-determination. Notably, use of SEEPPO to collect quantitative data was a departure from the qualitative case studies found in the literature, but as noted, significant validation work needs to be done.

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