Stephen Fawcett Transcript

A former VISTA volunteer, he worked as a community organizer in public housing and low income neighborhoods in the United States. In his work he uses behavior science and community development methods to help understand and improve conditions that affect population health and health equity. Dr. Fawcett is co-author of nearly two hundred articles and book chapters and several books in the areas of health promotion, participatory research, capacity building, and community based research and intervention. He is co-developer of the Community Toolbox. Penny Foster-Fishman isn't here; started working with her on a project, she said "Do you know the Community Toolbox?", I said no. She said, "Go and read it" and so here it is, so I did my job. Those of you who are not familiar with this—but probably everybody here is—you should be familiar with it.

A former scholar in residence at the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, he served as a member of the IOM's Board on Population Health and Public Health Practice. A former visiting scholar at the World Health Organization, he serves as a member of the World Health Organization expert panel on health promotions. Dr. Fawcett is fellow of divisions twenty five and twenty seven of the American Psychological Association. And in 1997 he received a Distinguished Contributions to Practice Award from division twenty seven. Please welcome Stephen Fawcett.

Thank you very much. It is a particular pleasure to be here at a time when a friend and a colleague is being honored. I think we can, we come to know a people by how we honor each other. And to see, in this case, the occasion for which Bill's being honored; this university community engagement is a particularly sweet time to be present. So I am delighted to be here. I'm going to offer a bit of a reflection on this work from knowledge to impact. We've seen—and I have admired for years; I'd say Bill is much older than I am, but that's a lie. We're pretty much the same cohort—but have admired for years this extraordinary story. It is rare to see an innovation like this refined in practice with guidance and feedback and then sustained. It is such a rare thing to see that happen and a joy to help celebrate it.

So what I want to do is sort of step back and offer a reflection on knowledge to impact. We heard an impact story, we heard a story of knowledge to impact and what some of the stepping stones might be in what we all know to be a rocky path. So that's what I'd like to offer as an opportunity. This award, the regional recipient of which is the team is present today, has some interesting language in it. I was really fascinated. What's it's doing is reminding us that the core functions of university in the top part of learning, discovery, and engagement, it's saying that these are functions, these are the how of what we do. And there's the why portion of a mission statement like this that I think is equally intriguing. I think we would say that this work, I'm not sure that I would have chosen the terms "sympathetically engaged", but if we mean by that being in synch with need and concern we would, I think, agree that this is a wonderful exemplar. The productively part, I suspect Bill and team insisted upon. That is they would offer evidence that it had impacts at all these levels, all these ecological levels.

It is a beautiful exemplar, and it's a treat to reflect on it with you. Other people have named this work, and we should recognize the "mash-up" in web terms of this, right? We're mashing up ideas in a piece of work like this. And there are at least two streams, probably a third as well, that Ernest Boyer talked about—the former president of the Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching—and this notion of scholarship of discovery with its focus on

understanding is something that they academy is used to revering. What Boyer was trying to do was to lift up the scholarship of application and suggest that this also was virtuous, that this was a good thing, that applying knowledge was a good thing and he was trying to make the case that this mattered. He didn't name a scholarship of engagement, but clearly you have been about it here.

In the essence of the first two is understanding and improvement, the essence of the third is relationship. What flows through those relationships, and that's what I'd like to encourage a reflection on. And I'll do it through a window that is meaningful to me: work that comes out of public health and health promotion. As a little bit of an analogous angle in thinking about this together to suggest the complimentarity of that additional discipline and its perspective and its interest to those represented here. But the focal point will be on some stepping stones from knowledge to impact and I'll name four of them, pause on them, and pose some questions that I hope will invite us to recommit to this work individually as well, and hence the aim to consider, so what does it mean to be an engaged scholar? How are we doing, what else is left to do? How can we build on this fine example?

The context I'll talk about is the work that we've been doing at our center. We were designated six years or so ago now as a W.H.O. collaborating center, all cache and no cash, like most of these things. It means you have relationships, it means you have relationships with people that are smarter than you. When I played hockey you wanted to play against people that were smarter than you, better than you at that game. The only way to get better was for that to happen. And it's true I think, in this game as well, we're looking to find students, colleagues brighter than us who can help advance the work. They shaped us into two things, essentially they said, you know if you are going to do this, shape your objectives around expanding the evidence base for the work, and the work I'll talk about in a moment; the work of health promotion. And secondly it's got to be about building capacity. Work force is enormous, it extends well beyond universities and we need to figure out it is everyone; the work creating conditions under which health and well being happen for everyone is everybody's work. So building capacity and extending the evidence base ought to be the focal points. It is clearly represented in the work that was described here.

I'll offer another angle in. First a definition, this is W.H.O's definition from a U.N. document some years ago, but doesn't it look familiar? We could put on, we could put it goes beyond prevention, surely, right? And the treatment, prevention, promotion stretch we're really looking at creating the conditions under which health and well being occur for everyone. We recognize the justice dimension of this, the equity dimension of this. We also appreciate it's about environment. It's about ensuring the outcomes under which better outcomes in health and development happen for all of us. Big, important work; work that people need to redefine periodically.

I was privileged to be at a meeting, and this is a picture of the opening session, three weeks ago in Nairobi when the seventh, every four years whatever that is, the quadrennial gathering of people who are renaming, reframing this field. In my experience that didn't happen very often, it didn't happen very often in psychology and other places where people come together—six hundred folks—to essentially rename and reframe what the work is about. I had to opportunity to help facilitate one of the tracks on community empowerment with some other folks and it was a marvelous time when people were literally making this area and the other areas a social construction and the deep meaning of that. In our time and in our context, what does this

look like? We can chat about some of the interesting debates that people engaged in and the ways in which people around the world might define that.

So when we ask what this work of health promotion looks like, it's often helpful to have a framework. I like this iterative one, I like the fact, I like this particular frame. It's one that the Institute of Medicine used in its Future Public Health in the 21st Century in the chapter on community. This looks pretty familiar, does it not? Let's take the example Bill just treated us to, I'm not sure this is showing up. So at nine o'clock: improvement in population-level outcomes. The recidivism rate data that Bill presented from your collective work represents outcome at the population-level. It is a rare thing to be tracking that and to be showing some achievement in movement. We know that moving counterclockwise to affect population-level behavior like that you've got to affect the behavior of a lot of people. And in this initiative we saw the behavior not only of the individual suspects' youth, but the behavior of those who were responsible for them and who resume responsibility for them: the students, the community members, those we might have contacted them through the judicial system. That involves changing communities and systems. This program is a community change, no question about it. And you had to create the conditions under which this could happen effectively by making adjustments that you commented about at all those levels. We know this work starts at twelve o'clock with assessment, trying to get a sense of the level of the problem, of the situation, engaging people in planning, taking action, implementing what are now evidence based—then were practice informed—data shaped innovations. They evolved over a long period of time to produce this. So it's a game we're all pretty familiar with, are we not? But it's a long run game and to be in this game, to stay in this game effectively—at least in my experience—we have to do things that allow us to stay in the game.

A colleague of ours, Gary Gunderson, you may know from the Carter Center, the Interfaith Program at the Carter Center. Gary used to talk about when you engage in a big edacious, harry goal like the one that we just heard about, you have to be a "behag" as some like to call him. You have to be; figure out how you keep from getting wet, right? What are the stepping stones in that pond to keep us from getting wet, to keep us from falling in and getting chewed up by alligators, right? And so we, I think were witness to that and I want to expiate a few of those stepping stones.

They start, not surprisingly, in an engagement context with connecting; this is the first stepping stone. This is the thing we do at the beginning; it is the things that allows us to join. We typically do that on a values base, we're there because we share in on a concern. We are joined; we are in solidarity with people in a place, that's how it begins. And it always starts in relationships. This is a colleague of ours from the African Institute for Health Development in Nairobi. And Mary Nyamongo is an absolutely astounding person on the World Health Organization scene and in the informal settlements in Nairobi. She is at home at W.H.O in Geneva and at home in informal settlements in and around Nairobi. She also is the grounding for what I hope will be some collaborative work together. It is absolutely implausible that a gringo like me, and others in our team who were outside the African context could possible contribute functionally. We have to have teachers, we have to have guides. And similarly there is the hope that there are things that are useful in that connection like the connections that Bill articulated.

We appreciate their fancy terms for this now. We didn't talk about; I mean Malcolm Gladwell's book wasn't out yet. We hadn't talked about connectors or their function; nor was Putman's work. But when we appreciate the role as connectors we are strengthening social ties. I mean our first responsibility is to do no harm in our engagements and my bet is each of us has

done harm in our engagements. We have to be open to the experience of what happens when that harm gets done and the feedback loops are so critical in this. We also have to build bridges across groups. Putman has taught us that the rarest form of social capital is not the bonding kind, not the connecting, but the bridging kind. The things that connect across groups, so how resources flow, how money resources flow across our systems is part of what we do, it's part of our job to enable that to happen; to construct—and literally to reconstruct when they're broken—those bridges. Everyone in this room has done that. We now call it social capital, we call it bananas, but it's the stuff that happens when we build those bridges.

So let's pause on this connecting piece and I take this to be each of our work. It seems to me when we connect it always starts with discernment. I am an Irish Catholic kid, I think about discernment as what happens when we construct a vocation. And when we do it's when something feels right to us, seems right to those who care about us, right? When those things are joined, we're inline, we've got something. And it starts by joining what issues that matter to us, what are the things that outrage us, what are the things that get us up, get us wondering, get us moving? And what are the groups that are most affected by those things, that's where we start, that is the basis. And then we have to ask ourselves, how is it we are going to be able to be fruitfully engaged? Which whom do we have to connect to make that happen? I think that's how it starts. I think that's why the service learning dimension—before it had a name, that's been a part of this project for thirty some years—is part of what's so critical here. I think it's how people discover what it is that moves them. I want more of that, I want less of that. It's that warmer, colder dimension that is so critical.

Seeing is the next piece. When I reflect on seeing and thinking about this as the next step because it's; we need the connections to give us the guides, the Mary Nyamongo of the world to see, right? We are absolutely lost without the guides. We can't see a damn; we don't know what we're looking at, we don't know what's happening. And each of us have so many examples of this, that without our guides we are lost. I love this quote from Annie Dillard's book, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek;* it reminds us what the essence of seeing is. And she was talking about walking along a creek bed, and what you see in the patches of color, but I think it's true for us too. That seeing is very much a matter of verbalization, it's what we can put words to, right? What we can put measures to in a scientific sense? It's what I call attention to, bring attention to our eyes, without that we don't see it. That's what those measures where about, those measures were not the ones Bill taught us, those were not the measure that you started with, they were largely without use; they didn't have function in advancing the innovation. Measures are discovered, they're selected for when audiences care about things and you try to figure out how to name them and make them visible. Because what we do when we see, it's a matter of focusing attention, right?

And our responsibility, I think, is to focus attention in two ways. Usually we talk about one of them as scientists, let's talk about the other one as well. We focus attention on what is and what ought to be, right? That's our job, our two-fold job is to focus attention on what is, what ought to be, and the gap. That's what we're doing, always, right? We're noting the gap. And when we do our assessments, when we do our measurements, always we're focusing attention on what is. We have a responsibility in much more of our qualitative organizer way; it's the essence of macro practice in social work. Each discipline has its own frame for this where our job becomes to also help people envision what could be, what should be, what's possible in the place. That's what organizers do; they can name it, right, in a way that people find credible. And all of a sudden it seems possible and plausible to be able to make those things happen.

Our job, and this is what I like about the joining of these is, if we couple these then we might start out with some measures when we're engaged in what things are and then what they ought to be and then the gap between them, we're constantly being asked the critical thinking question of what success would look like. And that informs our measures, right? So vision articulates what ought to be, how it is we'll know it is the question addressed by the second question and that leads us back. This then plays out in whatever our framework is. And so we are constantly measuring, assessing, and moving our way through the usual spots assessment, but we're also measuring process. They're a lot of process measures in what Bill described: implementation of evidence based approaches. You were concerned about the fidelity of what was being put into play as it was emerging and what form it took and so on, as well as the other logical spots in which we saw it.

So when we reflect on seeing, it seems to me we've got a couple of things to consider. One of them is; and it starts, I think, with what we want to see. And this, and this starts with who we are connected to in spirit and in solidarity, as our Latin American colleagues would want us to say, right? Who are we connected to, and who, where do we as what's good enough for our kids in this context? So what is, what ought to be? And then if we realize what would things look like and how would we know, that brings us back to what it is we measure. So it's that joining of organization process with measurement and science that I think is part of what sets up discovery and application.

When Boyer talked about this, he talked about these as distinct forms of scholarship, and that indeed they are separable. We wouldn't separate them, though. It's wrong-headed to separate them, we'd say that that which we discover in the purist sense—Bill made reference and illusion to this earlier—wouldn't we discover things under the rarified conditions, I think is the term he used. Under rarified conditions it has no external validity. We may demonstrate the purist cause and effect relationships, but if they're not in contexts that are like the contexts in which they would ultimately be applied, they have so much less value. NIH is just beginning to get its head around, "gee oh we need to balance external validity with internal validity". Cause and effect is really important for us to understand. But if we don't understand this contextually, we don't have knowledge that's worth applying; that can be applied in a useful way.

So one of the things that I think most interests me, of the relatively new naming and framing of wine in new bottles is community based participatory research. And it's as if NIH and our colleagues have just discovered this, they've been around for a while, Kurt had a clue as to this--people will reform, right—had a clue as to what this is. But it is a radical idea in that it is now coming out of NIH is really interesting. I can give you a story about that later if you like. But this notion of involving community and scientific partners in shared responsibilities for sharing and understanding effects is a radical framing. I'll suggest that in a moment. It is the joining of experiential, as Bill put it earlier, and specialized knowledge. We tend to suggest that these are in one place or another. If our universities were set up better we'd have more experiential knowledge inside, if communities were set up in our relationships better there'd be more specialized knowledge outside, so it's not where this resides. But the shift from power over to power with is the radical idea. And here's how I think it plays out.

I won't go into the details of this for time, but think about what, starting at twelve o'clock, this team has done over the years. It's called adolescent diversion, the naming and framing of adolescent diversion. Not because youth named it that, right, or parents named it that, the funding agent I'm sure had a role in suggesting in the context the system you were trying to effect, that was a relevant naming and framing for what that issue was about. If others gathered

to do it, it might get named and framed differently. We're familiar with this game, right, but we've come around this from developing a logic model of how we're going to get from here to there. We name and frame research questions, we document the intervention and its affects, we try to make sense of the data, we use it to inform and celebrate. Coming at nine o'clock in reverse, the handoff to community, "here's our findings good luck to you putting it in play" has been the norm. The truth, right, that has been the norm. So the idea of power sharing or power abdogacation for communities is the normative practice, right, "you've got our knowledge do your best", right? And that day is suggested is over, our responsibility continues in this innovation diffusion model that we've seen articulated so clearly.

The making sense of data together, this is much rarer. Whose job it is to give meaning to what it is we've been seeing. We're the ones who discern statistical significance. The discernment of social significance, the value added, whether the impact is enough, whether it's good enough, that's a judgment we have to make with our colleagues, right, in community, in context, right? That power sharing is not prevalent, that's a struggle. And then come on back up to research questions. Who gets to name those? Typically those who fund us in our studies get to name those, it's a rare exception that a granting agency—and NIH is just cracking the door on this—to let the naming and framing happen in context with community after you get the money. Good luck selling that one; we've not been really successful in that. You have to have a pretty good idea of what the questions are going to look like if people are going to buy in. The power sharing is hardly complete. What I mean to suggest by this is only, what a radical idea. And it's going to be up to the next generations to run with it I think, to make it more real.

Ultimately—this is a couple of colleagues at that same meeting—this discovery application is a social construction. It is what we do together; it is what we do in community that will make the meaning and application more probable. Because these three bullets, I think, are the stuff we do. What are we seeing, what does it mean, what are the implications for adjustments? That's the stuff we do when we do systematic reflection, right? And it is our job to figure out how to do that better with our partners. It's also the case that the first three aren't enough. That if the game is knowledge to impact, and not knowledge to fusion—which has been the game, that's the game that pays off—the production of knowledge and it's reporting in scholarly journals is the payoff in the academy, right? If you're connected and you see things and are moved to discover and apply, then you've got to keep moving in this game. And it ultimately comes to building capacity.

So I want to reflect on that for a minute through this notion, that building capacity is a big job. I mean it's a big job because it means the ability of people to do things across time for sure, it's got a durability to mention to it, and then across concerns. Because the idea is that the community would be able to construct—after you're done with this engagement—they'd be able to construct the next thing in response to the next goal., right? And there's scant evidence that our engagements have yielded this. That the capacity through our engagements together have yielded generalized ability to solve the next problem. We're not accumulating that evidence in the way that we would hope we might. So what I'll describe is that with humility is a foray into that, that was alluded to because it gives a window into the challenges of it, not because it's a solution, but because it gives a window into the challenges of it.

We began with some colleagues around the country and now in other parts of the world fifteen years ago with Bill Berkowitz, many of you know him from psychology, and now many many partners from this field and others building this thing called Toolbox. It was a crazy idea, the notion was that if we had a box of tools—this was 1994—if these tools for how you give

personal testimony, or how you're affected by an issue, how you organize and engage people in meetings, yada yada yada, if that could just be freely available publically forever people could download it get just in time, print it etc. And if it could be their perpetuity, that was the notion.

What it lead us to discover—and this is a construction now, after the fact—is who goes to such a thing. Capacity of whom, who shows up for community building tools? And now fifteen years later there's typically a million user sessions a year, fifteen minutes apiece, lots of people over the years, you get a sense of who's showing up. And clearly it's people from governmental, nongovernmental organizations, NGOs, CBOs, all kinds of stuff from around, and we'll talk about that in a moment. And then the question is what are they showing up for? This turned out to be hardly as easy—we started out with kind of an encyclopedia and then distilling metatools of what are core competencies, what does it take? So we started looking through the lens of community development, public health, what we could make of commeriazation practice from Jack Rothman and other colleagues' work, development etc. And this is not an unfamiliar list, I don't think. Interestingly it gets rarified periodically in credentialing. There's a group, Galway Consensus Net in Health Promotion, an international group, they named about a dozen of those in essence. Grant writing is irrelevant in some contexts. But you know you get many of these things you know you really have to build partnerships, you really need to assess the situation, you really analyze the problem, etc.

So these are the kinds of things that people seem to need to know. They have taught us that what they want from resources is these things, and not always the same things. The people who show up for something like this usually don't have access to universities. Very often they are in a biot in Latin America or in the United States, or they're in a reservation, a tribal community, they are in a health ministry in some part of the world, whatever. They may not have a library, so they would love to have access to things to learn key skills. They also want guidance on how to solve problems. They would like to know what you would ask of a situation; to do a situation assessment as an expert for the common kinds of situations that go wrong in their place. They love to get guidance from people like us. Especially not so much what to do, but how to do it in my circumstance, when to do it, what's happening to me and what should I do in my circumstance. And they typically want access to things when they need it, just in time stuff. Not the workshop, not the class, not the degree, just in time access. That's humbling for people who spend ninety percent of our time teaching in classrooms; it's humbling to get this kind of guidance about the proportion of our time that isn't necessarily helpful.

So we started out building this thing that responded to those. So the table of contents is learn a skill, right? It's an encyclopedic look at here's the three hundred; it's now seven thousand pages, so it's a fairly large entity. But do the work is the sixteen core competencies. You click on one of those and you get more, it's the web benefit. You click on one of those, you want to learn about what our evaluations say you can then reach in and get an ask analysis for an evaluation plan and then reach in for tools on how you develop a mission statement and identify stakeholders and what their interests are, etc, etc. with the assumption that not everybody knows how to do this stuff. We try to name competencies for which there was a consequence; that was our goal. If somebody is asking you to develop an evaluation plan or a sustainability plan or an assessment, then probably there are continuances on learning those things which means there's a bigger audience than the students that we can force to learn them because they are in the syllabus. That was the logic. It was pretty much that crude.

This was the first thing, and it was the troubleshooting guide. So you click on one of about thirteen. This was a construction with a lot of people, Bill I don't know if we asked you

about his, I bet we did. To construct, to name common problems that occur in community work. There are about thirteen, fourteen of them. And you click on one of them like "not enough action to promote change" and then the left hand column is the kind of questions that people ask when they do a situation assessment on the assumption that that's rare to have in the place, in the time to have somebody who can facilitate a discussion of the situation; an assessment of the situation is rare. So that's been useful. They ask an adviser; we were chatting about it earlier, Bill Berkowitz, one of the members of this team based in Massachusetts. Bill is all over, he has made a career of being, he's just a gem of a person and the sweetest man I know. Bill was all about, how can we create a space where anyone in the world can ask a question and receive advice from people who have some experience and some knowledge? And he created this system—and I don't know if Michigan State has been part of this rotation yet, I hope you all do this—where teams of community psychologist mostly and maybe some people in public health basically agree to affect the questions that come in for a three month period, and it's in rotation. I don't know how; Bill makes it work, Bill makes it work. And so it moves around, and you all might want to take a turn doing this at some point. And then the questions, the answers get archived as an emerging knowledge base from the field. What people want to know, and they get archived.

One of the things that's apparent and I am going to bring this to a close, is you look at the; we've looked now since '94 at so who's using it and what proportion are domestic and international? With the rise in the internet, a little bit of lag, parallels and now clearly a third of the users are outside the US. And we get a lot of appeals, "Could this be in Spanish?". And so we embarked on; it's seven thousand pages so frankly it takes a lot. And like cultural adaptation for Spanish, it's now all of this summer, now it's all in Spanish and it checks out. And now it's undergirding other curricula, like the health motion curricula that PAHO—Pan American Health Organization—has designed. For the Americas the undergirding curriculum for this is the toolbox because it exists and a lot of this stuff doesn't, at least not for free.

Our aspiration, and this is where I want to bring it more broadly and we hope to start on Arabic soon. But I want to shift. I want to come back: Capacity Building in a Global Community. And this is all of us, right? This isn't the toolbox, this is all of us. What do we do to assure contextually appropriate knowledge that people could access and avail themselves and contribute to? The common well, I think, is a lovely analogy for this because it's not just what people take, it's what people leave. And so the innovations that emerge for how one does advocacy in Thailand cannot be the same as how we try to do it in our communities, it cannot be the same. The forms of resistance you'd expect would be different, at least in their form, in their typology if not their kind, right, to take one example.

And so one aspiration in Google Translation. Do you all use the Google Translation button? I love it, I love it, it's not bad, it's not bad. There was a student aspiration to have this toolbox in Hindi and a student who speaks Hindi was in my office two days ago and was saying "not bad". You know just using Google Translation Engine, fairly good. I want to reflect on this then take us out.

The reflection on capacity building, and bringing us back to our joint responsibility, is collectively I think we need to sort out; and we don't; whose work is this? To sort out what it is people need to be able to do to create the conditions under which health and development happen for all of us. That is not any one of our discipline's work, it must be just by the introductions there must be half a dozen disciplines, at least, in the room. We know it's not the province of any one of our disciplines, it's sure not the province of any of those of us in any of our institutions, nor in any of our countries, right? So how do we create that and how do we assure access to

supports for that as a collective, because we can do that now. It's too easy to make this information sharable. And so how do we reconnect? That's a dangling "g" for reasons I don't understand, so if you are looking for the sort of mythology of that I can't take you there.

But I want to come back to connecting because I think; and this I want to conclude with this. We can imagine a world where engagement of community and scientific partners and discovery and application—we saw a beautiful example of that today—you have among you in the work you're all doing this project and the other projects you are constructing, lovely examples of this. How do we assure access to, enable access to free just in time resources for these emerging evidence and practice based innovations that are coming out from your work and from those of others? And maybe the hardest of all, how do we connect across our institutions? I think we're doing better in our university-community connections than we are in our university to university ones. The continuances do not support the latter very well. And Bill was saying at lunch, "This is the first time you've been here?", and yeah it really is just as a couple of years ago was the first time he set foot in our campus I think. And that's crazy. So how do we do this in light of the communications technology's advances that we have? So leave that as a shared challenge for us and we can have some discussion if you wish.

Thank you.