

OPENING REMARKS

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On behalf of the Philippine Sociological Society, I should like to welcome you all to this Seminar on Evaluation Research. If you will allow me, what I should like to do in these brief opening remarks apart from welcoming you is to outline a few random ideas that I feel are important in discussing the nature and importance of evaluative research.

Evaluation is an integral component of planning. Conventional planning manuals do not fail to mention that when you set up a program, you must always provide certain structures and mechanisms for monitoring what you are doing and assessing what you are accomplishing. Evaluation Research is the term that we use to designate the procedures for collecting the data and analyzing these so that we may arrive at some concrete picture of the status of an on-going program.

The basic dilemma of evaluation research, to my mind, is in deciding what criteria to use in evaluating a project. Are we to use standard indicators of technical efficiency? If so, then the types of questions we ask are like the following: Are people doing what they are supposed to be doing? Are target dates being met? Is the project keeping within its budget? And so forth. Or, are we to use standards of technical effectiveness? In which case, the questions we ask are: Are program goals being met? Were the services intended to be delivered actually delivered, and were they delivered to the right people? Most evaluative studies pay attention to both classes of questions. Others go beyond

these; the questions they ask are normative in tone. In other words, the intention is to apply a set of value criteria that clearly transcends the specific and narrowly articulated objectives of a given program. For instance, they ask: Does the program enlist people's participation? Does it benefit the poor majority? Does it respond to some felt needs of a community? And so on. In the present order of things, this last type of questions tends to be asked by international assistance agencies through the independent evaluating consultants that they hire.

There can be no doubt that the adoption of transcendent value criteria in assessing programs represents a tremendous gain, especially for communities who are the objects of development programs. However, I believe there is room for widening the scope of desirable criteria.

To illustrate: One can see a shift in perspective here — it is a shift from the narrowly defined objectives of an intervening agency to what one would call the necessities of a community's collective rationality. From seeing a program's qualities in terms of an agency's instrumental objectives, we are asked to consider the program's costs and benefits in terms of the community's set of values or in terms of some conception of a desirable state of affairs.

There are new dangers that a conscientious evaluative researcher confronts here.

Every evaluation is a form of cost-benefit analysis where your criteria for determining costs and benefits are derived from a consideration of the actual options open to a community. Where you are dealing with a deprived

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and underdeveloped community with no real options other than perhaps a radical revolution, evaluation may tend to make you see only the benefits and be systematically blind to the actual pain and opportunity costs of a program. The reason for this I believe is that much evaluation research even of the most socially conscientious kind follows the model for market analysis.

The market is seen as offering a set of opportunities resulting from the free interplay of effective demand and supply. The community is represented as choosing from a range of options, and proceeding to weigh the wisdom of the choice by comparing actual benefits with actual costs and opportunities given up. But look at the typical Filipino rural community or the Metro Manila slum community and ask if the national community in which they participate is a free market, and if they have any real options in this market. The fact is any intervention program — even if it amounts sometimes to a poisoning of the environment — any development program is preferable to the prospect of immobility and extinction. A people-oriented evaluator can stop here and accept these constraints as natural facts of life. He will keep hoping that things will get better, and think that meanwhile there is this program that appears to address some concrete need. That is all very well, I think. Except that there are genuine questions waiting

to be answered. I would like to conclude these remarks by suggesting these to the researcher.

Every community is part of a larger society: its options are necessarily circumscribed by the choices of the larger society. But the larger society is also only a component of an even larger community — the global community administered by the advanced countries. Can evaluation continue to ignore these realities?

More concretely, let me put it in the form of an illustration. Villanueva in Misamis Oriental is a community, and it is part of Philippine society. The lives of its people are now being affected negatively or positively by an act of the Philippine government — in this case, the decision to accommodate a Japanese sintering plant. Now this is represented to us as a component of our integrated national development program. Any development program, however, whether on the small community level or on the national level, is, to use Peter Berger's term, a "calculus of pain." It is worth asking, I think, how the pain is allocated and how the distribution of the comforts is computed.

More directly, we should inquire before anything else: In what ways has the calculus of pain been rigged by class and imperialist interests?

Thank you.