

The social scientist thus faces a dilemma; the possible social consequences of research on a minority community must surely weigh on her conscience. She must be accurate, but ideologically she is committed to conclusions which promote social justice. Those are some of the elements of importance to ethnic minorities implicit in a consideration of ethics and social science research, the subject of Elisabeth J. Johnson's paper.

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Notes

¹ J.A. Barnes. *The Ethics of Inquiry in Social Science*. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1977) 48.

² Irving Louis Horowitz, ed. *The Rise and Fall of Project Camelot*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967).

³ Joan W. Moore. "Political and Ethical Problems in a Large Scale Study of a Minority Population." Gideon Sjoberg, ed. *Ethics, Politics, and Social Research*: (Cambridge: Schenkman. 1967), 225-44.

Critique

Johnson's paper contains four assumptions which deserve further attention, especially in the context of ethnic minorities. These four assumptions are both obvious and at the root of the ethical problems: 1) Minorities need services; 2) services are to be provided by the dominant group; 3) the providing of services must be evaluated for cost-effectiveness; and 4) the evaluators are more likely to come from the dominant group than the minority group and hence be more powerful than those being evaluated. This, then, leads to the basic problem addressed by Johnson: How can this evaluation process occur such that the rights and privileges of the minority are protected? Phrased another way, how can this process occur without the dominant group using its power over the minority group?

Johnson notes, I think correctly, that the ethical problems arise because of the politics of providing and evaluating services, and there is no easy, all-purpose solution. Thus, Johnson suggests that within the existing power structure the evaluators, whenever possible and feasible, give those being evaluated a bit more power: informed

consent, participation in the decision making, etc. She acknowledges, however, that such attempts will only be partly successful. One cannot evaluate another and also protect fully the other's rights and privileges.

A rather radical but straightforward solution to these problems would be to give minorities power. If a group has power it can no longer be called a "minority" group, it would not need special services, there would be no dominant group to supply such services, and if evaluations were needed the group could evaluate itself (as, for example, is done in the U.S. Senate or at any university).

Unfortunately, dominant groups attempt to retain their power; they do not give it away. Unless a revolution occurs there will continue to be minority groups who will need and want services, the providers of such services will demand that they be provided in a cost-effective manner, evaluation will occur, and ethical problems will remain.

Another solution would be to change the focus of evaluation research. Specifically, evaluation researchers might evaluate the more powerful, dominant group instead of the victims of power abuse. The evaluators might consider some of the following questions: What is it that dominant groups do that leads to ethnic minorities needing services? How effective would various changes in laws, institutions, and communication networks be in alleviating a minority group's need for special services? Such research would evaluate the source of the problem rather than their manifestations: it would seek to cure the disease rather than temporarily reduce the symptoms.

Essentially, I am suggesting that evaluation researchers, working as they now do for the dominant group, cannot overcome the ethical problems inherent in evaluation research. It is worthy to try to minimize them, as Johnson suggests, but they will remain as long as a dominant group and a minority group exist. Perhaps the most effective solution would be for evaluation researchers to work for the minority group in their study of the dominant group. Of course, there would be no funding for such research, and ethical problems would remain, but these ethical problems would be possessed by the power holders who, after all, caused the problem.

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