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Framing a Program Evaluation Study

Sociological Practice and the Generalized Empirical Method

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A FALSE DICHOTOMY?

✚ Basic vs. Applied Sociology

The “Cultures of Inquiry” (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998)

- Quantitative behavioral science research (Basic?)
- Theoretical research (Basic?)
- Historical-comparative research (Basic?)
- Ethnographic research (Basic?)
- Phenomenological research (Basic?)
- Hermeneutical research (Basic?)
- Critical social science research (Applied?)
- Action research (Applied?)
- Evaluation research (Applied?)

✚ Toward an Integrative Method of Sociological Practice

Does not the applied presuppose the basic?

Is a “fusion of horizons” (Gadamer, 1960) possible?

Is a “fusion of horizons” desirable?

Lonergan’s integrative approach: Cognitive operations as cumulative

LONERGAN'S GENERALIZED EMPIRICAL METHOD (G.E.M.)

✚ The First Cognitive Operation: Be Attentive

The empirical level of consciousness

Reliance on the senses, direct observation

What is yielded: "Data"

✚ The Second Cognitive Operation: Be Intelligent

The search for understanding

Asking questions, generating insights

The descriptive level of consciousness (Organizing, classifying the data)

The explanatory level of consciousness (Accounting for the data)

✚ The Third Cognitive Operation: Be Reasonable

Juxtaposing "analytical frameworks" in relation to "representations" (Ragin and Amoroso, 2010)

Arriving at a working analytical framework

✚ The Fourth Cognitive Operation: Be Responsible

Truth community (Habermas, 1982) makes a judgment of value (Are the representations as accounted for by the analytical framework desirable or in egregious violation of community standards?)

Identifying "action" steps

Monitoring the effectiveness of action steps

APPLYING THE G.E.M. TO A PROGRAM EVALUATION

✚ The Program to be Evaluated

Halfway house for pregnant women

Religiously-based program

✚ “Testing” an Integrated Analytical Framework

Drawing on Systems and Exchange Model (Bredemeier, Parsons, Kuhn, Giddens, Mead, Powers, Latour, etc.) to collect and organize data in setting

Utilizing an ethnographic design, including in-depth interviews to study “error” (Powers, 1974) and map social networks

✚ Sharing Findings with Program Leadership and Stakeholders

Facilitating a process in which a judgment of value is made

Facilitating a process in which action steps are identified

Developing a process for ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of action steps

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