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ABSTRACT

Program portrayal is one way of addressing the need for increased descriptive capability in evaluation research. Portrayal supplements traditional reporting by utilizing subjective, anecdotal, or impressionistic information, in an appropriately communicable form, to enrich the description of program transactions, settings, and outcomes. It is distinguished by a sensitivity to unusual effects and atypical results and is primarily concerned with program transactions. Portrayal is more than description: it is expected to be dynamic, creating a new reality or surrogate experience which allows audiences to obtain exposure to and understanding of program transactions. In this paper, excerpts from recent examples of program portrayals are used to illustrate the characteristics of this technique: participation of the evaluator; expectations; unobtrusive design; use of contextural description to stimulate reflection, empathy, and understanding; and attention to action, chronology, and stage setting. The implications of portrayal as a personal reporting style are also discussed. (BW)

PORTRAYAL AS A WAY OF ADDRESSING PROBLEMS IN COMMUNICATING EVALUATION FINDINGS*

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The evaluation of educational programs has in recent years been altered appreciably by changes in the informational needs of funding and administrative agencies. These changes, often the result of changes in the locus of control, have led to increased interest in the description of educational programs and associated transactions. Funding agencies, now often hundreds or thousands of miles from program activities, seek understanding of program transactions. Distance inhibits knowing what the program is.

Program participants have often joined in the call for improved descriptive power in evaluative research. Past evaluation efforts have often left participants perplexed. Participants have been confused by discrepancies between program transactions as they experienced them, and the representation of these transactions as presented by the expert. As consumers of evaluation reports, program particpants need help in resolving the dual image of reality as they have come to know it; and reality as it is represented by experts.

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Traditional reporting techniques have also been criticized for not responding to the differences in criteria of success honored from place to place. While these reports purport to assess the merit of an educational activity, little provision is made for providing validation of evaluative judgments across cultures and over time. Criteria of success vary from place to place and change over time as well. To be valid over time and across cultures evaluation studies require broad and creative approaches. Assigning value to educational activities requires knowledge of both transactions and context. "The assessment of merit"--along the by-line of program evaluation--is now often expected to encompass sensitive descriptive and communicative strategies far beyond previous demands.

In an effort to meet the demands for more and better description, evaluation specialist are turning to other disciplines. They seek old techniques, newly adaptable to evaluation. To date, the primary outcome has been the reshaping of the evaluation process into a more eclectic activity. One addition, particularly attractive to some evaluation specialists, is the conceptual model of ethnographic inquiry.

Several specific strategies have been suggested as alternatives which may generate more precise and complete descriptions of educational programs. One such alternative is evaluation by case study. In a discussion of the aims of case study, Becker (1970) stated that,

> In contrast to the laboratory experiment, which is designed to test one or a few closely related propositions as rigorously and precisely as possible, the case study must be prepared to deal with a great variety of descriptive and theoretical problems. The various phenomena uncovered by the investigator's observations must all be incorporated into his account of the group and then be given theoretical relevance. (pg. 76).

Others (Stake, Smith, MacDonald, Walker) have also explored case study methods as applied in educational settings. As indicated by Becker, these authors suggest that a primary thrust of case study is for breadth of coverage. "The case study. . . proliferates rather than narrows. One is left with more to pay attention to rather than less. The case study attends to the idiosyncratic more than to the pervasive (Stake 1976, pg. 8)." Case study has received more and more attention as evaluation specialists display increased interest in promoting understanding of program transactions.

In their discussion of "grounded theory", Glaser and Strauss(1967) addressed the issue of relating theory and data. Their goal was that of generating theory rather than reporting evaluation results, but their plea for wholistic description fits the evaluator's goal too. In the same vein Denzin (1971) has offered "naturalistic behaviorism," as "the studied commitment to actively enter the worlds of native people and to render those worlds understandable from the standpoint of a theory that is grounded in the behaviors, languages, definitions, attitudes and feelings of those studied." Denzin's work typifies the current challenge for better communication of program transactions.

Campbell (1966) has offered another discussion of linking theory to data. The challenge of pulling together data from observations, interviews, or surveys in order to form a conceptual whole, is addressed through pattern matching. "In the pattern matching of theory to data we reduce the fringe of error as much as possible, we center theory in the data points so that the fringe occurs without systematic deviation from theory, and we distribute the fringe of error over all of the observational points, potentially. . . The 'anchoring' of theory to data has not at all been achieved through a perfect correspondence

at any particular point, but rather through a pattern matching of the two in some over-all way." (Campbell, 1966, pg. 100-101).

In a paper more specifically directed toward evaluation, Parlett and Hamilton (1972) proposed "illuminative" evaluation, an approach which the authors described as belonging to an anthropological research paradigm. In illuminative evaluation "attempted measurement of educational products is abandoned for intensive study of the program as a whole: Its rationale and evolution, its operations and achievements and difficulties." (Parlett & Hamilton 1972, Summary.)

Another form of evaluation, educational connoisseurship and educational criticism, has been suggested by Eisner (1975). In defining this evaluation form, Eisner states that, "The concept of education connoisseurship and education criticism is posited upon a different set of techniques. Connoisseurship is an appreciative art based on an awareness of the qualities of what one encounters and a comprehension of other states against which to contrast it. Criticism is the linguistic disclosure of the encounter (Eisner, 1975, abstract)

Stake (1974) has suggested "Responsive" evaluation. He has described responsive evaluation as "not a new alternative (but). . .what people do naturally in evaluating things. They observe and react." (pg.1) Stake further asserted that "an evaluation is a 'responsive evaluation' if it orients more directly to program activities than to program intents, if it responds to audience requirements for information, and if the different value perspectives present are referred to in reporting the success of the program." (1974 pg. 1.)

Kemmis has synthesized the work of Parlett, Hamilton, and Stake by emphasizing the realities created by evaluation reporting. In

reaction to traditional statistical reporting, Kemmis warned that the "bare skeleton. . . cold and unyielding to the technically inexpert eye. . . does not adequately render the living reality of people, events and issues in day-to-day program operation." (1974, pg. 1.)

Common to each of these writings is a sense of the inadequacy of traditional evaluation methodology. Each author has proposed a more wholistic treatment of the evaluated activity. In addition, each paper lends support for a recently proposed approach to qualitative description: evaluation by portrayal.

This paper explores program portrayal as a way of addressing the need for increased descriptive capability in evaluation reserach. Through comparative analysis, important elements of several evaluation reports are identified. Each of these reports has been labeled as portraying an educational program. The analysis of portrayal is also facilitated by comparison to existing traditions of evaluation reporting.

Elements of the Portrayal Approach

Kemmis (1975) suggested that evaluation has as its primary responsibilities facilitating the "coming to know about" or "making decisions regarding" educational programs and products. Portrayal, with its emphasis on description, is particularly appropriate for addressing these responsibilities. It responds to the need for presentation of evaluative results in an easily communicable style.

Several authors (Parlett, Hamilton, Stake, and Kemmis) have defined key elements in the portrayal approach. Parlett and Hamilton (1972) for example, have extended portrayal to address the numerous relevant parameters which characterize educational situations. They contend that in the more traditional evaluation research, population parameters are parsimoniously described by selecting large random samples for measurement. Traditional methods, by concentrating on quantitative information, "can lead to neglect of other data, perhaps more salient to the innovation, but which is disregarded as being 'subjective', 'anecdotal', or 'impressionistic'." (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972, pg. 7.) Portrayal is expected to supplement traditional reporting by utilizing this information, in an appropriately communicable form, to enrich the description of program transactions, settings, and outcomes.

Portrayal is distinguished by a sensitivity to unusual effects and atypical results. It is to be designed to articulate the concerns of multiple audiences, to be responsive to the range of information needed by audiences, and sensitive to the varying conceptual styles of different groups. As an act of communication, portrayal relies on pluralistic sensitivity for success.

Portrayal is further characterized by a primary concern for the description and/or interpretation of program transactions. Preparing for portrayal, the evaluator will be wholistic in approaching the educational program. Techniques which tend to over-simplify the program are to be avoided. Parlett and Hamilton would describe the program against the backdrop of the "instructional system" or "learning milieu." It is assumed that the program, its setting and constituency combine to formulate a complex interactional system. The evaluator's task is to "unravel it, isolate its significant features, delineate cycles of cause and effect and comprehend relationships between beliefs and practices, and between organizational patterns and responses of individuals." (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972, pg. 16.)

Those who attempt portrayal can be expected to give attention to information gathering at the expense of decision making. Documents, beliefs and practices take precedent over measurements. Ultimately portrayal may aid more in rational decision making. It stimulates knowing the object rather than its measurements. These measurements, unlike experience, are discrete; portrayal, however, attempts to preserve the continuous nature of reality.

Several writers (Stake, Hamilton, MacDonald, and Kemmis) have expected the evaluator to be iterative in his approach, constantly checking and verifying information and perceptions. As the investigation unfolds, problem areas become clearer. The portrayal evaluator builds upon an expanding record of observations. Their main forte is interpretive human insight, implemented through participant observation as well as other naturalistic techniques.

Portrayal is more than simple description. It is expected to be dynamic, creating a new reality or surrogate experience which allows audiences to obtain exposure to and understanding of program transactions.

The portrayal process is evolutionary, for as it grows, it develops; becoming more focused, more descriptive. According to Stake, issue-questions become the core of investigation and are revised and/or replaced as the investigation proceeds. Such questions are "sources of insight for the portrayal maker: they are the foci around which the themes can be stabilized. They have special power because they recognize what participants regard as the key issues or ideas about the program and because (in starting from the concerns of audience members) they provide ways into understanding the program for the portrayal audience." (19 , pg. .)

For Stake (1972b), "What many clients need is a credible, thorough representation of what the program is, including information about who likes what about it. Clients need confirmation of what they know reminders of things they are overlooking, and something in the way of a report to show other people. It is difficult for many clients to perceive the scope and movement of the program. . . If the program glows, the evaluation should reflect some of it. If the program wobbles, the tremor should pass through the evaluation report." (pg. 3)

Though it is yet an infant much is expected of portrayal. The long list of expectations summarized here reflect that clearly. Portrayal is in fact developing as its practitioners obtain more and more experience "representing" educational programs. New modes of expression are being developed to allow the evaluator the flexibility required in

portraying complex educational programs. The portrayal-bound evaluator is charged with responsibility for explicating multiple realities, displaying nuances of behavior, and simultaneously weaving a descriptive reality heretofore seldom delivered in educational evaluation. By building a shared experiential base between author and reader, the portrayal writer seeks to facilitate the resolution of disparate images; to provide surrogate experiences for those too far for intimate involvement; and to honor the varied criteria of success held by evaluation audiences.

Excerpts from Recent Examples of Portrayal

Much of recent discussion regarding the potential and rationale of portrayal argues the superiority of portrayal over more traditional approaches to reporting. These arguments, couched in disapproving statements regarding other approaches, have done much to imply an incompatibility between portrayal and traditional approaches. An analysis of portrayals themselves, however, yields no such incompatibility. A review of existing portrayals demonstrates, that portrayal leads to an increased awareness of and sensitivity to the nature of the evaluated object. Advocates of portrayal need not promise to replace or invalidate traditional approaches; the contribution of portrayal is a real and discrete addition to current evaluation practice. Portrayal, an act of description, analysis, and interpretation is perhaps--it will be seen--most importantly, an act of communication.

Several evaluation reports which "portray" educational programs have been identified by Stake (See appendix A). These works are not a complete display of portrayal, but they represent much of its beginning.

Early portrayal authors have critiqued their work for spontaneity, precision, and validity of inference and observation. The task is a difficult one. Traditional dependence on psychometric methods dies hard. It is true, however, that whereas much has been asked of protrayal, and even more promised, existing works so labeled have made a real and distinguishable contribution to the problem of communicating program transactions. There remains a need for careful delineation of those characteristics of protrayal which provide the basis for its success.

In reviewing several of the works cited by Stake as "portraying" an educational program, numerous styles were observed. Yet, when taken comparatively these portrayals displayed several common characteristics, which provide guidance to the would be portrayal author. Much in the same way that the literary styles of prominent writers influence young developing writers, the descriptive achievements of contemporary portrayal authors are explored here for guidance. Attention is particularly being paid to techniques used to preserve the "real life" qualities of educational programs.

Participation of the Evaluator. In portrayal, the evaluator may choose to be either active or passive, but is always at least a covert participant. Portrayal writers may facilitate the interpretation and/or validation of their work by extending the participant observer role from data collection and analysis into the report writing stage. Functioning as a participant in the report narrative, the evaluator is able to reflect expectations as they developed during program transactions. By painting the author into the images created by the report, the natural skepticism of the reader is put to work in a validation process. The evaluator serves as narrator/recorder, describing program transactions as if they were presented on a studio monitor. Validation is hence advanced because the statements of the evaluator define a "stage presence" with respect to the object portrayed. The portrayal author may move in and out of the activity reported, illustrating which activities he/she has particular knowledge of or experience with. This is accomplished by laying out other elements in a more distant mode of presentation.

Through this continual participation of the evaluator (either as an actor or narrator), the reader is oriented to the evaluator's style, preferred mode of delivery and the relationship of the evaluator to the action.

Jim Schott and Mary Lee Smith have illustrated this technique in a "Participant Observation of Outward Bound." This statement appears as part of an Evaluation of Outward Bound. In the participant observer statement, Jim Schott introduces the reader to the outward bound program, and to himself as a participant narrator. In a section headed "Expectations" the author sets up his participation, elements of the program, and something of his personal perspective as his participant narrator role begins.

Expectations

> The six-hour bus ride from Denver to the San Juan Mountains let our fears and expectations incubate. My own fears centered on the age difference between myself and my fellow Outward Bounders. I guessed that I was twice as old as the rest and wondered if their strength and endurance would surpass mine. The prospect of failing physically and being a social outcast was cheerless. Like the children around me, I knew something of what Outward Bound was supposed to be and to do to me. I was aware of its military origins and the rumored physical danger of the program. There was also the intimation that one would experience the mystical entry into adulthood. Although I had long since entered adulthood, certain aspects of myself raised doubts about the coming 23 days: my fear of heights, my inexperience with competitive situations, my intransigence when pushed. The doubts were repeated mental questions. Would I be left behind? Would I panic half-way up some steep rock face? Would I fall into an adult role, take too much responsibility and be rejected? Would I quit? My confidence was low and my anxiety high. The silence on the bus led me to believe that the others were also ruminating on the experience ahead. We each had our own private visions and nightmares. (Schott and Smith, 1973, pg. 24.)

The evaluator's age, self-concept, and fears are included in this example of stage setting. The reader can then get an idea of the perspective from which the participant observation data is gathered. These points are important as further analysis and description is attempted.

> For several members of the patrol almost every day was spent pushing farther and faster than they thought themselves able. For others, the slow pace taxed their patience rather than their endurance. I was fatherly and solicitous of the slower members so my impatience never showed. The people who urged us to a faster pace on one day might be the one with blisters or a wrenched knee the next. Enduring pain was just as much part of the physical challenge of Outward Bound as was moving faster and farther than one wants to go. We began to experience the physical rewards as well. Physical exertion brought on feelings of exhilaration and well-being. (Schott and Smith 1975, pg. 27.)

In this particular evaluation, the range of experiences held by participants is assumed to vary widely. Each outward bound student comes away with a novel set of experiences and a different evaluation of outward bound's value. Obviously the participant observer cannot change roles repeatedly in an attempt to capture the range of these experiences, but the outward bound report illustrates a broad sampling of these experiences through the eyes of the observer.

> Our patrol was broken up and I became acquainted with six new people. The comfortable niche in the old group was gone and I missed it. The boy who was designated leader immediately repelled me. I believed that the instructors placed him in charge beacuse he was incompetent and needed the experience. He made several crucial mistakes. The others weren't much better. There was Leslie who carried the newspaper clipping of her debutante ball. Jim, a military brat, bragged incessantly about his possessions. He could do nothing with conviction, changing his mind and leading us all off course. Then there was Jerry who, after 20 days of Outward Bound, still had difficulty with maps, stoves, and tents. (Schott and Smith 1975, pg. 38.)

Other portrayal writers have used different mechanisms for illustrating the vantage point held during observation. As illustrated later, field notes may be included in the portrayal to reconstruct events, or photography may be used. Whatever mechanism is employed however, portrayal authors gain much by including themselves as a part of the portrayal report.

Unobtrusive Design. The strategy of portrayal places great emphasis on representing programs completely and accurately. As a result, it is important that the investigation be as non-reactive as possible. There are no control groups; hence the effects of data collection procedures cannot be parcelled out, either in terms of outcomes or process. A portrayal therefore would look closely at events, actors and settings--yet seek some comfortable compromise between rigor of investigation, richness of data, and the problem of interferring with the program being evaluated.

Interference is minimized by using data collected from various sources and through a variety of techniques. Triangulation of data sources and collection strategies increases the confidence which can be placed in data that are independently not as powerful as experimental measures.

In describing data collection methods used in "Uncertainty: Problems in the Wellesley Milieu," Parlett (1975) states that,

> The methods of illuminative research vary with each study, defined by the nature of the problem rather than by adherance to a canon. The Wellesley study entailed small, carefully minuted discussions or interviews with over 80 college members (students, faculty, student services and administrative staff); numerous other informal conversations over coffee, beer, tea, coke, or sherry; visits to residence halls, classes, administrative offices and attendance at a variety of special functions - from registration to graduation. I also became a compulsive collector of college documents - committee memoranda, publications, news bulletins and the like. With over fifty visits to the college campus, over 500 pages of interview notes, and a minor mountain of documents to hand, there has been no shortage of things to write about. (pgs. i-ii.)

Smith, Gabriel, Schott and Padia (1976) combine narrative portrayal and quantitative approachs in their evaluation of the Outward Bound Program. The authors explain:

> Our sense of value is affected by both types of portrayal. As evaluators, we lean toward the quantitative when we are confident that we can anticipate the decisions and the questions that need answers. We lean toward the narrative when our sense of what matters is tenative and evolving. Taken together, the two descriptions of Outward Bound in this evaluation offer the reader a contrast in textures: a tightly woven experiemtnal report to filter out hokum and self-deception; a loosely woven narrative that captures the singular and unmeasurable. (pg. 400)

Stake and Gjerde (1971) used yet another technique to offset the "presumed weakness" of the more subjective portrayal approach. Their report, "features an advocate's report and an adversary's report, summarizing the most favorable arguments in support of the Institute and the other summarizing the most damaging criticism. The reader is left with responsibility of resolving these conflicting arguments." (pg. 2)

Although each of these portrayal authors has used different techniques, the similarity of their choices comes from the principle of maximizing the power of data through utilization of multiple sources and collection techniques rather than simply relying on experimental controls and post hoc statistical manipulations.

Use of contextural description to stimulate reflection, empathy, and understanding. All evaluation reports are obligated to attempt, the identification of important contextural elements. Understanding the program requires knowing something of the constraints, rewards and pressures under which program transactions occur. The reporting activity may involve the description of schedules, setting, primary actors, weather, time of day or any other element of possible importance to program transactions. It may involve impressionistic, factual or photographic representation of context, but it serves to anchor the analysis, to establish the "bounded case".

The writer may wish the boundary of this case to be the result of negotiation between writer and audience. Through preliminary presentation

of his/her interpretations, to program personnel, the portrayal may be injected with reality, or at least first order, primary interpretations of reality. By being iterative and involving participants, they share responsibility for validating the narrative and interpretations included therein.

In providing a surrogate experience, portrayal data beckons the reader to become actively engaged with the transactions. Metaphorical style, attention to specifics, and full description each serve to elicit responses in the reader, similar to those experienced by participants. Such activity on the part of the reader heightens empathy and understanding.

In "Education, Technology and the Rural Highlands," an evaluation of computer assisted learning program, Smith and Pohland utilized field notes to relate specific actions and preserve "reality" in the evaluation report. Their field notes for 10/24 read:

> Midway through the morning I happened to notice three boys working on the terminals. They made an effort to start together, and it was a real contest. It should be noted that the three boys were not on the same lesson. Nevertheless, there was a great deal of competition to see (1) who would finish first, and (2) who would get the highest percentage. The boy who finally did finish first raised his arms above his head like a boxer's and crowed rather exaltedly, "I won, I won." The sweet smell of success was even greater when he found out that he had achieved a higher percentage score on his test than either of his two buddies. Both of them looked a little bit crestfallen, particularly the boy who ended up last." (1974, pg. 31.)

This quotation is part of a section describing competition. This example, one with which many readers could empathize, involves the reader by eliciting memory of their responses in similar situations. This recollection further enhances understanding of the current event. As this occurs, the experiences of program participants are successfully transferred

from their source (the three boys) through a conduit (the author) to an audience (the reader).

Stake and Gjerde provide contextural description by describing "Monday, July 19: A typical day at the Institute." Each of these techniques serves to catalyze the readers experience of the program by identifying relevant context. Yet this is accomplished without codifying or reducing the complexity of the setting.

Olsen's (1973) use of captioned photography is another example of the reconstruction of program transactions. Stake and Gjerde also approached this through the inclusion of student poetry and statements in their attempt to reconstruct for the reader the actual paraphernalia of the program. This may also be accomplished through statements from evaluation staff members, direct quotes from field notes, responses to structured interview protocols or questionnaires, or the use of outside testimony.

This reconstruction is simply another method of providing linkage between the portrayal author and audience. Here participants, staff, evaluators or others, present something which communicates their personal way of knowing, experiencing, or feeling the program in order that there be maximal potential for the audience to personalize this experience. The audience then by relating to personal past experiences, transfers program experience from the actual participant through a tangible surrogate experience into their own personal frame of reference.

An example of this reconstruction can be found in the participant observer's report contained in "An Evaluation TCITY." Here Ben Stake, a member of the Wilderness Leadership Class of the Institute speak to the learning opportunity of the Institute.

> Students will learn, even under adverse conditions. On one occasion after a nearly sleepless night under a non-rain-proof shelter, a friend came to sit-out the rain under my dry shelter. He was in low spirits and explained to me he was not learning what he wanted to. He said that he was learning what was wrong, but not what was right. But we figured out his teachers were not trying to teach him the answers-they were trying to teach him the questions. And even though he said he didn't want to, he was learning. They kept putting him in situations where he would learn. (Stake and Gjerde, 1974, pg. 16.)

The author here elicits prior experiences of the reader to aid in describing both the learning opportunities and an example of how he came to understand these opportunities.

Attention to Action, Chronology, and Stage Setting. In creating its reality, the portrayal will probably emphasize the interrelatedness of transactions. The author may use a narrative style to string together related events. Such activity adds to the two dimensional description, a three dimensional "presence". The portrayers seeks to set up an interplay between the background (context), foreground (events), and important characters. This again is done through stage setting.

One example of stage setting may be found in Smith and Pohland (1974, pg. 26).

From field notes the authors recorded:

> Gail was extremely conscious also about people seeing her work. She waited until there was only one person in the room before she sat down at the terminal. [Typically, in this class, children were set up in groups.] At that, she covered the print-out with her hand and forearm so that no one else could see it. When she caught my glance, she immediately spread her fingers apart so that I could not see it either (10/22).

This passage describes something of the setting and the action, while also illustrating the author's relationship to the action.

In portrayal, as the demonstrated interrelation of actions creates the "presence" of reality, the chronological presentation of these events creates a further impression of fullness, providing rich description. Stake has referred to it as the "whole cloth" of an educational program. When transactions are presented as threads of a narrative, the events described take shape in the literary sense. The event becomes something the reader can describe again and again, a part of the reader's experience. Not the same as if he had participated, but much warmer and more complete than a statistical summary.

Consider for example Brauner (1969) as he describes an airlift of project participants.

> From over the ridge the beat of rotors chopped away at the remaining mist. As sky opened the turbo-jet helicopter swung in, trailing a 55-gallon drum of fuel at the end of a long line. It set the drum between two logs as neatly as a woman might place a vase. The lift was on.
>
> In groups of four and with three additional lifts of 20 backpacks hung in a cargo net beneath the machine, the base camp went to the glacier. The flight up became a personal experience from the moment of lift-off. The machine skimmed off the meadow, circled inside the basin, and darted through a gap in the peaks. The lush Alpine meadow dropped away into rock canyon stripped of vegetation. The helicopter came up to the 500-foot face of the glacier at 120 miles an hour, slipping between clouds and ice like a razor parting tissue. Racing across the frozen ridges of snow that spread all around like a still ocean brought the full fascination of speed up through the glass bubble. As if about to topple over a crest that dropped half a mile, the machine floated into a stall and touched to a stop. Set down at an altitude of 6,500 feet, each new arrival looked from the rough crown of encircling peaks into the abyss. (Brauner 1974, pp. 81-82.)

Skimming, circling, darting, slipping, racing, floating, and looking, each action in Brauner's description builds on those prior. Together they

elicit the essence of participant experiences. Little falls between the gaps in this description, each action grips that before it as all are woven into a composite description, the "whole cloth".

Contrast is of course a main element of description and hence is maximized in portrayal. Contrast is further a strong element in definition. The surrogate experience is enhanced by the drawing of internal contrast, since events decribed are then anchored in the mind of the reader. In discussing "the mode" Brauner states (1974), "Mueh was made of the positive feature of people, places and events. The negative aspects of industry slums and attitudes were set out in sharp relief." (p. 97)

The portrayal format is a catalyst for extreme variance in literary style. The portrayal focuses on actual and specific events, transactions or activities. Its narrative might include a detailed recounting of what happened and to whom. Here the process orientation is in contrast to that outcome orientation of more traditional methods. This process orientation seems to have a natural need for literary and/or interpretive reporting. The final report attempts to recreate the unraveling dimension of actual events. Summarization must be redirected so as to protect the integrity of some of the smallest discrete behaviors. Preservation of the illustration of action is a primary objective. How does vivid language foster the illusion of action? Brauner, (1969, p. 96), for example, presents a taut, vivid description in "The First Probe".

> Quite beyond themselves, the crowd did not notice the next stage until the strobe light set out a pattern of flashes that resembled the cannon blasts at the siege of Sevastopol. All motion was frozen in a series of disjointed stills and the roar of artillery came over the powerful amplifier. A rock and roll band of amplified guitars and rim-rattling drums opened a

> light show. On a parachute, held up to the curve of the dome, projectors flashed subliminal images in quick succession and overlay. Color blazed through the smoke and splashed along the silk like dry dust cast by a contemporary Jackson Pollock. The blinding flashes of light showed the gyrations of the dancers into a slow-motion satire of a Chaplin film. And throughout the dome the ear-splitting roar of the band pressed as thick as an invisible fog suddenly turned harder than steel. Frozen in frantic postures by the flashes of bright and black, they were held there motionless by noise so stunning it solidified the very blood in their veins. It was the light, the black, the blindness, the deafness, the start, the stop, the roar, the numbness of Creation. And it went on until dawn. (p. 96)

By contrast, Stake and Gjerde (1971, p. 6) described a day at TCITY:

> Around 8 a.m. students started gathering in the bus area: the Sesame II class and combined French and German classes left for a Cannon River canoe trip with Wilderness Class guides. Rest of Wilderness Class left for Isle Royale on an eight-day backpacking trip. Biology classes went to St. Paul Ramsey Hospital for a series of physical tests. About 8:15 or 8:30, other classes started in classrooms on the Macalester campus. Most of these classes took a short break about 10:30 and then continued until 12:00 or 12:30. Fifteen students started on a bike trip along the Mississippi River at 11:30. Sometime during the morning, Basic Computer challenged Environmental Accounting to a volleyball game. A few students played tennis, frisbee, softball, and went swimming later in the day.
>
> After classes, opponents in the chess tournament started finding each other. At 1:00, Dr. Mitra demonstrated the use of acrylics, and math students began constructing a geodesic dome. At 2:00, Avi Davis' dance class met in the old gym. Art rooms were busy with painting and pottery; astronomy students were grinding lenses for their telescopes; a few science students were finishing their redwood and fiberglass canoes. Poetry students were in the office duplicating their "Broadsides" for distribution to people in the streets, and there were other activities.
>
> By 1:30 most of the 150 students who stayed for afternoon activities on campus had departed for home except for the canoe builders who stayed till 6 or 7 in their race against time.

Both descriptions recreate the events of the day, though with very different formats. Olsen (1973) included a pictorial description in his portrayal of a 4-H camp. All three portrayals underscore the personal nature of the activity.

The portrayal writer has the opportunity to include interpretive statements within the narrative of the portrayal. Inclusion of such statements, while adding to the common ground between writer and reader, will also yield the possibility of higher order interpretation of events and their relationships. While such interpretation is not new to evaluation, it has seldom been spotlighted. If, as in Brauner's "The First Probe", the writer describes the scene interpretively as containing a "Lord of the Flies" group, the reader may wonder of the label's significance. However, the writer in this instance has metaphorically defined the grouping process and identified several behavioral groups, the hoarders, the sharers, the defiler, the isolates, the raiders, the includers, the excluders, the worriers, the trusters, the grumblers, Thus, stating and substantiating the groupings, the writer exposes hints about the relative position of evaluator and object and further adds interpretive flavor. This combination illuminates the evaluated object and the evaluator's position relative to that object. The primary difference as compared to traditional reporting is the conscious interpretation with deliberate injection of "scene-setting" interpretive statements. Such deliberateness is often preferable to the haphazzard style most often encountered in contemporary evaluation reports.

One logical extension of internal interpretation is speculation about causal relationships. The isolation and identification of causal relationships is the aim of many evaluative works and is legitimately within the scope of portrayal. Here again the causal relationship actually hypothesized may differ only slightly from that resulting from a traditional reporting system. But because portrayal goes beyond the basic mandate of description, this causal relationship is highlighted in the write-up. In portrayal, primary emphasis is on the preservation,

interpretation and transmittal of experiences, actions, and events which had often been lost in the analytical nature of traditional investigation strategies. Presentation of these relationships in a speculative manner, however, allows a less weighty treatment of causal inference.

Extending this theme raises the prospect of complete specification, description in such detail as to literally recreate program activity. Smith and Pohland, though not going to that extreme in specification, move beyond Brauner to a more traditional anthropological method designed to "recreate" transactions through full description. These authors utilized field notes, a focus on individual behaviors, and organization (into the smallest meaningful units) of issues, findings, etc. to generate both theory and presence.

Here the presented surrogate experience becomes that of the evaluator rather than exclusively of the program participant. There is a very smooth yet significant shift implied in this new orientation. The more literal and detailed, but detached description referred to here still seeks to provide the reader with a surrogate experience but the timing is moved forward. The reader comes away with a view of the program and its transactions, but a view revolving around the evaluator's encounter with program elements, in addition to participant reactions.

Each of these characteristics contribute to increased awareness of the evaluated object. They set up the basic thrust of the portrayal strategy, while jointly outlining implicit standards. In isolation, however, they can never capture the complete flavor or potential of portrayal evaluation. Portraya as an act of communication is very situation specific. The aboye characteristics while broadly representative of current practice do not of themselves equal portrayal.

Implications of Portrayal as a Personal Reporting Style

Movement towards portrayal involves a paradigm shift which has implications for every facet of the evaluative study. Portrayals are necessarily a very personal thing. Regardless of how iterative and responsive the approach or how triangulated the design, the portrayal still represents the personal involvement of the author with an educational program.

As a result of viewing the author as object and subject of his work, introspection becomes a pivotal activity in the portrayal process. Denzin suggests that the observer, "Can treat self as a third-person object, placing self in a collective group and noting how 'they' acted. She or he can introspectively take the role of a second party, inputing motive to a wife, daughter, or colleagues. And finally, she or he can treat self in the first-person sense." (1971, p. 180.) It is this introspection which greatly enhances scene setting and interpretation, and provides a challenge to participatory evaluation.

One challenge of participatory evaluation lies in the reduction of personal bias. The evaluator's underlying ideological or philosophical bent plays an important role in shaping the portrayal produced. Subtle cognitive imagery as well as idiosyncratic liasions and preconceived notions of the proper order of things, unavoidably restrict the range of the portrayal. The reduction of bias depends in part on the portrayer's ability to describe his interaction with program components. In addition, however, the author utilizes triangulation of observation to support major propositions.

In triangulation, the evaluator focuses on contextual material to anchor observations. Observations are analyzed for their timing,

sequencing and consequences both with respect to primary actors (including the evaluator), and important aspects of the setting. One of portrayal's strengths is the relating of primary observations to the setting in which they occurred, and the consequence or outcomes they reportedly elicited.

To produce a well-reasoned analysis, propositions must be grounded-in data. Portrayal authors therefore, must attempt to impose creative tension between the interpretive reality of program participants and the more theoretical, analytical, constructions they generate. This tension facilitates the author's penetration into the evaluated program, exposing the internal mores and forces which shape participant perceptions. Care must be exercised to utilize all verifiable perspectives. Only when in contradiction with other findings can a respondent's account of program setting, transactions or outcomes be discounted.

To maximize the validity of generalizations within the bounded case, the evaluator seeks to construct observation schemes which reflect normal behaviors of program participants. Care is exercised to avoid imposing an order on program transactions simply to facilitate data collection. The distance between evaluator and respondent conceptual frameworks should also become an explicit portrayal component.

The protection of some notion of chronology within the description often supports understanding program transactions and reduces the need for improvised conceptual schemes for data analysis. It should be noted however that this chronology in retrospect may imply an orderliness not obvious during ongoing program activity. The portrayal should seek to avoid oversimplifying these elements and must place a priority on providing an accurate account of their relationship to the program as it unfolded.

This analysis of unfolding events draws on the participant evaluator's ability to reveal at least one side of the (normally covert) dialogues with self that generate participant behaviors. Program events traditionally analyzed for predictive power, are now viewed as holding interpretive power in and of themselves. It is these events which empirically ground the causal propositions the portrayal contains.

In traditional designs these propositions are generated by standardized methods producing a guise of objectivity which has been called into question. Portrayals, to be an alternative, would cast the evaluator in a responsive and dynamic role in order that the concept of the audience's decision making responsibility be maintained. If the audience is able to sense the interaction of evaluator and program, it has the opportunity to short-circuit biases of the evaluator.

It becomes the responsibility of both evaluator and reader to critically analyze reports for recurring themes. Enough of the program activities should be represented that the audience may verify some (though probably not all) of these themes and thereby guage the evaluation results for themselves.

The problem of ideological bias is aggravated by the "position" of the evaluator with respect to the program. Typically this problem results from the sanctioning of the evaluation effort. It may also result from distance between evaluator and project. Typically, the evaluator is brought in by the funding agency or the project director. In the former, the sanctioning of the evaluator comes not only from outside the program, but also in a sense from above the program administratively. In the latter case, the sanctioning can be multiple in that the evaluation may be mandated by contract, but supervised by the program director. In most cases,

however, the evaluation will be viewed as an extension of the sanctioning body.

Hence the reception which the evaluator receives is in part based on his/her administrative alignment with the project. In portrayal, this relationship must be described both to support the understanding of the audience and to clarify the orientation of the evaluator.

Stake has raised an interesting point in his suggestion that evaluators are praised more for their methods than results. Given that this is the case, evaluators try to utilize their strongest methodological tricks whether they apply well or not. In essence, all people are predisposed to measure what they can measure best. Specialist in evaluation are currently better (or more practiced) at measuring than describing. Perhaps this is true because for many years they have equated the two. A parallel question in portrayal asks whether portrayers will tend to describe that which they describe best? Or more basically, that which they observe best?

As a check, portrayal writers work iteratively, drafting comments and checking them with participants or staff. Unfortunately, this checking is an artificial situation. While it will correct gross deficiencies in the portrayal, the emphasis for the program participant will primarily be on checking the familiarity of points. Thus, program participants may see much reflected in a portrayal which they themselves would express, and may ratify the description not on the basis of functional identification of validity, but rather on a false aura of completeness derived from the portrayal having touched several points accurately.

It is true that problems of labeling program parts, sequencing of events, ordering positions of primary actors, etc. can be detected by

program staff. While this consultation does challenge elements of the portrayal for accuracy, it does not appear to deal sufficiently with the problem of ideological or methodological bias. Further, it is of concern to what extent we can ever expect to counter balance biases, by circulating drafts, given that a large portion of the evaluation data comes directly from project staff. Much of what the evaluator sees, feels, or hears is the result of observing, interviewing, and simply interacting with program staff. Finally, the negotiation with participants sets up a new artificial situation apart from the reality the portrayal seeks to represent. This interaction creates a whole new set of dynamics, and therefore, any description resulting is altered by this second level of interaction.

It is this type of bias which contributes to the discrepancies which prompted portrayal initially. To combat its influence, there is a conscious attempt to demonstrate how subjective experience has influenced coming to know the educational program.

It is here that focusing on the information needs of a defined audience can pay off. Not simply to give them what they want to hear, but what they can best understand. This not only broadens the input base to include additional sources, but it allows for a more coherent pattern of choices at various decision points in the study; deciding when to collect data, where and for how long?

Of course, what has just been described is also a bias of sorts, but it is a conscious and documented set of decisions. It is an element the reader can take into account as part of the analysis of the portrayal. The analysis of trial portrayals is also enhanced because although such an analysis is still a tally of matched and unmatched perceptions, the limitations of the study are more clearly delineated.

The Contribution of Portrayal

For all of the promises and demands attributed to portrayal, its real contribution remains a potential rather than a given. Portrayals, as a rule, appear vulnerable to the effects of limited and undeveloped methods. The demands on portrayal are high. The proposition like the psychometric tradition is an ambitious one. In portrayal, we are committed to relating a dynamic picture of program transactions. The situation determines much in evaluation by portrayal, few general rules apply. Little can be prespecified. The evaluator must be committed not only to responding to audiences, but also to program cues.

It is here that the primary potential of the portrayal approach is found. Conceptually, traditional evaluative and research designs seek to maximize objectivity and a corresponding philosophy of science. Great pains are taken in these designs to promote standardization as a way of obtaining objectivity. The sterile manipulative laboratory image of these designs borrows credibility from the exhaulted position of science in contemporary culture. Further, the associated techniques enjoy a romance with modern technology, further advancing the aura of scientific detachment and efficiency thought to be preludes to objectivity and ultimately to reason.

Portrayal on the other hand, rejects sterility for completeness and involvement. Summarization and detachment are replaced by informed and interpretive human insight. The conceptual result is tied to reason and knowing, but through experiential rather than detached methods.

Portrayal then is a reporting style which has implications for analysis. It implies in addition, a way of knowing an experiential/participatory knowledge. This stance influences both the evaluation and evolution of the program. It is this sensitivity and orientation which

portrayal contributes to evaluation. As a metaphorical way of reporting, portrayal ushers in a new set of criteria for evaluation studies; criteria which promote the revitalization of naturalistic techniques. This training and practice is crucial for the development of evaluation and improves the articulation of program settings and outcomes. In successful situations, the evaluation enchances the description of program nuances.

The development of this potential requires a diverse sense of communication in the evaluator. Though it is not necessary that the portrayer be proficient in every medium of communication, evaluators choosing portrayal should be aware of the special advantages/disadvantages of the various means of communication. Further, they should be aware of the optimal use of naturalistic observation techniques, interviewing and other communication techniques. The technique used should be selected for a natural correspondence with the situation. The evaluator will want to take a preliminary look at the program in order to build an evaluation team around situational demands.

Only by utilizing fully the various methods of communication and observation can the potential portrayer make use of the potential of portrayal approach. A portrayal admittedly trades off some problems for other potentials. It trades the risk of increased bias for the potential of fuller description; narrowness of focus for sensitivity and depth; time honored experimental design for the creation of a surrogate experience. Portrayal represents a risk; it is not necessarily an easier, faster, or more efficient process. If fully utilized, the result will more than compensate for the risks, yet to not fully utilize the potential value of portrayal is to render it less desirable than the approaches portrayal attempts to supplement.

The portrayal must capture program energy, turmoil and potential. A blending of the descriptive, interpretive and speculative. It is in this sense that portrayal attempts more than description, it approaches recreation. The task here described requires a special and complete use of observation/interpretation/communication techniques.

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