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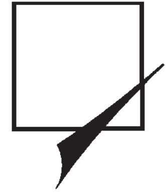

Good Fences Make Good Neighbours

Policy Evaluation and Policy Analysis – Exploring the Differences

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Trying to build political dimensions into evaluation has blurred the distinction between policy analysis and policy evaluation. We do not dispute the importance of political context and values for evaluation or policy analysis, but we argue that evaluation and policy analysis are indeed different by definition, function and methodology. These differences are widely known but increasingly disregarded, especially at the stage of the presentation of findings. Evaluation tends to adopt the stance of the analyst in that it is being urged to make recommendations on policy choices within the narrow scope of answers based on evaluation questions, without the benefit of additional contextual information. The article compares policy evaluation and policy analysis in terms of conceptualization, research methods, problem definition and data presentation and argumentation. In presenting the differences between evaluation and analysis, we point to the dangers inherent in a lack of awareness of where the boundaries lie and what purpose they serve.

Introduction: Identifying the Problem

One of the perennial issues in policy literature is the tension between policy analysis and evaluation. Everyone realizes that they are distinct, but also related in various complex ways. Sometimes the effort to delineate the relationships leads to a blurring of the conceptual boundaries between them. Once the boundaries are blurred, however, the specific and distinct contributions of policy analysis and evaluation to the policy process are in danger of being confused as well.

In broad terms, policy analysis is understood to be shot through with value conflicts, political decisions and priorities, but evaluation is typically seen as the application of relatively neutral, social scientific research techniques to policy issues. The conventional approach to the tension was to acknowledge its existence, but

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to ensure that evaluation met its mission of technical integrity and research objectivity. Palumbo, for example, accepts that politics and evaluation are 'intricately intertwined' but that nonetheless, 'professional evaluators cannot engage in openly political evaluations because to do so would abrogate the role they want to play in policymaking' (Palumbo, 1987: 43). The problem is 'in being able to build political dimensions into the evaluation role without at the same time reducing evaluators to political supplicants or lackeys' (Palumbo, 1987: 15). As Glasman puts it: 'evaluators are called upon to be, at once, neutral and scientific and as useful as possible to policy actors' (Glasman, 1987: 215).

The risk of maintaining methodological purity, of course, is the loss of influence; hence the perennial debate about enhancing the utilization of evaluation results (Chelimsky, 1985a: 15). Of late, however, a new 'solution' to the tension between policy analysis and evaluation has been proposed. A good example is Chelimsky's model of evaluative practice in a political context, where she urges a much closer association between evaluator and policy actors in an effort to maximize the impact of evaluations in the policy process (see Glasman, 1987). In the last of five steps in the model, she urges the use of policy evaluations in a way that borders on making recommendations and generating new policy issues. Whereas the traditional solution to the tension was to keep politics out of evaluation, more recent models embrace politics so that evaluation is much more 'savvy' and influential. Indeed, this is not so new a strategy at all: Lindblom suggested as early as 1984 that evaluation should become much more political and client-driven (Lindblom, 1984: 1–42).[1]

We think it is important not to conflate policy analysis and evaluation, and to respect the distinct characteristics of each. Of course, politics and values are intimately entangled in evaluation. The goals and objectives of evaluation studies are established by clients. Data have to be interpreted and filtered through values of some sort that help us determine what is significant and what is not: as Palumbo notes, 'value-neutral research is not possible nor desirable' (Palumbo, 1987: 32). Even the strategy of comparative analysis of two or more programs as a means of ensuring objectivity runs up against the problem of deciding what to compare (Patton, 1978a: 104). Evaluations should be useful in some way, and an eye to utilization usually involves some political calculation. Certainly, deciding who will use the evaluation involves choosing one's clients to some degree, and different clients have different values and different interests. In choosing clients and targeting utilization, evaluators inevitably make political choices (Patton, 1978a: 103). Ultimately, information is itself a form of power, and so even the most rigorous evaluation research will have political implications. Again, Palumbo: 'When evaluators speak truth to power, they should be aware (but often are not) that to an administrator information is an instrument of power' (Palumbo, 1987: 24).

However, while the importance of politics and values to evaluation cannot be denied, it is important not to make the opposite mistake of conflating evaluation with policy analysis, especially in distinguishing both the contributions and special obligations of evaluation in the policy process. While the inherently political context of evaluation has been acknowledged for some time (Patton, 1978b: 102),

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one virtue of the traditional model was its claim that some phases of the analytical process could and should more or less be insulated from or uncontaminated by narrow politics.

To speak of 'evaluation' and of 'policy analysis' of course implies a firm distinction that sometimes does not exist in practice. As House notes, evaluation has recently moved from monolithic to 'pluralist conceptions, to multiple methods, multiple measures, multiple criteria, multiple perspectives, multiple audiences, and even multiple interests' (House, 1993: 3). The increasing reliance on qualitative techniques and methods is one example. However, as the rest of this article makes clear, there is a powerful consensus in the profession that there are two broad phases or dimensions of policy work – one oriented to research, and one oriented to advice and recommendations. We take an obvious but useful liberty in emphasizing this accepted difference in order to probe an important problem in the literature. As recently as 1997, for example, the President of the Association for Policy Analysis and Management could argue that it has become increasingly difficult to deal with the political context of policy analysis (Radin, 1997: 209). The *problem* we are addressing is real; in order to address it we simply sharpen a distinction that is widely acknowledged, if not always well understood. Accordingly, for the remainder of this article, we will speak of evaluation and policy analysis as distinct enterprises.

Evaluation is a subset or phase of policy analysis that is primarily research-oriented. Mainstream evaluation research is well aware of its epistemological and empirical limitations, but it nonetheless follows the basic scientific paradigm of evaluation-question testing in the face of independently gathered evidence. It strives to be objective in both the conduct of the evaluation and the presentation of the results. Normally, evaluation tries to provide answers to causal questions. Typically these will be questions of impact (what was the effect of program X on outcome Y? or of goal A on object B?) or efficiency (cost/benefit). Evaluation is usually conducted *post facto*, or may be a preliminary exercise probing costs and effects of a range of policy options. Good evaluations answer questions that must be answered as objectively as possible, whatever the normative wishes of the evaluator or the client. In principle, evaluation should not make recommendations based on the answers obtained but merely present data – since recommendations depend on more than the evaluation results. Policy analysis, however, is primarily about making recommendations on preferred or best options. These recommendations will be based on research (much of which is provided by previous evaluation studies) but will typically go well beyond it.

Despite the fact that evaluation is clearly viewed as constrained by methodological principles and conventions (Lewy, 1998), both literature and practice in recent years have implied that policy evaluation in fact plays political roles. This follows the school of thought that identifies evaluation with a process at the end of which the evaluator should prompt recommendations (Stake, 1967: Guba and Lincoln, 1981a); it extends the classical function of evaluation beyond accountability, formative or summative roles and data submission in relation to impacts, process and cost. As Chelimsky suggests, evaluation may adopt advocacy techniques to promote recommendations. The danger here lies in the blurred limits

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between policy analysis and evaluation. First, when evaluation is confused with analysis more broadly understood, its intrinsic humility evaporates. Second, advocating recommendations on policy issues based on the limited scope of evaluation may be both dangerous and irresponsible: it adheres to a role evaluation cannot fulfil because of a lack of sufficient context data – and as such it may be clearly misleading and lose its credibility.

It is important to reclaim some space for evaluation as a distinct activity within policy analysis more generally. In our view, credibility is a crucial asset in both policy analysis and evaluation, and rather than merely succumb to subjectivity and politicization, analysts and evaluators should strive where possible to clarify where they are engaged in more objective, research-driven work and more normative advising or advocating.

This article is, therefore, a work of reconstruction and some modest boundary-making. It argues that there are important differences between evaluation and analysis in terms of conceptualization, function, target audiences, research methods, problem definition and data presentation and argumentation. These differences do not make one superior to the other. Rather, our position is that the policy process as a whole will be improved if we respect and recognize the distinctive qualities and contributions of each.

Conceptualization: Definitions, Related Functions and Target Information

The difference between public policy analysis and evaluation starts from their basic conceptualizations. A comparison in terms of definitions, functions and target information will lead to the conclusions set forth below.

Definitions and Related Functions

Public policies are chosen to address a given existent or conceived problem and are determined by the contexts and the actors involved, by power contests and by the problem definitions reached as a result (Geva-May with Wildavsky, 1997). If public policy can be said to relate to courses of action, positions, stances or political decisions which stress goals, means, values and practices, and imply political or power contests (Cochran and Malone, 1995; Dye, 1995: 3; Lasswell and Kaplan, 1970: 71; Pal, 1992), then 'making sense of policy is what policy analysis is all about' (Pal, 1992: 13) should well describe the role of policy analysis.

Other definitions regarding policy analysis go as far as Lindblom's 1958 first allusion to policy analysis as 'a type of quantitative analysis involving comparisons and interactions of values and politics' (Lindblom, 1958). Over the years the conceptualization of policy analysis has developed and has taken on new points of confrontation. They range from the view that policy analysis is a creative process meant for '. . . creating problems that can be solved' (Wildavsky, 1979: 1) within a procedure identified as a problem solving process (Bardach, 1992). Mainly, policy analysis is defined as a course intended to choose the best policy alternatives among a set of alternatives with the aid of evidence and reason (McRae, 1979: 17; McRae and Wilde, 1979: 14) and which makes use of multiple

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methods of inquiry and argumentation 'to produce and transform policy-relevant information that may be utilized in political settings to resolve public problems' (Dunn, 1981: 60). Moreover, policy analysis is regarded as a politically oriented discipline; it provides power by producing knowledge of and in the policy process (Dunn, 1981: 2); it determines which of the various alternative public or government policies will most achieve a given set of goals in light of the relations between the policies and the goals (Nagel, 1990) and in light of politically feasible courses of action; it generates information and evidence in order to help the policymaker choose the most advantageous action (Quade, 1975: 5); and it identifies and evaluates alternative policies and programs intended to 'lessen or resolve social, economic, or political problems' (Patton and Sawicki, 1986: 21). Interrelated is the view that policy analysis is client-oriented advice relevant to public decisions (Weimer and Vining, 1992: 1) geared to investigate and produce accurate and useful information in the service of decision makers (Cochran and Malone, 1995: 24).

Moreover, as Wildavsky pointed out, policy analysis is an art as well as a craft (Wildavsky, 1979); an art because it demands intuition, creativity and imagination in order to identify, define and devise solutions to problems; and a craft because it requires mastery of methodological, technical and inter-disciplinary knowledge in fields ranging from economics and law to politics, communication, administration and management.

While policy analysis can be said to be prospective, evaluation is retrospective. While '. . . the emphasis of policy analysis is on likely effects or estimates, or projections . . . the focus of evaluation . . . is on actual effects, that is, on what has been observed, has already occurred, or is existentially occurring.' Therefore, a policy analysis question may ask 'What will be the likely effects on hospital use if bed supply is restricted? ' as opposed to 'What happened to hospital use after bed supply growth was restricted?' in the case of policy evaluation (Chelimsky, 1985a: 6–7).

Evaluation relates to existent, measurable and most often segmental aspects of the policy process. Seeman (cited in Chelimsky, 1977: 36) regards evaluation as an additive drip-in process that he compares to the Chinese water torture – its contribution being in adding little bits of information, one at a time, and having a cumulative effect on broad program directions and policies.

Evaluation clings to the tunnel-oriented evaluation question and does not have the mandate to look into comparisons and interactions of values and politics unless explicitly required in the evaluation question; it does not 'create' problems that can be solved – on the contrary, it adheres to the problem as defined at the beginning of the evaluation process. Moreover, due to the same inherent characteristics it is not an iterative problem-solving process; its data may offer solutions to a particular facet of an initially well defined problem. Evaluators are required to use evidence and present policy makers with data that may assist them in the decision-making process; choice of the best policy among a set of alternatives based on subjective reasoning is not the mandate given to evaluation. The extent to which the evaluation findings are actually used and contribute to the policy analysis process, i.e. to identify and evaluate alternative policies and programs

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that are intended to 'lessen or resolve social, economic, or political problems' (Patton and Sawicki, 1986) is up to the policy analyst or the decision maker who may utilize those data. But then the role of evaluation should be given the right proportion among the other data needed for such comprehensive decisions.

As such, evaluation may use data gathering methods that are also used in policy analysis, may take pride in the strict research methods of inquiry, but, not having all the necessary additional data – whether political, economic, psychological, social, or legal – it cannot assume an argumentative role aimed to 'produce and transform policy-relevant information that may be utilized in political settings to resolve public problems.' Webber, for instance, clearly regards evaluation as one among several stages in the policy cycle following agenda setting, policy formulation, policy legitimization and policy implementation, and leading to the last stage of any policy feasibility assessment – policy reconsideration (Webber, 1986: 550).

The conceptual overlap concerning the roles of evaluation and policy analysis may spring from three definitional sources: both 'produce knowledge of and in the policy process' and are client and decision-making oriented. Both aid in systematizing client orientation within the problem situation. Nevertheless, while policy analysis embraces a wide span of future alternative policies, evaluation mostly examines on-going, focused and well-demarcated facets of the policy and/or of its implementation. Its main role is accountability and feedback, and not the search for alternatives. As such it requires more scrutiny and a particular commitment to objectivity. Moreover, while policy analysis attempts to determine which of the various alternative public or government policies will most achieve a given set of goals in light of the relations between the policies and the goals, evaluation in the Tylerian sense may assess to what extent policy goals had been carried out or achieved.

We noted with Wildavsky that policy analysis is a craft that depends on method and imagination. It is not that an evaluator should not be expected to be creative, use previous knowledge or intuition in coaching the client and formulating evaluation questions and methodologies – but that their data interpretation should stick to very strict research codes in order to be able to present a reliable information base. While the policy analyst should make use of journalistic modes of inquiry, the evaluator should make sure that objective research methods are being used – whether comparative, experimental, case studies, etc. – along with valid and reliable research tools (Weimer and Vining, 1992; Bardach, 1974).

Evaluation definitions vary in scope from those of policy analysis and are related to the preconceived functions of evaluation. Nevo (1983) sums up the prevalent definitions and the evaluation process as a 'systematic description of educational objects and/or an assessment of their merit and worth.' Ralph Tyler (1950) defines evaluation as a process of determining to what extent the aims and the objectives of an on-going program or project have been attained. Other definitions refer to rigorous social science methods for the study of project and programs (Bernstein and Freeman, 1975; Rossi et al., 1989) or to the comparative nature of the process – comparing the relative cost and benefit of several programs – in order to avoid the narrow view of evaluation as initially defined by

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Tyler (see Alkin and Ellett, 1984). The valuative aspect of evaluation or rather 'the systemic investigation of the worth and merit of some subject' was provided by Joint Committee (1981), Eisner (1979), Glass (1969), House (1980), Scriven (1967) and Stufflebeam (1974). Another school of thought defines evaluation as a process that involves both description and judgment (Stake, 1967; Guba and Lincoln, 1981b). Cronbach and the Stanford Evaluation Consortium (Cronbach et al., 1980: 14) reject the judgmental definition of evaluation because of the potential dangers it can engender – anxiety or resistance – and define evaluation as a 'systemic examination of events occurring in and consequent of a contemporary program – an examination conducted to assist in improving this program having the same general purpose'.

The functions attributed to evaluation mostly stress feedback for improvement. As such, evaluation is viewed as being formative (Scriven, 1967) or monitoring (Chelimsky, 1985a). Stufflebeam (1972) and Chelimsky also offer the distinction between proactive evaluation, which should serve decision makers' planning, and retroactive evaluation for accountability purposes. Two other roles emphasized by Nevo (1983) point to the socio-political and psychological function of evaluation (Cronbach et al., 1980; House, 1974), to create motivation or awareness or promote public relations, and to the administrative function, i.e. 'evaluation as an exercise of power' and authority (Dornbusch and Scott, 1975; Nevo, 1983).

Target Information

Beyond definitions and functions it is important to note the type of target information each process relates to. The CIPP Model proposes that evaluation concentrates on the goals, the design, the implementation process and the outcomes of the evaluation object (Stufflebeam et al., 1971). As such the evaluation focuses on the merit and worth of these target components. In this regard Guba and Lincoln (1981b) refer to descriptive information about the target object and its setting, to standards of worth, to information that is relevant to certain audiences, to issues of interest, or to values of concern. Patton enlarges the information span of evaluation beyond program evaluation and regards it as 'a systematic collection of information about activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs, personnel, and products for use by specific people to reduce uncertainties, improve effectiveness, and make decisions with regard to what those programs, personnel or products are doing and affecting' (Patton, 1987). Critics agree that in all cases the information obtained in evaluation studies can assist either policy formulation, or policy execution or accountability processes in public decision making (Chelimsky, 1985b, 1986).

As far back as 1963, Cronbach (1963) and later Stufflebeam (Stufflebeam et al., 1971) and others, emphasized the role of evaluation in decision making. Cronbach's definition of evaluation relates to information collection and use in order to make decisions about (an educational) program. Stufflebeam, following the decision making model set by David Braybrook and Charles Lindblom, regarded evaluation as 'the process of delineating, obtaining, and providing useful information for judging decision alternatives' (Braybrook and Lindblom, 1970: 128). This implies that decision makers need to ascertain the relative values

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of two or more alternatives, and that evaluation findings can provide this type of valuative information. Delineating, obtaining and providing information are therefore viewed as the basic steps of a methodology of evaluation.

Does the confusion between policy analysis and policy evaluation start at this conceptual junction? In both cases the three steps are the same, and in both cases the findings serve decision makers. Being valuative and recommending or advocating alternatives (Chelimsky, 1986) is not the mandate initially given to evaluation. Moreover, according to its accountability definition, evaluation results may serve more than one client, each having different information needs, and may not necessarily be relevant to making decisions, judgments, or comparisons (Patton, 1987; Weiss, 1983) as is the case for policy analysis.

Evaluation has been charged in recent years with being: narrow in scope and unrealistic because it sets too high criteria standards; irrelevant because its answers are not of immediate interest; and unfair because it adheres to its sponsors and does not provide the data to less powerful stakeholders as part of its accountability role (Weiss, 1983). Other objections to evaluation take note of the anxiety and rejection it creates. But these are exactly the characteristics – whether positive or negative in connotation – that identify 'pure' evaluation. It is indeed limited to the program or policy under investigation and to the problem definition reached. It assesses effectiveness, and as such the standards set should measure optimal achievement. Policy analysis cannot be considered 'unfair' because the policy analyst's commitment is to his or her client. Analysis neither threatens its investigation objects with valuative criteria that may affect them directly, nor does it, unlike evaluation, cause rejection and lack of interest in the results. This is understandably so! As Chelimsky presents it, there are cases where evaluation can become or serve as an assassination or suicide tool, while Wildavsky (1987) and Lynn (1987) refer understandingly to the unwillingness of organizations to rock the boat.

Differences: Key Procedures

Study Methods

While evaluators are supposedly engaged in the 'scientific assessment of public programs' (Majone, n.d.)[2] policy analysis seeks to put together already existing scientific knowledge and to explain it, and follows a more tentative methodology. Cost-benefit analysis and systems analysis added what are regarded as scientific characteristics to the analysis process, i.e. modelling, quantification, objectivity and formalization.

Evaluation uses strict and objective social science research methods to assess, within the various organizational structures, ongoing programs, personnel, budgets and operating procedures, as well as to influence the adoption and the implementation of a policy or program. It attempts to avoid bias by divorcing itself from political influences, by setting in advance the evaluation questions, the research tools and the target investigation objects.

On the other hand, policy analysis is compared to journalism (Bardach, 1974;

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Weimer and Vining, 1992). Although like policy research, policy analysis uses empirical methods and social science theories to figure out the expected consequences of anticipated alternatives, it requires data gathering and communication skills similar to those practised in journalism (Kingdon, 1995; Patton and Sawicki, 1986; Weimer and Vining, 1992). Furthermore, the political agenda and the political feasibility of the alternatives, i.e. findings, determine the direction the investigation takes, its methods and tools of inquiry, and its target analysis objects (May, 1989; Meltsner, 1972; Scriven, 1967; Weimer, 1993).

While evaluation does make use of case studies, most experimental or comparative studies – whether quantitative or qualitative or a combination of the two – set strict criteria and emphasize reliability and validity measurements. Policy analysts, on the other hand, are advised to 'start with what you know' (Bardach, 1974). 'A few facts, or even vague recollections plus some intelligent reasoning', (Patton and Sawicki, 1986) followed by the location of relevant sources – mainly documents and people – and by malleable criteria serve as the methodology of policy analysis. The alternatives or 'courses of action' or 'strategies of intervention to solve or mitigate a problem' (Bardach, 1992: 6) are reached through borrowing, historical comparisons and transfer, or may be the result of accumulated knowledge, experimentation, modelling, brainstorming and cost-benefit and efficiency analysis (Neustadt and May, 1986; Rose, 1991; Weimer, 1992). It should be stressed that in policy analysis selection is not a random process, and alternatives are reached by submitting them to criteria, which although reached iteratively, are pre-determined and range from cost-benefit calculations to technical and political feasibility (May, 1986; Meltsner, 1972; Webber, 1986). Moreover, policy analysis as opposed to evaluation has to take into account that behind alternative considerations lie a myriad of values, norms and behaviours which have to be met or confronted. The alternative identification process is iterative and may lead to problem re-definition through a continuous procedure of backward mapping (Elmore, 1982). This is not the case in the evaluation process. A re-definition of the problem would be interpreted as a serious research flaw and would be considered to affect the objectivity of the evaluation findings.

Moreover, while the data in evaluation studies are original and oriented to the particular problem under investigation, in policy analysis the data are derivative and have been gathered, created or developed by others, in different settings and times, and for different needs. The evaluator's role is to produce original data while the role of the analyst is to discover, collate, interpret, criticize and synthesize ideas and data that others have already presented (Bardach, 1974).

Client and audience collaboration are one way of reaching a consensus about the problem, acceptable values and opportunity windows. It would be sensible to assume that after having established a communication system – starting from problem definition, through criteria setting and modelling agreement – on reaching the stage of alternative choice the analyst will have grasped the values and norms held by his or her client or by related interest groups. In the evaluation process client involvement is important for identifying the problem setting, the problem definition and the evaluation question(s). The communication patterns established with the client and with stakeholders should lessen anxiety if present,

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should promote collaboration in the process of the investigation, and should promote findings implementation by buying the client(s) in.

We shall relate to two crucial locations in policy analysis and in evaluation process: problem definition and data presentation. Problem definition sets the direction of the study while data presentation relates to the degree of objectivity required of the study.

Problem Definition

Both evaluation and policy analysis problem definitions stem from the problem setting. In both cases the problem definition stage provides the structure and the direction of the investigation process inherent in the enterprise (Geva-May with Wildavsky, 1997) identifies the problem's variables and related interactions, as well as the criteria for their valuation. In both cases the problem definition should be reached in collaboration with the clients.

Nevertheless, while in policy analysis, decisions taken at this stage regarding required information, variables, inter-relations, criteria, values that underlie the problem, and models that can be used to forecast and evaluate possible solutions, determine the final choice of alternatives and drive the ultimate policy options (Bardach, 1992, 1996; Weimer and Vining, 1992: 183), in evaluation studies they determine the research method, target population and research tools, but particularly avoid predicting results, which would be regarded as biasing research results.

If policy analysis is analogous to problem solving, then this also implies a continuous process of trial and error, and of tentative attempts at problem definition throughout the problem definition stage and subsequent stages (Bardach, 1992; May, 1989: 230; Patton and Sawicki, 1986: 77; Wildavsky, 1979: 19). Any new information may change the analyst's initial understanding of the problem and may necessitate its reformulation. Imagination, intuition, skill and constant collaboration with the client should be applied in this iterative process and should set a common ground for communication and for future implementation feasibility (Majone, 1975; May, 1986; Meltsner, 1976; Webber, 1986). In the evaluation process the problem definition stage requires clarification of problem setting with the client, but once understanding has been reached as to what the problem is, for research objectivity reasons it must not be changed.

We regard problem definition as an inventive and iterative process that must be based on public values and public concerns. The art and craft of problem definition lie in the analyst's ability to understand contexts and actors, to see the difference between policies and policy goals, and between symptoms and actual problems. Ultimately, it is the analyst's skill in identifying variables and in obtaining, gathering and synthesizing data that determines the complexity of problem definition and drives the final selection of alternatives.

One might mistakenly suggest that problem definition is a short and uncomplicated phase requiring a mere statement of the problem. Both evaluators and policy analysts would testify differently.

Their primary responsibility is to identify the actual problem situation or setting (MacRae and Wilde, 1979).[3] In both cases the difficulty lies in identifying

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the actual discrepancy between 'needs and wants' that characterize any problem situation, and in communicating with the clients. Clients tend to present 'symptoms' rather than formulate overall problems in a coherent analytic way that facilitates follow-up examination (Weimer and Vining, 1992: 183; [4] Wildavsky, 1979). The evaluator stops at the point where he or she reaches an understanding with the client as regards the policy or program goals, evaluation object and information needs in that context; policy analysis views problem situations as implying more than one problem or more than one cause of the problem. The policy analyst would regard problem situations as conglomerations of actors' political interests, sites, values and attitudes, along with resources, bureaucratic unwritten laws and routines, regulations and legal interpretations (Bardach, 1992; Behn, 1979: 17; May, 1986; Meltsner, 1972, 1976; Patton and Sawicki, 1986: 170), and would investigate the problem in relation to all or at least some of these interfering factors. Further, the analyst should be asking why others have failed and what original contribution can be made in the definition of the problem. Creativity is the key word here. Alternatives may range from status quo (Patton and Sawicki, 1986) to incremental (Lindblom, 1959; Wildavsky, 1984) and finally highly imaginative proposals. Creativity and skill are required in order to make the alternatives the best possible solution in given circumstances.

In this context creativity means finding solutions unforeseen by others while skill implies gathering and transferring knowledge, communicating and taking advantage of political opportunities (Brightman, 1980; MacRae and Wilde, 1979; Meltsner, 1990; Weimer and Vining, 1992). Creativity and innovation are not a major concern in evaluation: adhering to strict research methods of investigation, and following them rigorously, are. Communication patterns are all important but objectivity of presentation should be followed. Taking advantage of political opportunities is part of the client's implementation role, but it is not the evaluator's concern. These issues are developed in the following section.

Data Presentation and Argument

Stark differences in data presentation and argumentative style also distinguish analysis from evaluation. Remember that analysis is concerned with the wider problem of selecting and recommending options, whereas evaluation is typically focused on answering clearly posed questions about program impact, cost or process. It is clear that in neither case can the results 'speak for themselves', but how do the analyst and the evaluator present their findings? Is there a distinctive voice or mode of presentation?

At this stage policy analysts rely more on advocacy, rhetoric and techniques of communication than do evaluators, for several reasons. First, the sources of data and research on which they have drawn to make their recommendations are typically wider as well as more controversial. They will include results of past program evaluations, probabilities, hunches, opinions, expert testimony, scientific data, modelling and so forth. The bar is raised for the policy analyst because he or she works with such disparate elements, bits and pieces of evidence, to build a case. As Majone says, 'since perfection of data is impossible, the standards of acceptance will have to be based on craft judgments of what is good

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enough for the functions the data needs to perform in a particular problem' (Majone, 1989: 47). This is closer to legal argument than to mere presentation, but it goes considerably beyond that. While there may be a hard core of some evidence in some cases, in most instances the policy problems will be hard to specify and the necessary evidence to make decisions difficult to retrieve or produce. The analyst's art consists in making judgments or educated guesses about the central tendency of the evidence and then building a case. 'The format of your policy analysis plays an important part in determining how effectively you communicate your advice to your client' (Weimer and Vining, 1992: 237).

The second reason has to do with the audience and not the evidence. The analyst's audience is wider than the typical evaluation client – indeed, drawing on Meltsner, Majone makes clear that the distinction between audience and client is crucial for understanding the analyst's role in the process (Majone, 1989: 41).[5] The analyst speaks to a wide array of stakeholders, many hostile to the recommendations, many with alternative sources of knowledge or information, and with different priorities and interests. To use Sabatier's terminology, they speak to the entire policy subsystem, which consists of competing advocacy coalitions (Sabatier, 1993). This demands a presentation style that is both more engaged and more varied than that typical of the evaluator. The analyst has to bridge differences, has to present alternatives in such a way that they create possibilities that actors had not seen or may not have initially agreed to. The alternatives being presented will also usually adversely affect large minorities of stakeholders, and so they have incentives to actively and aggressively engage the analyst. The style of presentation has consequently to be more fluid, more reactive and responsive.

The third reason is context and timing. Analysts are presenting preferred or recommended options. They are making a case in favour of certain proposals that they conceive to be the most feasible under the circumstances. But what are those circumstances? Feasibility is a function of technical considerations, of course, but it is primarily (from the point of view of the program client) a function of political and social context. As Brewer and deLeon noted: 'A primary consideration for the decision maker is the overall context of the problem . . .' (Brewer and deLeon, 1983: 192). Will proposal X fly? This demands of the analyst a different sensibility from that which is characteristic of the evaluator. The analyst has to consider what factors in the social and political context contribute to and detract from feasibility. The analyst has to consider political contexts and actors, organizations and politics, and be able to assess both oppositional and supportive constituencies. Having made that determination, he or she must be able to communicate a sense of that context, with all of its dangers and opportunities. Also, these dangers and opportunities depend on windows opening and closing, none of which may be predicted, but about which clients will seek advice from the analyst. Kingdon makes it quite clear that the success of policy advice depends on recognizing when 'windows' open for the combination of policy problems and solutions (Kingdon, 1995). He also makes it clear that these windows are highly contingent and unpredictable. A good deal of the analyst's art consists of divining the best timing for policy proposals. 'Time is critically important because the

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passage of time can alter the entire context and necessitate complete reformulation of the problem and alternative solutions' (Brewer and deLeon, 1983: 193).

A final reason that the mode of presentation by the analyst is so distinctive is that it increasingly is seen as a means of engaging citizens. Fischer considers this a key contribution of expertise in the policy process: 'bringing citizens back into the policy-making process' (Fischer, 1993: 36). Reich refers to it as a process of 'civic discovery' (Reich, 1988). This is distinct from the interaction with stakeholders mentioned earlier. In this instance, the analyst is engaging the broader public through the facilitation of democratic debate. This is less a mode of argumentation than it is the offering of arguments that other citizens may use in their presentations. In this sense, the obligation of the analyst is to offer as many plausible constructions as possible, to widen the range of democratic discourse, to empower citizens to present their own case in a plausible manner. As Stone puts it, the search for criteria 'to justify classifications forces us to articulate our wishes, preferences and visions' (Stone, 1988: 310).

The presentation of evaluation data and findings is completely distinct in each of the preceding categories: data, audience, context and timing, and contribution to democracy. Consider the sources of data. Obviously these can be quite varied as well, but they will be disciplined by a clear set of evaluative questions. Rossi et al. make clear that whatever the type of evaluation, it is disciplined through the attempt to 'obtain answers to a range of questions' (Rossi et al., 1989: 18). The criteria whereby evidence is gathered and integrated by the policy analyst are iterative and as a result fuzzy, whereas they should be quite clear for the evaluator. Relevancy is determined by the nature of the evaluative exercise and the questions at its core. Each piece of evidence should be capable of justification within the evaluative framework. To be sure, the evaluative framework is itself negotiated with clients and stakeholders, and the first step is 'to define and establish acceptable and useful criteria' (Patton and Sawicki, 1986: 141). There is consequently less need to defend the selection of evidence once the criteria have been agreed. Judgments are obviously made as to the reliability and validity of certain forms of evidence, but these are still constrained more tightly by the canons of evaluative practice.

The evaluator's audience is typically quite different as well. The direct client may ask for recommendations based on the research, but most evaluators are (or should be!) reluctant to cross that line. This removes an enormous burden of persuasion and argument from the evaluator's shoulders. Moreover, the direct client has helped shape the evaluative framework, and so has at least a nominal stake in the findings. In these cases, the evaluator has less need to make a case about the findings, since in part those findings reflect the problem definition and goals as provided by, or reached in collaboration with, the client. Since the evaluator does not have to bring groups of clients together, once again the need to communicate in charged and persuasive terms is obviated. Clearly, evaluation results can sometimes be threatening to an agency, especially if they have been commissioned from an external client, but the evaluator is still to a large extent shielded from confrontation and defence. When evaluation results are challenged, the nature of the evaluator's discourse shifts to some degree – a more

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defensive mode by definition is one geared more towards persuasion. But even in this case the evaluator is more like someone in a witness box than someone on a soap box – responding to queries of method and interpretation as they come, rather than concocting a persuasive argument in the first instance. In 1985, for example, Weiss listed seven different meanings of the 'utilization' of policy research, but still ended with a plea for some measure of distance from politics and persuasion: 'Perhaps it is time for social scientists to pay attention to the imperatives of policy-making systems and to consider soberly what they can do, not necessarily to increase the use of research, but to improve the contribution that research makes to the wisdom of social policy' (Weiss, 1985).

Evaluation per se is not concerned with context, feasibility or window of opportunity in the same sense that policy analysis is. Since evaluation is primarily retrospective, it looks at context in terms of factors that facilitated or impeded policy success. Feasibility is interpreted not as what will work and why, but in terms of what worked or did not work before. Timing affects evaluation, but not in terms of the strategic moment to maximize influence. Timing usually comes into play as a constraint on the research process – results are wanted immediately. Finally, in terms of its contribution to democracy, we argue that this lies principally in the integrity of research. Whereas a successful policy analyst without a political sixth sense is a contradiction in terms, an evaluator who is naive about the political context but respects the integrity of the research process exudes a certain nobility. As far as democratic discourse goes, the measure of the contribution of the evaluator is precisely in his or her dispassionate presentation – the less engaged, the more neutral, the greater the attempt at objectivity and the wider the dissemination, the greater the service to the wider democratic polity.

This comparison between analysts and evaluators makes the former seem heroic, while the latter appear about as inspiring as accountants. There is a measure of truth to this, as there may be in the telephone entry that reads: 'Boring – see Engineers'. However, it is not a matter of personalities but of the intrinsic functions of analysis and evaluation. They complement each other.

Conclusion

The distinctions that we have explored in this article are widely understood and reasonably clear to both policy analysts and evaluators. Indeed, most of what we have done is simply draw on these understandings to clarify and highlight the conceptual boundaries between the two. Despite being well understood, however, these boundaries are not always well respected. In recent years, the drive to make evaluation more 'relevant' and to enhance utilization has led some observers to urge a more overt politicization of evaluation, effectively equating it with what we have defined as policy analysis.

In our view, while there is real tension between policy analysis and evaluation, as well as some overlap, and while evaluation certainly cannot be abstracted from values and political context, failure to respect and recognize the boundaries we have uncovered in this article will do a disservice to both analysis and evaluation, and by extension to the policy process as a whole. In certain circumstances, the

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boundaries can and should be crossed, but we are simply suggesting that it is important to recognize the transition from one 'mode' to another. Why does this matter?

When evaluators suggest policy options based on their evaluation research, they are using reliable data to make unreliable recommendations. That is because the selection of options depends on a much wider range of information than can be provided through standard evaluation methods. This sort of advice is properly the domain of the policy analyst, who will factor in evaluation research as one element in a variety of judgments and data, and mix it with considerations of feasibility and timing. When evaluators cross the line, but still present themselves as evaluators, they run the risk of ultimately undermining their own credibility, and violating their ethical obligation to present the research as it is and not go beyond it. Moreover, they also risk undermining the client, since their recommendations are wrapped in the aura of 'hard data' when in fact they need to be supplemented and supported by much more.

While conflating the two can hurt evaluation, it can also damage policy analysis. As we outlined above, analysis relies on a wider spectrum of evidence and a heavy dose of persuasion or argumentation. Data gathering in policy analysis is concerned with an array of secondhand information, mainly qualitative and collected in a manner close to journalistic research. Evaluation data on the other hand are typically collected by means of (various degrees of) rigorous research methodologies and address specific issues of interest. Policy analysis can benefit from a clear definition of boundaries in that it can turn to relatively 'pure' data and utilize them in the selection of policy alternatives without the fear of using an already politically contaminated information base. Although the analyst should always consider the validity of data collected for other purposes and on another time basis, keeping evaluation within its boundaries can only benefit policy analysis in this respect. Analysis is universally recognized as embedded in politics, values and organizational dynamics – there is no 'right' answer, only the answer that suits the times and the array of interests. While this is undoubtedly true and realistic, when taken to its logical conclusion it suggests that the policy process is about nothing more than raw power and the clash of interests. The notion that there are 'facts' that can be gathered through arduous, painstaking and systematic methods may in some cosmic sense be a convenient fiction, but is also indispensable to civilized politics.

Keeping policy analysis and evaluation distinct is not an act of denial. In fact it is an affirmation of what is widely known in public policy, but at times forgotten either in order to grant full measure to the weight of politics in policy making, or to seek more influence for evaluation. Good fences make good neighbours, and recalling the distinctions between analysis and evaluation will strengthen both.

Notes

1. As cited in Glasman (1987).
2. On this issue see also Majone (1980).

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3. A notable study on this issue is in particular Braybrook and Lindblom (1970).
4. The authors present the following illustration. The problem is related to day-care. The client usually provides a symptom of the problem and may state: 'My constituents are complaining about the rising cost of day-care'; or they may offer an alternative 'should the state subsidize the meals at day-care?' A coherent analytical problem definition would be in this case, 'Does the day-care industry under regulations provide an efficient and equitable supply of services? If not, why not?'
5. Citing Arnold J. Meltsner (1980).

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