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ABSTRACT

One debate in the field of development communications research focuses on the type of science that ought to be practiced: empirical or critical. The issues involved are many, but epistemological analysis can shed light on a number of them. Traditional empiricism as embodied in the "classical" development communications work is deserving of much of the criticism it has received, since it has made inappropriate claims to value-neutrality and objectivity and is ethnocentric in spite of its claims. Current philosophical formulations of empiricism, however, do not make these claims. On the contrary, they legitimize the use of value-laden assumptions in research. This has three primary implications: (1) the search for alternatives to traditional empiricism is academically valid, (2) neither critical research nor modern approaches to empirical research can exclude the other on "a priori" philosophical grounds, and (3) the two approaches are not mutually exclusive and can be used together. (Author/FL)

Issues in International Communications: Development Communications Research

by

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Abstract

One debate in the field of development communications research focuses on the type of science which ought to be practiced: empirical or critical. The issues involved are many, but this author suggests that epistemological analysis sheds light on a number of them. Traditional empiricism as embodied in the "classical" development communications work is deserving of much of the criticism it has received. Indeed it did make inappropriate claims to value-neutrality and objectivity, and indeed it was ethnocentric in spite of this claim. Current philosophical formulations of empiricism do not make the same mistakes however. On the contrary, for example, they legitimate the use of value-laden assumptions in research. This has three primary implications: 1) The search for alterntives to traditional empiricism is academically valid; 2) Neither critical research nor modern approaches to empirical research can exclude the other on a priori philosophical grounds consistent with their own; and 3) The two approaches are not mutually exclusive and can be used together.

Introduction

Development communications research is in something of a quandary today. A strong period of theory formulation in the 1960's and early 70's has given way to one of indecision. The "Classical" development paradigm has passed away, but little has risen to replace it. This quandary is marked by disputes over what "type" of social science research ought to characterize future work in the field. In the highly charged atmosphere of today's international relations some scholars have called for the use of "critical" approaches, in addition to or in place of the quantitative empirical approach that predominated past work.

Responses by empiricists have been varied. Some work towards synthesis has been done, (Harms, 1980; McAnany, 1980) but overall, responses to critics have exhibited little sympathy. (Pool, 1980; Lindsay,1980) General sentiment seems to be that we need better research, not new approaches, and that political rhetoric has come to play an inappropriately intrusive role in academic considerations. The critics, in turn, consider such responses to be products of the very type of empirical science they are criticizing; they feel that empiricist claims to value-neutrality have the effect of insulating scholars from the realities of socio-political life -- realities that persuasively indicate the need for critical work.

This paper analyzes the epistemological assumptions of empirical science and suggests that much of the criticism

is warranted. Past development theories made knowledge assumptions that, certainly by now, are very much out of date. The "passing" has neither analyzed nor replaced these underlying assumptions -- at least as is communicated in the literature. On the other hand critics of the traditional approach frequently overlook the fact that, despite daily research practices in the communications field, much of today's empiricist philosophy of science quite articulately agrees with them. Philosophers of science in growing numbers advocate empirical research which recognizes the centrality of value-based decisions in all levels of inquiry.

Consideration of simple epistemological arguments indicates that both viewpoints could benefit from a reflective discussion of current philosophies of science. The critical and empirical traditions are neither mututally exclusive nor antagonistic on scientific grounds; there is room for research based in both.

I will attempt to show that there are no <u>inherent</u> antagonisms between current formulations of empiricism and critical research, even if traditional forms of empiricism deserve a good measure of the criticism they have received. At the same time I argue that despite this compatibility, the disputes raging represent real differences in research traditions as they have been practiced, and that these differences need to be directly addressed by the field. (1)

Research as an issue

It shouldn't be necessary to explain at great length that development communications research itself has become an issue. A number of papers have addressed the matter in detail. For example, Beltran has criticised the "vertical" bias in communications planning. (Beltran, 1979) Mattelart has charged that communication research itself is in fact manipulative. (Mattelart, 1979) And Golding critiqued the entire approach to development assumed by the classical paradigm. (Golding, 1974) (2)

In addition to the specific conceptual criticisms of the "classical" development communication paradigm, however, there have been a number of criticisms addressing the type of science the paradigm represented. Some scholars have argued that the problems with classical development research began with empiricism's view of science. These criticisms are less well known, and it is these I would like to illustrate here. For these are the key to the debate, underlying the more substantive criticisms. Therefore let me review some of them before suggesting the manner in which they may be seen as a key. (3)

One common criticism, for example, regards "cultural sensitivity." Frustration is exhibited in face of the difficulty empirical methods have in researching cultural phenomena. Common sense identifies profound cultural changes resulting from, or at least in tandem with, the introduction

of Western media into less developed countries. Yet empirical standards of knowledge end up in actual practice, not only by not substantiating cultural effects but also by somehow overlooking the need to research such phenomena. Third World scholars react to this, at any rate, strongly enough to comment to this effect. (Schmucler, 1980) Unesco conference resolutions echo this as well. They ask that:

> ... consideration be given to evolving special methods of communications research which do not ignore the cultural and other unique characteristics obtaining in the respective countries of this [LDC] region and thereby ensure that the findings of such research would provide true and accurate accounts of the effects of communication flows on the target public and thereby become meaningful inputs for the design of communication systems and policies. (Unesco, 1979, p 34)

Whether or not media "effects" is a proper research concept might be questioned, but the thrust of the resolution addresses a concern for cultural phenomena. Any of a number of concepts or approaches might be used in studying cultural phenomena. Little such research is sponsored by empiricists, however.

Another topic that is focused on by critics is "activist" research. Interest in activist research comes from two related concerns. On one hand it issues from philosophical criticism of the traditionally non-political stance of empirical science. On the other hand, it reflects the interest of researchers in playing an active professional role in the development of their countries. Political, social, and economic conditions prevailing in

many less developed countries make practical involvement seem necessary indeed. Efforts are being made to develop communication systems that serve political development, although the definitions of this vary. "Democratization" is among the development goals.

We have tried to define this research as committed to political change, and in this sense, it is that which is oriented to formulate, apply and evaluate communication policies in terms of a model of actual democratization. (Capriles, 1980, p 23)

One other critical viewpoint issues from the structuralist position. Statistical limitations have severly limited conceptual possibilities, it is held, and the Cartesian tradition has taught us to specify phenomena to death. In this school of thought empiricism is considered to be inadequate in face of the complexities of human society, particularly with regard to its contradictions, conflicts and dynamics. Thus, it is argued:

The communications researchers should emphasise their investigations of the structural and overall determinations of the communication and information phenomena and of the insertion of the systems, networks and forms of communications social formations, as elements of the reproduction of the social relationships and structures. (Capriles, 1980, p 49)

Focusing on isolated phenomena which are amenable to analysis by means of a handful of variables, according to this viewpoint, is useless in analysing the nature of change in developing societies. What is needed is an approach to social research that encompasses social institutions in their entirey, capable of generating theories on their

institutional interactions. The primary root of this sort of analysis is structuralism, and is tied of course to Marxist thought. The social relationships and structures referred to are those of economic and political domination. (4)

These are but a few of the criticisms and suggestions, but they represent a broad trend of viewpoints. Such viewpoints are naturally resisted by most empirically oriented communication researchers, especially in America. Science is supposed to be free especially from cultural, religious and political values.

Science, Social Change, and Epistemology

That concern over both the quantities and types of research needed has been expressed, then, is plain enough in both independent scholarly works and in official documents of international organizations. Yet, the overall thrust of the criticisms of past development work is somewhat more difficult to assess. The variety of suggestions and criticisms is considerable, and each one comprises a difficult problem. Structural research, for example, no doubt has its place. But what is it? Are there examples of it adequate to serve as models? What about culturally sensitive research? Action-oriented research? And what can be meant by models of democratic communication, if this is indeed meant in a theoretical sense?

How can the American and other developed countries'

empiricist scholars respond to such a variety of issues? Analysis of such requests and criticisms would most profitably seek a common root to them all. Unfortunately no common root can be easily found in the variety of concepts or theories used for critical purposes. But if not there then where?

The viewpoint offered here is that the common root cannot in fact be determined at the level of communication research models or specific theories. The commonness between the various criticisms exists at a more fundamental level, i.e. in a shared desire for research approaches capable of directly addressing the value-laden processes of social change experienced by developing countries. Social change is the topic underlying the issues of both the New International Economic Order and the New International Information Order. As is indicated indirectly by a number of the references above, the true topic of criticism is the perceived inability of past empirical research to realistically recognise this.

Critics share concern for value-laden subjects and for value-committed modes of research. They also share criticism of the empirical type of research which has predominated; a type which to a large degree still predominates the field's treatment of such subjects, and which in some important respects excludes professed action on value-based concerns academically. It is at this very basic level, the level of epistemology, from which substantive criticism emerges.

This then, is a key. The feeling remains that the empirical mode of research itself somehow inhibits the conduct of needed and valid social change research. Given this, and evidence of it is clear, two questions must be answered before we can evaluate and respond to criticisms: 1) Has empiricism in fact done this, insofar as it is a type of science? 2) If so, has it been correct in doing so?

The answer to the first question, is relatively simple: Yes, it has done so. Empirical researchers traditionally learn that science should not be contaminated by biases, preferences or values, including political and cultural values, etc. This principle is embodied in tenants of the philosophy of science which establish definitions for valid scientific knowledge. Development communications research assumed these tenants, as we shall see below.

The answer to the second question is less simple. These tenants are no longer clearly valid. Current philosophy of science has largely abandoned the traditional definitions of valid scientific knowledge. It is now felt that values and biases are largely inescapable. In general it must be said that empiricism cannot clearly draw lines between scientific and value laden thought, between academic research and political or policy research, etc. Yet although this much is clear, the second question is less simply answered because the naure of knowledge, and the current standards of good and useful research seem vague.

So to a large degree the critics are perfectly right.

Most research done in the development area has assumed very simplistic, and now outdated, notions of research and knowledge. This past inadequacy needs to be examined and acknowledged if progress is to be made through debate, whether or not we have anything better with which to replace these notions.

There is one important qualification to the criticisms, however. Critics are right insofar as what I will call "traditional" empiricism has been, and is still, practiced. (Let me define this below.) They are wrong insofar as, what I'll call "current" empirical philosophy no longer makes the sort of claims that led empiricists down such a narrow path in the past. We must review a few basic points on standards of scientific epistemology, to try to sort this out.

In the next portion of this paper I review two views of scientific epistemology, both from the west. One is traditional and underlyed the classical development work. The other is current. The tumult in the field of international communications research can be better understood if the philosophical emergence of the more current view is examined. The critics, I believe, are actually best aware of the current view. And thus it can be seen that their criticisms of our field's research modes are not merely political as is often charged. They do indeed address important academic issues, even if in a politicized context. For the present, the relationship between social research and scientific knowledge needs to

be broached at the level of epistemology, to make this clear.

Empirical epistemology or "What is valid knowledge?"

A review of some history could be helpful here, even if it may seem somewhat remedial. In the earliest years of its development, as we all know, in the 16th and 17th centuries, one of science's most noticeable results was the liberation of thought from the strictures of the church. (Bernal, 1965, p 446) De Cartes trod a thin line diverging from then current standards of knowledge represented by Church scholarship. Galileo was censured by the Church for his opinions. The science which resulted from the modern thought represented in these men went its own way, away from social and church dogma. Eventually, science became characterized by the deliberate effort to separate its own goals of inquiry from social goals and values.

This history came to be represented in formulations of what is the nature of valid scientific knowledge and what is not, of what is understanding and what is dogma. These formulations are the heart of the matter in considering empiricism and its approach to value-laden social phenomena.

A fundamental empiricist axiom is that knowledge comes not from rationalist or deductive schemes but rather from observation of the world. This philosophy was developed by English philosophers of the "empiricist" school in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Their greatest names included

John Locke, Edmund Burke, and David Hume. (Taylor, 1961) The axiom has a number of results that bear upon the role science is allowed to play in the value-laden processes of social change.

This "observation" axiom is based upon a more fundamental assumption that we are taught in our elementary philosophy. It holds that the stuff of the natural world is somehow composed of real, universal objects and that through our perceptive organs we have access to these, as "brute facts." Thus as scientists we "observe." Facts, since they are supposed to exist universally are considered to be value-free, and thus so is the observation of them. And theories based on observation are also therefore value-free, if thoughtfully constructed. This is the bedrock upon which traditional empiricism rested, and its logical result is the belief that factual knowledge is and must be considered to be of a realm <u>separate</u> from values. For an example of this philosophic "naturalism" see Ernst Nagel's THE STRUCTURE OF SCIENCE. (Nagel, 1961)

A second and related result of the observation axiom is the notion that there is no suitable basis for evaluating value-based explanations of the world. Expressions such as, "Society ought to progress toward equality," or "Human beings are basically good," have no place in traditional empirical social science theories. Cultural value systems defy rigorous empirical research of the traditional variety. They cannot be empirically observed and therefore cannot be

controlled or tested. Although values have been studied by many social scientists, such studies have generally sought an objective basis upon which to validate their findings. Consequently, the predominant trends in the scientific study of human life in the 20th century have stringently avoided the "murky" areas of value and sought firmer ground upon which to stand, focusing on tests of observable "behavior." The dichotomy is sometimes expressed as the distinction between empirical and normative theories. (Taylor, 1969)

To summarize, empiricism's foundation is a belief in the objectivity of observation. It results, for our purposes here, in a set of knowledge standards that exclude values as respectable objects of inquiry, due to the difficulty of observing values objectively.

This approach to knowledge was developed initially in the physical sciences, as is well known, but was later applied to the social sciences as well. (Kaplan, 1964 pp 3-4) It has since dominated western, and particularly American scholarship. Over the last one-hundred years philosophy has become became less influential. The grand, synthetic social theorizing of early social scholars such as Max Weber and Emile Durkheim has lost fashion, giving way to more narrowly defined "empirical" social study. And psychology has become increasingly behaviorally oriented.

Today this history is reflected also in the philosophical basis upon which Western scholars reject demands for research to be more instrumental in social

change. Scientific objectivity is precisely a standard that frees us from value issues extraneous to knowledge, so it goes. Knowledge and value committments of any kind, especially political ones, have become for empirical science an inviolable dichotomy.

The point to made here is that this dichotomy also has very practical results, which orient research away from value oriented studies, and otherwise ignor value-laden dimensions of knowledge.

Harold Lasswell, a political scientist who contributed greatly to the field of communications, exemplified this distinction in his work on policy analysis. In outlining his approch he split knowledge in two, thinking he could rely upon only the "objective" part:

> "The present conception conforms...to the philosophical tradition in which politics and ethics have always been closely associated. But it deviates from the tradition in giving full recognition to the existence of two distinct components in political theory--the empirical propositions of political science and the value judgments of political doctrine. Only statements of the first kind are formulated in the present work." (quoted in Taylor, 1969, p 156)

In his work he indeed separated "empirical" statements from those which comprise "value judgments," and this was based on a fundamental supposition regarding the nature of scientific knowledge. This is the supposition which maintains that the two realms of empirical fact and value may, in fact must, be treated as separate.

This background in elementary philosophy of social science can bring some perspective to the work of development communications research. Naturally, the value-neutral assumption was made in the field of development communications as well.

It is generally known that development communication theory was actually part of a larger view of international development formulated in the Post War period, i.e. Modernization Theory. (Eisenstadt,1976; Beal and Jussawalla, 1981) It was modernization theory that provided the framework within which communication was studied. The dimension of "traditionalism" and "modernity" formed its essence. It is from modernization theory that the communications work of the period derived such concepts for its own work. Notions concerning the contribution of economic growth to national development were also an important part of modernization theory (Rostow, 1960), and were presumed in development communications theories as well. Similarly presumed were theories concerning the secularization of culture, the differentiation of social roles, and the evolution of individualistic achievement motivations within individuals. (Black, 1966)

From modernization theory came many ideas familiar to the communications field, found in the works of Wilbur Schramm (Schramm, 1964) and Daniel Lerner (Lerner, 1958). It was modernization theory that proposed the image of the Western Industrialized coundtries as the more or less

inevitable, and desireable, goal of all growing countries. Development communications work contributed to the modernization paradigm in important ways, but it did not invent these fundamental ideas.

An element of this history that is less frequently discussed, however, is the theoretical claims of these development ideas. And they are of particular importance here. They did, as we know, claim to be universal, to apply to all "developing" nations. But what is important is that they based this claim upon scientific grounds, as theory. The theoretical substance of modernization theory was Functionalism, Post-War sociology's crowning achievement in objective social theory. (Tipps, 1973) It thought, at this time, that it had at last found the foundations of a value-free approach to social research based in the concepts of "system" and "functional" relations. (Buckley, 1967)

Development communications work was very understandably steeped in these scientific goals and beliefs. In Latin America particularly, development work was associated with functionalist social science. One Latin American scholar explains: "Within the bounds of communication studies, funcationalism arrived hand in hand with some theories regarding development." (Schmucler, 1980, p 1) Another emphasizes the negativity assigned to this association: "Critical research in social sciences and particularly in regard to mass communication has nearly always defined itself in Latin America by its rupture with functionalism."

(Barbero, 1980, p 2)

Current Epistemology

As has been suggested, this position traditionally taken by empiricism, by modernization theory, and by development communications, is by now somewhat archaic. This is because the more general philosophical dichotomy between facts and values is no longer considered to be tenable. And here is where we find that the criticisms begin to make sense. The status of the "perennial" issue has changed during what might be referred to as an "epistemological shift" in the philosophy of science. Still important as a purely philosophic issue perhaps, the rigorous distinction between facts and values has become fuzzy, and this is altering the basis upon which research, and scientific theories may be judged. (5)

The reason for reviewing the somewhat archaic formulation has to do partly with changes this "shift" has rendered in research, but more importantly with changes that are not being rendered in spite of it. The shift is well advanced in philosophy, and is known to a certain number of researchers in all fields. But at the same time, the implications of this breakdown of the formerly clear distinction between fact and value have been only cursorily recognized throughout the greater portion of the social sciences, including the field of communications. Lasswell's split, though not often maintained explicitly these days,

still somehow characterizes a great part social science's "self-conception." (Moon, 1975; Bernstein, 1976) This seems to be true in development communications at least. According to the common practices scientists still are not to be principally concerned with political and ethical questions.

If it were merely a matter of science's principal concern, of course this would not be an important issue. But implications of the shift go somewhat beyond the matter of what is social science's principal business. They logically intrude into the nature of social scientific theories and research practices, and thus they imply changes in the methods we use and the standards by which we judge the validity of research approaches. Or rather, they should.

To date the field of development communications research has largely disabused itself of the old, i.e. "classical," concepts and theories. The concepts of "modernity," of "early" and "late" adopters" and the like have lost the focus of attention. But the scientific foundations which initially supported the classical approach remain. So it would seem. The traditional knowledge assumptions which biased our development concepts in the name of objective social theory toward a western concept of world development remain. They no longer have specific theories to legitimate as they once did, but they do serve, still, to f "s research away from today's value oriented proble

This can be seen in the dearth of writing on s ch matters in the debates concerning research. Little credence

is given to concern over theoretical standards themselves. More often, Western responses point at what they see as political meddling in the academic arena. Thus, what may seem obvious to some requires review.

Let me document certain respects in which critics seem justified. The outline of empiricism's epistemological starting point offered above, as I have said, is traditional rather than current. We now must deal with more modern views, views which corroborate criticisms about the falseness of claims to value-neutrality, and which indirectly corroborate criticisms alleging empiricism's narrowness.

First, it can no longer be said that observation is completely objective, even theoretically. Observation was always considered a difficult task requiring discipline and training, of course, but it was required of traditional empiricism that observation be considered theoretically objective. Danger of bias was thought to reside in the drawing of inferences from data by which to identify generalizations, but not in the act of observation itself. (Berlo, 1960, p 273) Major fractures of the traditional approach occurred, as is generally known, with developments in the hard sciences themselves, initially with physics.

Einstein's principle of relativity and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle indicated that the world is in fact not constituted such that what we see through our observations is "objective." Instead, what we see is

relative to our purposes, biases, etc, even in the act of observation. As one communications theorist has recently explained, "observation itself involves inferences." (Krippendorf, 1980 p 21)(See also Kerlinger, 1964, pp 491-2) Inferring from empirical findings or observations is a very tricky business, one without truely formal methods. It begins one place where values and biases enter the research process, one place that is absolutely fundamental to empirical work, i.e. in observation.

In the social sciences this point is especially important because the biases and assumptions researchers bring to their studies are often value-laden in ways that relate directly to the actual subjects of study. To take the case in point, our communication theorists brought assumptions or biases concerning the nature of societies, and of social "progress," that they thought were generalizable and objective. It is now clear that they were not. Values concerning political pluralism, individualism, materialism, and other highly regarded Western ideals were made a part of theories concerning social conditions to which they had little relevance. Respecting the current views on epistemology requires that values be explicitly recognized and stated, whenever possible.

As mentioned, despite the fact of this shift, much work conducted in the social sciences today, including communications, assumes a more traditional viewpoint. A recent and otherwise excellent work by Rogers and Kincaid

for example, seeks to avoid the "mechanism" of early empiricism, but nowhere addresses the fundamental issues of values or social change. (Rogers and Kincaid, 1981) It is here that the more academically sophisticated critics make their strong arguments. They see a discrepancy between the new teachings of the philosophy of science, some of which come from America, and the standards they were and still sometimes are asked to accept in communications research.

With this background certain Third World criticisms can be understood as something other than political. Refering back to critical scholars reviewed above. Diaz-Bordenave's desire for "culturally appropriate" methods of research can be seen as a reaction against standards of knowledge that hold value differences to be too vague for scientific inquiry. Capriles' call for "democratically committed" research can be seen as a reaction against standards that consider normative, value based, theories to be <u>a priori</u> inappropriate. Such critics have commonly dubbed the traditional American standards as characteristic of "scientism;" a blind faith in the objectivity of phenomena and in science which is held to be nature's best examiner -- a belief they do not share philosophically, and which they think to be outdated.

The fall of value-neutral empiricism does not of course validate any other particular approach. But it does indeed support criticims of traditional empiricism as operationalised in development communications research, and

it should therefore open the floor to discussion of new views.

This is the main insight epistemological analysis provides. It looks beneath the variety of specific conceptual criticisms to the conception of science being used. It provides the background necessary to both understand the criticisms and to more clearly understand the dilemma the field faces. In the context of the research debate, the "passing" of value-free science fundamentally changes our standards, or at least it should if scientific alternatives to the past are to be discovered.

This is a good point to stop and rest. Indeed it is needed, partly because the problem is so seemingly vague. We've traversed the issue, its philosophical definition, its empirical history. We can see the current problem and we can look forward to future directions. But the question is: "What next?" This is the major question now, and it is a difficult one. The present author doesn't presume to answer it. This paper's goals have been different. The first has been to analyze the traditional empiricist assumptions underlying development communications research. The second has been to show that while current criticisms of traditional development work are valid in some important empistemological respects, nevertheless critical research and empiricism are not inherently mutually antagonistic. This is due to advances made in empirical philosophy of science, whether or not implications of these advances have

impacted the field's literature yet. Let me expand on this last point once before closing.

More and more, empiricists are making the same philosophical criticisms as the critical scholars. Empiricism is not confined to value-neutrality as it once was. Even if it's methods and it practice still tend to be rather traditional, trends in modern empiricism allow for much broaader approaches to conceptualization. It, no more that "critical" work, can be ruled out on an a priori or philosophical basis.

So, what can knowledge be based upon if not the old definition of objectivity? Since observations can no longer considered to be objective, they must be evaluated in reference to conceptual or theoretical frameworks which are admittedly based upon value-laden assumptions, at least at the level of social research. These frameworks give meaning to observations and at the same time illustrate assumptions underlying research. Based upon this kind of approach, for example, Kaplan has sought a middle way between total relativism and total objectivism with what he calls "objective relativism," in his book on methodology in behavioral research. (Kaplan, 1964, pp 392-3) He means to say that although we cannot be completely objective we need not fall into complete relativism; that there is a kind of reality "out there" that is not simply a function of our imaginations. Thus, although it is relative to our knowing, we may nevertheless call it objective. Karl Popper is

another philosopher of science who, although very different from Kaplan, takes a more sophisticated road. He begins his formulation of "objective" knowledge by critically mixing, both at the same time, elements of what used to be called subjective and objective approaches to knowledge. (Popper, 1972, p 104)

Philosophically speaking, empiricism has recognized new, non-objectivist standards. And this opens the way to a dependency between criticial and empirical work, since the assumptions stated for research definitions may be of any kind. They may be Marxist or capitalist or anything between. It is in this sense that the two traditions can no longer be thought of an inherently contradictory.

Conclusion

There are those who would pishaw concern over objectivism. Many researchers are aware enough of the developments of modern thought that discussions such as this can seem old and platitudinous. (Lang, 1979) But such discussion is needed, especially insofar as recognition by the field of communications is more important than recognition by any number of individuals separately. That a few individuals recognize the problem is not enough. The field as a whole, without by any means having to agree on solutions, must register recognition of the problem as the scientific one it is. On the issue of objectivism, this has

not occured in a sufficiently broad manner. (Chaffee, 1981)

Some empiricists have recognized some problems and offered their conceptual alternatives, but as recalled above conceptual issues are not the only ones involved. A strictly speaking philosophical recognition of the impact of values on research, and of its past impacts upon the subjects of our research is required in tandem with conceptual and methodological alternatives. This is necessary to complete the field's reconsideration of development communications research.

Certainly this is not easy. Empirical approaches seeking to account for values by calculating them in will not of course suffice. As Kaplan says, this approach must rely on an empirical grounding of value systems. (Kaplan, 1964, p 387) For example, how can one otherwise partial out of a research design the fact that one is of one religious or political belief rather than another; the fact that one is doing the research for a particular agency; or the fact that one is a researcher in the first place? The researcher can, using this method, account only for his or her own view of their role and contribution.

Another alternative involves specifying a universal theory of the Good and one's roles and intentions. Yet such a theory does not seem to be in the offing at the moment, anymore than does an empirical grounding for value systems. It would seem therefore, that today, standards for valid knowledge are required that are more open ended and less

stringent. They are in fact the only ones possible.

On the other hand Marxist and structuralist approaches have their own problems, for they too can be positivitic and objectivistic. (Barbero, 1980) It is as easy to define a country's condition in absolutist and politically self serving terms through Marxism as it is through traditional empiricism. Some neo-Marxist theorists agree. This recognition was the basis for the Frankfurt School's work, for example. Its scholars reacted to Stalinization on a theoretical plain and sought to reinterpret Marx. (Jay, 1973) Concerning epistemology, the Frankfurt School's work is to deterministic Marxism as current empiricism is to traditional empiricism. (Wellmer, 1971)

Thus we find that despite the ease of criticizing traditional empiricism epistemologically, philosophical and theoretical alternatives are not so easily found. In surveying work offered in the development area today we find a similar paucity of clearly offered formulations. (7) But in light of the difficulty of the underlying philosophical issues, this is perhaps no condemnation.

In the end, a "philosophical" alternative, one that is completely accounted for philosophically and scientifically is perhaps not a realistic goal for the time being. Broad theoretical thinking together with modest claims and practicality could be productive, and should be able to avoid the sort of problems which have lead to the issue we are considering here. (6)

Since this discussion has been somewhat abstruse I would like to close by making some rather more concise suggestions for consideration. Included are research topics that might help to air the dispute, and topics for conference discussion and debate:

1) Discuss, what is the basis of knowledge in the communication sciences. How do we distinguish it from technical, practical, and common sense knowledge? How do we know when we have it? In other words, discuss what is theory.

2) More specifically, discuss, how can values be explicated in theoretical and conceptual frameworks without falling victim to totally relativistic knowledge standards? This must be attempted, and it must be successful if any sense at all of social science is to be retained.

3) To structure such discussion, a list could be constructed of points in theory construction and research design where values legitimately enter in.

4) Another list could be constructed of ways that a certain kind of non-naive objectivity can legitimately be entertained in research interpretations.

5) Comparative studies, utilizing both traditional and modern epistemological standards, could be performed as well. Or more applied topics could be comparatively addressed, such as problems in particular planning contexts. This way the effects of various assumptions could be explored and illustrated.

6) Various theoretical approaches, including Marxism, structuralism, and semiotics, should also be examined with regard to their own assumptions. Structuralism, marxism, and as we have seen, empiricism, can all be formulated in either objectivist or non-objectivist ways. Objectivism must be avoided in all its forms, of course, not just its empiricist varieties.

Such discussion and analysis would serve to bring the overlooked subject of research approaches to light in academic debates over international communications, in a

constructive way. International uses of research approaches are politically determined to a significant degree, but standards of good research are so to a much lesser extent. If our views of these standards can be clarified, then the relationship between our academic and our political debates will also be clearer, and perhaps debate can progress towards research.

Footnotes

1) I will refer to scholars in the field who have been critical of communications work as critical researchers or critical scholars. This reference is not to be confused with any to Critical Theorists, scholars identified with the Frankfurt School. There are certain similarities between them, but the two groups have distinctly different histories.

2) See also: Beltran:1976, Felsthausen:1973, Grunig:1971, Kearl:1976, Peacock:1969, Rogers:1976.

3) It should perhaps be said here that a wide variety of viewpoints is represented in the criticisms. Politically radical and moderate, academically quantative and qualitative. It is better not to view the criticisms as monolithic. Rather, they are diverse.

4) The structuralist approach has attracted considerable interest in recent years, and a Marxist orientation to this development has characterized many of the positions. It should be noted, however, that structuralist analysis does not necessarily imply Marxist roots. The structuralist tradition is very rich, having contributed to a number of fields including linguistics, anthropology, psychoanalysis, and others. There is support for its use in communications research among American scholars as well. (McAnany, 1980)

5) Leading philosophers of science have held for many years now that such standards for scientific knowledge are far too simple. Commonly such empirical standards are refered to by the term, "foundation metaphor." (See W. V. O. Quine, 1953; Wilfrid Sellars, 1963; Feyerabend, 1962; Scheffler, 1967)

6) Recent work by Teheranian exemplifies complementary use of broad theoretical thinking and empirical measurement practices. (Teheranian: 1980)

7) There is considerable discussion of the notion of "participation" is development work, recently. (See Beal and Jussawalla, 1981) It has been incorporated into thought about communications as well, but despite its promise as a general approach it is defined only vaguely as a research concept so far. Formulations of its nature as theory have not appeared yet, to my reading, and I therefore will only mention it here.

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