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ABSTRACT
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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 analyses 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 inherent
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
criticized 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 :artes 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 characterised
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 separate 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 contri-
buted 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" state-
ments 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 knowle⬤e, 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 ; 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 areana. 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 a priori 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
operationalized 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 broader 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 standa:ds. 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, 19.73) 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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