

Cmoreno900@aol.com
carlos.moreno@undp.org

This paper was presented at the University of Miami, February 6-8, 1997, at the Fourteenth Annual Intercultural and International Communication Conference. Miami, U.S.A.

**INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: SELECTED
EPISTEMOLOGICAL
TRAITS THROUGH SOME OF ITS THEORIES, CONCEPTS,
DIMENSIONS AND METHODOLOGY¹**

By
Carlos Moreno

"Scientific thought succumbed because it violated the first law of culture, which says that "the more man controls anything, the more uncontrollable both become." In the totalizing rhetoric of its mythology, science purported to be its own justification and sought to control and autonomize its discourse. Yet its only justification was proof, for which there could be no justification within its own discourse, and the more it controlled its discourse by subjecting it to the criterion of proof, the more uncontrollable its discourse became. Its own activity constantly fragmented the unity of knowledge it sought to project. The more it knew, the more there was to know."

Stephen Tyler

INTRODUCTION

In attempting to write an essay about the state of art in intercultural communication (I.C.) there is nothing better than to do it through a few of those anecdotes in the likes of which many of us have gotten involved when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds. The literature about I.C. is completely full of these kinds of anecdotes. They are possibly the best

¹ This paper was written as a course paper at Howard University, Department of Human Communications in 1994.

examples for illustrating theories, methodologies as well as the core of knowledge in I.C.. A foreigner entering a Japanese home without removing his or her shoes or a Northamerican keeping a certain distance while speaking with a person from the Middle East are some of those typical examples. A particular anecdote that I want to narrate happened recently while this author was attending a party with people from different cultural backgrounds. A young boy from an Indian family, first generation born in the United States, and about twelve or thirteen years old, came to me and asked, "Are you Hispanic?" My first reaction to the tone of his voice and his attitude was to feel if this young guy was seeing in front of him a "label", a "category"; I wondered whether he could see just another person. I responded, "Hispanics are people from Spain and I am not from Spain." My answer was such that today I believe it was a surprise for him as well as for me. Responding with an O.K. sign, the young boy moved away from me.

This scene which could be labeled as an unfortunate, ineffective -and perhaps rude- situation between two persons from different cultural backgrounds trying to communicate is, however, more than that. It symbolizes, in essence, the meaning and the complexity present today in many similar situations around the world when people that are different -in this case culturally- are trying to communicate among themselves.

A field like I.C., which is seen as a new and growing field, pertains to the field of communication, and defines its main purpose as related to these issues, specifically, trying to understand how people communicate among themselves and how their cultures frame this communication, its means as well as its results.

Trying then to deal with some of these issues currently defined, conceptualized, and researched by this field, this paper will try to focus on some prevailing perspectives and discussions. To accomplish this goal, the paper will illustrate some trends in social sciences and communication that are being discussed contemporarily. Next, a detailed epistemological description of some of the current points of view used in social sciences, communication, and I.C. will be made, particularly emphasizing some of the modernist assumptions in contrast with some of the postmodernist assumptions. This, in order to offer an open background about some important points of view, are seen to be disregarded in some of these fields, but specifically in I.C.. Continuing, a critical review about some of their theories, methodologies, concepts as well as subfields will be attempted using, for that purpose, some of the modern and postmodern assumptions previously discussed. It is the central expectation of this paper to demonstrate how the influence of modernism in general, but positivism in particular, as a deep philosophical base - almost like a kind of "worldview"- is present through the theories, methodologies, and concepts discussed and proposed in this field.

L. A BRIEF PANORAMA IN COMMUNICATION

In the summer of 1993, for the second time in the last twenty years the Journal of Communication published a series of articles trying to see the "ferment of change" in communication. Despite all the different points of view, proposals and approaches of the authors (Craig, 1993; Davis & Jasinski, 1993; Shepherd, 1993; Lang & Lang, 1993; Newcomb, 1993), it is interesting to note that some general conclusions seem to apply not only to communication but also to a subfield like I.C.. We will discuss all those conclusions that could be seen to be related to

both communication and I.C.

First of all, It is very clear that there is an atmosphere of change, not only in communication but also in the social sciences. However, considering the case of communication, this change reveals different aspects according to the perspectives and worldview of the authors. That is, whereas some of them link this change to socio-political changes in the foundations of society (Davis & Jasinski, Craig, Newcomb), others see this change produced mainly in the context of change of the scientific arena -e.g. paradigms, theories, and methodologies- (Rosengren, Sheperd, Lang & lang). Davis & Jasinski (1993), for example, point out that modernism, as a kind of worldview which has oriented Western culture, is in a process of complete decline. Consequently, the notions of sciences, institutions, and so on are being questioned. On the other hand, for authors such as Rosengren (1993), the change is seen through the transition between approaches with different epistemological foundations.

Second, an important feature pointed out by some of these authors is the decline of certain influential theories and approaches that were significant two or three decades ago. For instance, according to Rosengren, following Burrell and Morgan's typology, two dimensions permit a distinction between some approaches not only in other social disciplines but also in communication. One of these dimensions covers the assumptions about the nature of social sciences (objectivist/subjectivist), and the other about the nature of society (regulation/radical change, consensus/conflict) (Rosengren, 1993:6). Rosengren's point of view is that while in the late 1970s the regulation/radical change dimension was predominant, today the predominant one is the objectivist/subjectivist dimension. Under such considerations, then, a common example cited is the decline of the Marxist approach. Yung-Ho Im, for example, discussing critical studies in communication in South Korea points out:

"...the rise of revisionist ideas such as post Marxism, analytic Marxism, and post-modernism have threatened critical studies. These theories call into question the major tenets of Marxism and undermine the theoretical, philosophical and political rationale of Marxism, which has been undeniably influential in shaping critical communication studies in Korea" (Yung-Ho Im, 1993:111).

For some others, without following the typology used by Rosengren, the decline of certain approaches came, in contrast, from the notions themselves, used traditionally for understanding scientific issues. Craig, for example, mentions that the typical factor of falsifiability -sine qua non of the Popperian science, and therefore, of many approaches in social sciences and communication- seen regularly as a lackness in the speculative grand theories, is, perhaps, not necessary anymore in front of approaches like those developed by Habermas, Foucault or Giddens (Craig, 1993:30). In the light of these new approaches it is obvious that science as any other activity responds to extra and intra theoretical interests. Davis and Jasinski also make observations in the same direction saying that the early communication approaches have had strong ties to modernism. Thus, with the decline of modernism, it is expected that a decline in those quantitative approaches which helped from the 1940s to describe, explain, and improve modern social institutions would also take place (Davis & Jasinski 1993:141).

Third, although all of them recognize the growth as well as a large contribution of

communication as a field, at the same time, they are skeptical about its present and future. Fragmentation, uncertainty, isolation, lack of ontological status, a sense of crisis, and lack of confrontation and cooperation are some of the terms used for characterizing the field in this current state. Quoting Rosengren, for example,

"It is as if the field of communication research were punctuated by a number of isolated frog ponds--with no friendly croaking between the ponds, very little productive intercourse at all, few cases of successful cross-fertilization." (Rosengren, 1993:9).

Fourth, the alternatives suggested by various observers in order to correct this state of affairs reflect their own perspectives. In others words, each one proposes an alternative. Trying to group them, it could be said that there are mainly three kinds of alternatives. Interdisciplinarity is the first one. For researchers such as Newcome, Lang & Lang, Craig, and Davis & Jasinski, the atmosphere of change in social sciences is presenting two alternatives: one is to be "open" in order to work and combine points of view with other disciplines (e.g. sociology, anthropology, history) or to be "close", that is, to work fundamentally from within the field of communication itself.

Following the search for interdisciplinarity, a second alternative proposed is related to the improvement of all those activities orienting the scientific arena: production of theories, formulation of models, and application of methodologies. Rosengren's point of view, for example, is that the field of communication has to work for accumulation in the Khunian sense. In addition, it has to work putting together..."three elements central to all scholarly activity : substantive theories, formal models, and empirical data" (Rosengren, 1993:9). According to him, some subjectivist approaches tend to leave aside formal models that are not only mathematical and statistical models but also models with a basis in logic. Unfortunately, he does not observe how the mathematical and statistical models form the predominant stream in objectivistic approaches.

In a similar direction but from a different point of view, Craig points out the need for "rethinking" the notions of theory. According to him the common notions of theory today (e.g. falsifiability and empirical generalizations) are different from those of the 1970s when more or less everyone knew what a theory was. For him the existence of so many theories right now does not mean that they have become more scientific. Actually, "the new schools of interdisciplinary theory show little resemblance to traditional forms of theory in the empirical sciences" (Craig, 1993:29). Addressing the changes in notions of theory and implicitly in the notion of science itself, he also underlines "a blurring of the boundary between theory and practice". In his own words:

"...the epistemological holy trinity [explanation, prediction, and control] has become deeply problematic as attention has been drawn to the potentially constitutive role of theory in social life. ...given a constitutive rather than just an explanatory function, theory must address other issues and pursue other goals in order to justify itself as an activity" (Craig,1993:30-31).

As can be seen from those perspectives, the first one proposes an alternative mainly centered in the context of science, while the second one goes beyond, linking the scientific

activities to socio-political dimensions.

The next alternative is related to the second one and it consists of epistemological foundations in social sciences. In particular, an issue pointed out by some authors deals with the capability of generalization in social sciences. Again, whether this is possible or not, depends on the approach and philosophical base on which each author relies. It means, on the one hand, that those who see the "crisis" in the context of science mainly consider that, if communication as a field applies rigor and formalization, it should generalize laws as well as other fields do. It is important to recall here that rigor and formalization in order to establish general laws are understood commonly as traces of positivist sciences more than any other. On the other hand, for those authors discussing the "crisis" in a wider context -not only knowledge but also socio-political dimensions- the possibilities of generalization are not a determinant issue. Davis and Jasinski seem implicitly to show this, for example, when they discuss the recent transformations, they open the door for considering the new experimentation that is going on in many fields of social sciences. This experimentation goes hand by hand with the so-called postmodernist approaches and it is obvious that from this perspective there is no clear interest for generalizing. This issue however has deeper roots and it will be discussed again below.

To sum up, there is no doubt that social sciences as well as communication are passing through a serious process of change. However, this change does not have the same perspective or sources among different authors. While for some scholars this atmosphere is seen in the context of the main scientific activities, for others the same atmosphere transcends intra-theoretical interests of science and involves extra-theoretical interests. Moreover, a "crisis" in the field of communication is recognized despite the progress and maturity already achieved. In the same vein, the solution for such a "crisis" must incorporate mainly three facts: the search for interdisciplinary work, the improvement of all those activities that comprise scientific activities, and the consideration of discussing more deeply the epistemological foundations of an idea such as a generalization of human behavior.

II. A PANORAMA IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

The preceding discussion in communication sheds important light to configure a similar panorama in intercultural communication. There are several reasons for that. One of them is that some of the discussed assumptions are not only valid for communication but also for some of the theoretical and methodological issues in intercultural communication. A second reason is that the preceding discussion has in its core significant and different points of view underlying the approaches, the alternatives, as well as comments about the current "state of the art" in communication and, therefore by reflection, in I.C.. A third reason is that such a discussion reveals also the essential epistemological concerns today not only in communication but also in the social sciences. In this sense as Marcus and Fisher have said, it is important to remember that the crisis of representation in the social sciences in the last decades has shifted from theoretical -- based on a "grand theory"-- to the level of method, epistemology and interpretation (Marcus & Fisher, 1986:7).

Under this shadow it is then an assumption of this paper that the key directions, approaches and theorization in any social science must be based and seen fundamentally in philosophy; and

therefore, in epistemology specially because it is from it that the core of any discipline --theory, method-- can be seen. In the case of I.C., for example, a distinctive trend that appears clearly is the use of regular positivist and quantitative approaches. We believe, this trend, in contrast to putting I.C. in the current of ongoing discussions, puts it in the traditional style of performing the sciences. In the current moment, for instance, with all the conflicts that are going on -particularly ethnic conflicts around the world- it does not seem justifiable that this new field maintains a perspective of knowing without contributing to change, or at least, to understand what is going on.

Epistemological trends in Intercultural Communication

Discussing some of the trends in the field of communication and also in I.C., Ling Chin points out how knowing and being -two fundamental issues that he reduces to an epistemological one- not only continue to be controversial today, but also they are at the bottom of the different definition and conceptualization of communication as a discipline (Ling Chen, 1993:342). According to him, in the West there have been two branches in the field of communication which have had predominant positions. On the one hand, one branch -known as empiricism- bases its points of view on the premise that people know because the world exists for them to perceive. Therefore, this branch presupposes an objective world that is the only criterion for the veracity of knowledge; therefore, if the truth is knowable, it is communicable. Furthermore, in this case communication is regarded as a tool for transferring or reflecting truth. On the other hand, the second branch -known as rationalism- bases its position on the premise that people know because they have the ability to reason. Then, from this assumption, humans as rational beings are capable of creating and using symbols. This practice of using symbols leads to reasoning and the production of knowledge. In the case of Western culture, Chen, underlines that those two branches reflect the mind and body dichotomy since the 17th century, the moment at which the origin of the modern sciences can be located.

On their side, Gudykunst and Nishida examining the theoretical perspectives In I.C., follow the Burrell & Morgan typology². In particular, they follow the dimension related to the nature of science (objectivist/subjectivist) in contrast to the dimension of the nature of society (consensus/conflict, regulation/radical change). The reason, according to them, is that "no current theory in I.C. stems from conflict assumptions and our view {is} that {the} two processes {conflict/consensus} are interdependent" (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1989:41). The fact that current theory in I.C. does not stem from conflict assumptions, then marks a differentiation for I.C. from communication theory because it means that I.C. does not have links with critical approaches such as critical theories, marxist theories, or French existentialism which are those approaches Rosengren recognizes as of a dimension of the nature of society. In that context I.C. is more linked to integrative theory, social system theory, and hermeneutic theory.

2 Rosengren works with two dimensions taken from the original Burrell & Morgan's typology. These are a) nature of social science (objectivist/subjectivist) and b) nature of society (regulation/radical change, consensus /conflict. For I.C. specifically, Gudykunst and Nishida work only with dimension a) and add another which is a dimension related to the origin of theory (adapted from a communication theory, borrowed from another discipline, or "invented" to deal with intercultural phenomena).

Amplifying the discussion about epistemological trends in communication, Littlejohn makes a differentiation recognizing two other branches: constructivism and social constructionism. The first one, according to him, "...holds that people create knowledge in order to function pragmatically in life" (Littlejohn, 1992:31). That is, what people experience is what they project. Furthermore, he adds that from this point of view, "...phenomena in the world can be fruitfully conceptualized many different ways, knowledge being what the person has made of the world" (Littlejohn, 1992:31). The second one, the social constructionism, is seen by him as related to constructivism; and it is understood as that knowledge that is "a product of symbolic interaction within social groups" (Littlejohn, 1992:31). From this last point of view, knowledge and, therefore, reality is a social construct and the result of culture and groups. Similarly, for him the positions taken with respect to one or another of these considerations are seen as worldviews.

More generally, while examining the trends referred to from the various authors, some important facts may be observed. First, the epistemological traits mentioned by Chen coincide with Burrell & Morgan's typology followed by Gudykunst and Nishida for the theoretical perspectives in I.C.. That is, to the characteristics attributed to the subjectivistic/objectivistic dimension, correspond the characteristics attributed to the rationalistic/empirical branches respectively. Second, while the first authors see the "classical" differences between the most influential assumptions -rationalism and empiricism/subjectivism and objectivism- Littlejohn advances to recognize points of view of the contemporary discussion in epistemology. Third, Chen, Gudykunst & Nishida mention that in communication as well as I.C. there exists an attempt for establishing a middle-of-the-road position between the two extremes (Chen, 1993:343). In fact, Gudykunst and Nishida propose that those two positions should not be treated as a dichotomy but as ends of a continuum (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1989:38). However, things do not seem to move towards conciliation despite this proposed conciliation. At the bottom of all these trends, there are worldviews, intra and extra theoretical interests, and not only epistemological differences. To suppose that differences respond only to theoretical differences is to argue that the role of I.C. is only related to knowledge. And there is a serious concern about the constitutive role of theory in social life. Fourth, indeed empiricism and rationalism had dominated the scene from which communication and I.C. have worked, but the reason is because these epistemological foundations are at the base of the positivist philosophy that gave -and still give- origin to modern social sciences. In contradiction to these assumptions it is a position of this paper, that this discussion is better understood within the current differentiation between modern and postmodern styles of conducting science.

The reason for proposing to discuss these epistemological trends in term of modernism and postmodernism³ is that, in this discussion, there are important differences that definitely are changing the rigid and classic treatment of some traditional disciplines, not only how scholars

3. The meaning that this difference -modern/postmodern- has mainly in this paper is related to principles. If we see, for example, that positivism as a principle is the child of modernity and as such it determines a very clear style of doing science from inside as well as outside. On the contrary, if we see postmodern discussion as trying to deconstruct this style and proposing, at least, other styles characterized by being open and distant from the rigid rhetoric used by modernity about reality, it is something more than a unilineal text.

have observed all those issues related to human beings but also the performance of the scientific community itself, as human beings dealing with other human beings. Therefore in essence if we see some differences between these two approaches these are in the epistemological foundations. That is, how we are representing all those phenomena related to human beings, how we are getting that knowledge, for what that knowledge is useful, and how we are narrating the knowledge gained.

Modern presumptions

In this context and along with those different trends it is important to question why modernism has been so significant as a worldview not only in all societal arenas in general but also in social sciences such as communication and intercultural communication. An answer certainly is not easy and it is necessary to examine for a moment this historical phenomenon.

However, speaking about modernism is a difficult issue. For this reason, perhaps, the best way for doing it is from two perspectives⁴: first, modernism as a perspective or worldview that "has served as the foundation for Western culture for more than four centuries" (Davis & Jasinski, 1993:141) is a philosophical orientation that goes beyond the foundation for sciences because it penetrates all the societal arenas. Second, modernism as a philosophical orientation is at the base of the consolidation of the ways of doing social sciences. This last presumption, for instance, is related directly to permitted and defined ways of knowing, such as the definition of the "object" for knowing, the method for knowing that "object", as well as the values underlying that process of knowing.

Modernism as a Worldview

Modernism from this first perspective, as Davis and Jasinski have pointed out, has survived from the Renaissance to the rise of capitalism because of its possibilities of accommodation. Also, three fundamental assumptions have supported it: radical individualism, inevitable progress toward the true and the good, and the preeminence of modern civilization (Davis & Jasinski, 1993:142).

From the premise of radical individualism, one of the most important discourses of modernity can be appreciated. This discourse is the revindication of dignity and freedom of individuals. Because of it, individuals have their rights in front of the state -another creation of modernity- in contrast to their community. Communities make an individual dependent on his or her fellow beings but the state does not. The moral character of individuals and their rights as pointed out by Williams came by placing the state as the ultimate guardian of order and homogenization (Williams, 1992:9-14).

In second place, the assumption of inevitable progress offers perhaps one of the most

4. It is obvious that these two perspectives are interwoven. However, the intention of separating them here is only to see how modernism as an orientation of the world is present within scientific thought as well as outside of it. That is, modernism as a pervasive idea is orienting many of the institutions in society and also the most ordinary ways of thinking in daily life.

"hard", pervasive, yet ambiguous issues of modernity as a worldview. From this worldview, progress through the last four centuries as indicated by Williams has been understood not only as a phenomenon that is never ending but also as a gradual and cumulative affair (Williams, 1992:2). Furthermore, as he also indicates, it is from such a notion that knowledge has been implicitly presupposed to be cumulative and equivalent to ability. Following in great part the premises of social darwinism that sees evolution moving from a simple level to a complex level, many positivist approaches in social sciences saw and see knowledge -and by extension all processes in society- as the result of accumulation and abilities. In this context we have many kinds of analogies following the logic of this mentality:

I	II	III
Child	Youth	Mankind/old age
Savagery	Barbarism	Civilization
Third World	Second World	First World
Pre-paradigm	Paradigm	Normal science
Communication I	Communication II	Communication III
Rambo I	Rambo II	Rambo III.

From this viewpoint everything goes from simple levels to complex levels. Equivalently everything is I, II, and III, but not I, II and III at the same time, or II, III, I at the same time, or whatever other possibility there may be.

It is important to add, however, that this mentality is not merely the result of an arbitrary "way of thinking"; at its bottom is the rationalism characteristic of Western culture. If there has been a space of legitimation of this mentality through the last centuries, it is the way of reasoning of Western culture. As we know very well from the Western perspective in order to find truth, the way of thinking has to follow the rules of syllogisms (e.g. every high context culture is a collective culture; China is a high context culture; therefore China is a collective culture) and, in Western thought this manner of argument explains almost everything.

Finally, the preeminence of modern civilization as the third premise that has held modernism as a base is related to its mentality of progress and the assumption that modern culture must be assumed to be the highest way of building a culture. Davis & Jasinski said, for example, that it is believed that modernism

"...evolved according to natural laws from, but is now qualitatively superior to, all forms of culture that preceded it. It will inevitable become the dominant world culture if it can be protected against subversion and trivialization by more primitive forms of culture" (Davis & Jasinski, 1993:142).

Phenomena inherent in this "inevitable" process but regularly forgotten, however, are two: on the one hand, the profound implications for the legitimation of Western superiority and, on the other, as Berman has said, the understanding that modernity offers possibilities of construction but at the same time, contains possibilities of destruction.

"To be modern is to find ourselves in a milieu that promises us adventures, power, joy, growth, and transformation of ourselves and the world. But, at the same time, it threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, and everything we are" (Berman,

1989:1).

Modernism as orientation of doing social sciences

If modernism as worldview has survived through four centuries it is important to ask why. Among different situations, we believe in a particular one: because social sciences during these four centuries -perhaps as any other activity- have helped to legitimize this vision. That is, if we review, in part, the history of doing social sciences (e.g. Victorian anthropology, functionalist sociology, conductivist psychology) there are particular aspects that stand out. such as the equality established between social sciences and natural and physical sciences, the assumption that the use of the scientific method must be the same, and the reduction of human beings to the category of objects in order to prevent the transference and countertransference of any values. Going then for a moment into this background of modern social sciences originally based on Descarte's philosophy; we face some significant issues.

First, for a long time under the tradition of the positivist sciences, natural sciences and social sciences have been treated as one. Therefore, the method of understanding the object in both has been the same although in the first the object is an object, while in the second one it is a subject. From this context it seems that the supposition seems to be that such an "object" does not breathe, feel, and think as anyone of us does. Similarly, it is thought that a gas or a metal has the same behavior as a human being. The exclusive use of experimental research in nonverbal communication, for example, seems to be demonstrating this continuously. However, as someone once said ironically the "problem" with "the other" is that it is not recognized by the modern and positivist tradition; yet "the other", being human, can always return a scientific glance. It is important to add that one may think that this debate is unimportant, but reality is different. For instance, Ritchie in a recent essay reviewing some books about science and values, objectivity and truth, describes one of the authors' position as follows:

"Although he is willing to concede some useful (but unspecified) function to social sciences, Bauer wishes most emphatically to deny that social science is in any sense "scientific". To do so, he relies on the spurious charge that social scientists cling to "the myth of scientific method" (p 137) in a futile imitation of physics, and makes an issue of social science's lack of "a body of consensually agreed upon knowledge" (p129) embodied in a core curriculum (p131)" (Ritchie, 1994:70).

This quotation paradoxically shows how even right now there are scholars who continue believing that science is only ONE -as if its object were the same-- and not many and different sciences with different "objects". On the other hand, it supposes also that science is the product of consensus and not dissensus as Lyotard interestingly has shown (Lyotard, 1987:11).

The second issue in this context is related to valuation. As we know very well the premise under modern social sciences that has worked is neutral valuation. It means, that the relation with the other, while one knows him or her must be without any kind of contaminated view. Then, from here, to have or not to have objectivity -as a dominant value in the process of knowing- was and continues to be the pivotal issue. The scientific glance has to be neutral, without valuation, "pure",

"immaculate", and so forth. Equivalently the scientific glance has to see the "object" without changing it and, obviously, explain it through the lineal cause/effect dimension.

The third issue linked to this history as it was mentioned earlier, has been the presumption that the method is only one. And the consequences of this modern and positivist tradition can be observed even today, for example, when scholars and schools in social sciences -sociology, communication, psychology- cannot imagine anything different than measuring to maintain objectivity. The confusion is such that truth is equated to quantitative and statistical methods. In the same vein, it is believed that through statistics and models, subjectivism is exorcised. However, As Devereux has said a basic datum completely forgotten in social sciences is how the researcher manages his or her anxiety. According to him instead of avoiding subjectivity by putting all kinds of filters in order to correct the distortion, we must learn to deal with the troubles related to it, and furthermore, view its potential (Devereux, 1977:20-21).

It is under this pervasive worldview underlying the positivist approaches in social sciences, communication, and intercultural communication that we believe that the trends in theories as well as in methods must be understood. Particularly, it is our interest to underline that in a young field such as I.C. much of this legacy is present in some assumptions and ways of theorizing. We think this is in part due not only to the absence of history of knowledge but also to pragmatism as a premise in I.C.. For example, in the literature on I.C., it can be said that this debate is nonexistent. In order to configure a better picture of this situation in I.C., therefore, we will examine some of the postmodern presumptions.

Postmodern presumptions

To speak about postmodernism as a universal premise, or a "whole", or even as a series of unilineal thoughts, we believe, could be an irony. For this reason, more than presenting the "premises" of postmodernism, we will trace some of those trends that, in our point of view, are expressed by some authors in counterposition to the modern assumptions we have so far underlined in this paper. Similarly, we will quote some authors that not necessarily are considered postmodernist. However, we do this because their points of view are in certain ways related more to this perspective than to a modern perspective, especially on those epistemological trends we want to contrast here. In this sense, the use of the concept of postmodernism in this paper follows in part⁵ the definition given to it by Lyotard as "the state of culture after those transformations which have affected the rules of game in science, literature, and the arts from the nineteenth century" (Lyotard, 1987:9).

Postmodernism is not the foundation for any culture, in contrast with modernism, which is the foundation for Western culture. That is, neither any institution nor any societal arena has postmodern foundations as it was shown for modernism. In this sense postmodernism is not such a totalitarian worldview that modernism has been. And if it becomes a worldview, we are sure, it will not be a determinant worldview. There will be many worldviews, because postmodernism is

5. We say, in part, because we do not agree with Lyotard in his consideration that postmodernism is the condition of knowledge in the more developed societies.

trying to propose itself, perhaps, more from heterogeneous perspectives than homogeneous perspectives. In this context we relate, in part, the new issues about the expanding point of view of the sciences made by, for, and with specific emphasis on those outside the mainstream, incorporating the concept of heterogeneity. But this does not mean that all the new approaches are presenting postmodern trends. If we see a problem, it is just that the lack of epistemological roots is often carried by "minorities" and "genders" themselves when attempting to understand their own reality. In other words, "minority" and "gender" studies made by minorities and people who struggle for their rights often are more positivist and conservative than positivist and conservative research in general. However, in our opinion a new perspective of opening up different alternatives is coming from postmodern trends in contrast with modern trends.

Postmodernism was born in the sphere of arts and sciences; and therefore, from here, there are direct concerns with all those processes related to how we know, whom, for what, and why. In this context it seems to counterpose the intolerance of modernism in the latter's unwillingness to accept that reality can be polisemic, poliphonic, and ultimately I, II, II at the same time, III, III, I at the same time, or ?,?,??. Postmodernism has opened the possibility of thinking heterogeneously and from here it maintains a distance from the classical unilinearism, the classical homogenization, and the positivization of life as well as the way of doing sciences that are the typical ways of modern thought. And here there is an important metaphor: we see that an ideal of modernism has been homogenization, but such a homogenization has exploded in thousands of fragments. For this reason it is naive to think today that reality everywhere continues to be such a homogeneous piece easily accessible through statistics and standardization.

Looking into some epistemological antecedents that have produced this current discussion in terms of modernism and postmodernism through the history of social sciences during this century, there are diverse opinions related to the ways of knowing since mid-century. For example, some of the thinkers of the Frankfurt school -Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Benjamin- were some of the major forces that put the issue of representation in the social sciences. According to Adorno, for instance, the result of philosophy could never be conciliation but only criticism. In the same vein:

"the invocation of science, its rules of the game, and the exclusive validity of its methods in which it has been developed, has come to be a prerequisite for the control that censors the freedom of thought. Control does not tolerate more than it has approved methodologically from the spirit. Science, the medium of autonomy has degenerated into an heteronomous apparatus" (Adorno,1972:190).

From this early discussion the disagreement with the positivist glance of modern social sciences started to be clear, especially in concerns about method, the consideration of whether a subject or an object is the case, and the inevitable presence of values while knowing.

Similarly, language and culture as a means and subject of analysis started to become phenomena of the first order, especially from the point of view of the Frankfurt school. The second one was significant in the sense that one of the cultures, which started to be reexamined in its foundations, was precisely Western culture. In The Eclipse of Reason, for instance, Horkheimer

in 1947 conducted one of the first deep, critical, and historical reexaminations of the arrogance and the fury of rationalism as one of the central values that was orienting Western culture since the Enlightenment.

Subsequent approaches to the Frankfurt school followed developing reflections in similar senses. For example, according to Vasco speaking about knowledge and interests, Habermas in the 1970's, showed how the role of doing science is not the supposed neutral activity performed by positivist scholars. Vasco's point of view, following Habermas, is that the relationship between knowledge and interests responds to two kinds of interests: extra-theoretical and intra-theoretical. The first ones are all those mediations present in scientific work such as the economic and ideological status of the scientific person as well as his or her political orientation. On the other hand, the second ones are the inherent mediations of the theoretical work itself. Among these last ones the interests of prediction and control, location, orientation, and emancipation are the most significant. The point to underline here is that according to Vasco these interests are the guidelines for the empiric-analytic, the historic-hermeneutic, and the critical-social disciplines in social sciences (Vasco, 1989:7-11).

Another important example during the last part of the XX century that has contributed the addition of more elements to the distance between modernism and postmodernism on these issues has been Foucault. For him, each period has a distinctive worldview or "episteme" from which is determined the nature of knowledge. For instance, looking at the practical of medical-history he showed how the discourse from the eighteenth century is different from the nineteenth century not as a result of a change in the system as such or in the theories but for only one fact: creation of a scientific structure about individuals (Foucault, 1994:6). In the same vein, according to him, people do not establish the condition of discourse, rather discourse formation itself determines the definition and place of the person in the scheme of the world. Moreover, in the structure on any discourse there are rules, but these rules are related not only in the ways how people talk but also in the nature of knowledge, power, and ethics that people possess in any period of time.

A third example we want to mention regarding these postmodern trends is Lyotard. Discussing about the postmodern condition he mentions, for example, the fact that the best way of understanding some of the issues related to scientific knowledge is through language, in the sense that for him, for forty years, sciences and technologies have been based on language (e.g. phonology, linguistic theories, cybernetics, algebras, etc.). Furthermore, according to him the crisis today is a crisis of all those narratives that in the past were supported through metadiscourses such as the dialectic of the spirit, the hermeneutics of sense, or the emancipation of the reasoning subject or worker. For him postmodernity is the incredibility of those metadiscourses. The narrative function is dispersed today in clouds of linguistic elements, each one of them transporting pragmatic effects. There are therefore many games of different languages. The postmodern knowledge must refine our sensitivity to differences, uncertainty and incommensurability when the logic of people who decide is directed toward commensurability, efficiency and operativity (Lyotard, 1987:11).

The last example we want to discuss is from Wierzbicka. For this scholar, who has considered the inherent problems of translation through the lexicons of different languages, not everything that can be said in one language can be said in another. The point to underline here from

her research is, in particular, the consideration that she has done of the traditional Western dichotomy between body and mind. Going back to Descartes's dichotomy, Wierzbicka points out that when Descartes was speaking about this distinction, he was using the French words <corps> and <ame>; <ame> being not equivalent to mind despite its translation into English as mind. <Ame> comes from a French folk concept that means "soul" and is associated with emotions. Moreover, following historically the meaning of mind in English, for her the concept in the past appears to have meant something rather different from what it means in the present day. In other words, the old concept of mind was associated also with emotions, for example, in the usage by Shakespeare. On the contrary, she points out that the modern concept of mind is focused on the rational character of human beings more than the emotional character, as recognized in the old concepts of soul and mind. The concept of mind is, moreover, a folk concept without exact equivalents in French, German, Latin, and perhaps in many other languages (Wierzbicka, 1992:42).

The observations made by Wierzbicka in the context of epistemology have very interesting implications. On the one hand, the dichotomy of body and mind has its equivalent in the empiricist and rational branches. Furthermore, the Anglo-Saxon branch is identified more with the empiricist current, while the French branch is identified with the rationalist current. In a certain way, the production of theory follows this pattern even today. On the other hand, in Western culture there is a reification of mind as a universal category that underlines the rational character of thinking and knowing in contrast with any other possibility. However, it seems that this is only a pattern of this particular culture. It is noteworthy how many social sciences contribute to such reification and do not take into account semantic differences. It seems that in those social sciences this dichotomy is taken for granted and from here, they construct their epistemological base. Among some of these sciences we have, for example, communication.

Thus, despite the different trends of these authors, there is a common trait from which, in our opinion, stems the biggest difference between a modern conception and a postmodern conception. This trait is how we are knowing, whom, for what, and why. If we see, for instance, one of the most important elements that underlines modernism today, it is its high confidence in human beings as rational and conscious entities. However, as Walicki has said we must not forget that "it is only a characteristic of western culture to be infected by the incurable disease of rationalism" (Walicki, 1979:103). And it is such excess of rationalism from which is derived the great part of the epistemological conceptions about the way we are knowing in the context of social sciences in Western culture. Notions and values given to measurement, neutrality, objectivity, generalizations, social and cognitive evolutionism, and homogenization are meanings on which the positivist and modern social sciences put a blind faith without questioning such conceptions.

Another element surrounding this discussion is that for postmodernist thinkers there is a great recognition of knowledge as a historical force that changes according to history and society. In this sense, it can be appreciated that the consideration itself of history is a kind of network where "primitive" and "modern" traits appear simultaneously. It is not anymore the historical, classical, and cumulative ladder that locates modernism and, therefore, Western culture as the culmination and the standard of judgement of other cultures.

In the same vein, another element addressed by postmodernism is directed to the old

positivist illusion that we know in a very neutral way and without interest. Through scientific discourse we are participating in society, we are producing social discourse permeated by ethics and relations of power because scientific discourse is only one kind of discourse among several others.

Finally, a last element that permits us to observe another significant differentiation between modernism and postmodernism is that associated with the role of language and representation. According to the modern tradition, for example, it is possible to note that the way of expressing reality is mainly through a neutral and cold language in order to maintain objectivity. In this direction, reality has been reduced to an unilinear text where one reads lines but not "in between" lines. Similarly, it is thought that language does not go beyond grammar, syntax, and logic. On the contrary, now under the postmodern approaches there are many explorations trying to take language beyond this limit. For example, many researchers are using figures such as metaphors, irony, story telling, metonyms, and poetry to find out elements related to other conceptions of time and logic that are different from western conception (see, for example, Sherzer, 1987). In the same vein, scientific narrative is being questioned (see, for example, Clifford & Marcus, 1986). From this point of view there is an interesting question directed to the common belief about language use in the scientific literature. Is a paper written in an impersonal manner and in the third person more scientific than a paper that is written in first person? Similarly, another question in this direction points toward the value of literature. What happens in the case of language use in literature that can sometimes describe universal characters and crosscultural realities without taking all those filters used by researchers through samples, statistics, experiments, and measurement?

Postmodernism certainly is bringing out interesting questions, and as indicated earlier, it was only our intention to underline some of the epistemological elements that we see in postmodernism in contrast with modernism. Thus, in a general way the central figure of contrasting what we observe in this discussion between modernism and postmodernism is the consideration about how we know. Particularly, one that calls our attention is how our "minds" have been conditioned by the characteristic homogenization of the Western view and, of course, Western science, in the name of modernism and progress without weighing other alternatives. It is in this contrasting context, then, that we think the epistemological trends In I.C. must be understood.

Modern or postmodern assumptions in intercultural communication?

According to the literature in the field of I.C., as indicated earlier, a predominant tendency that is possible to observe is the presence of positivist and modern presumptions in contrast with postmodern presumptions. However, it is important to add that this presence is not the same for the field as a "whole". In other words, observing the different sub-fields, dimensions, key concepts, theories, methodologies, as well as some particular authors, we observe different trends. Some of them are characterized by being contradictory -e.g. between method and theory- rather than clearly positivist, while others openly search for new routes and views. Here again the reason for those contradictory approaches is related to the lack of discussion on epistemological issues when dealing with the complex phenomena of communication and culture. This is an observation that we want to demonstrate in greater detail through various examples, specially because it is our perception that considering some approaches from epistemological roots, sometimes this field resembles more a mix of different fields than the field it claims to be.

Intercultural communication and its definition

In the development of ideas for a general discussion about the relationship between culture and communication -the fundamental base of this field- to define I.C., some authors (e.g. Gudykunst, 1991; Gudykunst & Yun Kim, 1984; Samovar & Porter, 1991 (a), 1991 (b)) follow a common pattern: first they define communication, next they define culture, and after that they elaborate on a definition for I.C.. The point is that when they discuss about culture they follow a relativist approach (e.g. culture makes people different because of their symbolic systems, worldviews, etc.), but when they discuss about communication they follow a very rationalist approach (e.g. communication involves the same universal process, characteristics and components despite its taking a form according to the culture that produces it).

Setting up the relationship in those terms, it seems that communication is a subordinated and changing behavior -a dependent variable- subject to culture or society -an independent variable- which is a relative phenomenon by nature. In fact, the definition of I.C. lies in the conceptualization that it is communication susceptible to being effective/ineffective (? Gudykunst & Yun Kim), altered/unaltered (? Samovar & Porter), between peoples whose cultures or societal cultures are different. In other words, the relationship between culture and communication -from the context of some of these approaches to intercultural communication- is explained by a general cause-effect relation: because of culture people communicate differently. For example, Gudykunst and Nishida clearly state that from the objective perspectives for studying I.C. -uncertainty reduction theory, convergence theory, social attribution- culture is treated as a variable, in contrast with subjective perspectives -the coordinated management of meaning theory, rhetorical theory, constructivism- that avoid the treatment of culture as a variable (Gudykunst & Nishida:1989:31).

Problems stem from these kinds of considerations in the definition itself of I.C.; indeed this particular relationship between culture and communication is characterized by some traits. First, the reduction of culture to a variable is related perhaps to those observations that Williams makes regarding some of the structural-functionalist approaches in sociolinguistics. On the one hand, in many problems of research the theoretical relevance of such problems came after subsequent interpretation of the statistical regularities, thus revealing a tendency to establish regularities in terms of generalizations. On the other hand, what is overlooked in some kinds of correlations time after time is that a correlation simply shows an empirical relationship between variables; it does not explain that relationship (Williams, 1992:68).

Second, another trait present in such considerations is the absence of any link to historical, political, or economic conflicts when considering communication between peoples whose cultures are different. In other words, because of such lack of consideration of phenomena such as power, history, and conflict in the definition of the field as well as in its explanations and theories, we observe a strong tendency to treat culture almost as an "ontological" fact. That is, "people are because of culture". This is the "final" explanation that permits every variance, and of course, explanation among human groups. An example in this direction is Samovar & Porter in the general presentation of I.C.. These authors, speaking about means of production and business, say that people who have grown up in China tend to have different beliefs from those who have grown up in the United States. In the first case, people may believe assets belong to the state, while in the

second, people may believe that they should belong to individuals or to several individuals in partnership (Samovar & Porter, 1991(a):108). We certainly agree that people may have different beliefs, but the precise point we want to underline is that the difference is not only because of culture. We are sure that in a consideration like this, there are more forces at play in both societies in order for people believe to believe what they believe.

Similarly, observing particularly the notion of culture, often this concept is applied to the political notion of state-nation as equivalent to culture (a regular mistake in almost all the literature), generalizing and comparing in this way cultural characteristics that many times do not reflect the situation and, creating thus, in our opinion, stereotypes. A very typical example in this sense is the study of Hofstede about the four dimensions of cultural values quoted frequently by many authors. For instance, following Hofstede's claims about the dichotomy individualism/collectivism, Hecht et al mention that:

"...the nine {of course, countries} most individualistic (respectively) were The United States, Australia, Great Britain, Canada, Netherlands, New Zealand, Italy, Belgium, and Denmark, all of which are Western or European Cultures. The ten least individualistic (respectively) were Venezuela, Colombia, Pakistan, Peru, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore, Chile, and Hong Kong -all Oriental or South American cultures" (Hecht et al, 1989:170).

Distinction between the concepts of culture and nation-state we believe is necessary because otherwise this is a very imprecise information very imprecise. In the case of Australia, New Zealand, The United States, or Canada, for example, we have a question. Is it the Anglo-Saxon branch of these countries that makes these countries tend to individualism or is it the presence of different cultural groups (e.g. the indigenous) that creates such a tendency? An interesting observation, for example, is that some of the countries that appear in the first group have been colonized mainly by the Anglo-Saxon culture.

Intercultural method and methodologies

Developing the ideas further and looking at the method and the methodologies used in I.C., it is clear that there is a mainstream in this field that comes from the quantitative side despite a few qualitative attempts. And, as we indicated before, sometimes the relationship between methodology and theory seems contradictory because while at the theoretical level, there is a broad panorama of discussion regarding various considerations related to the most general cultural phenomena (e.g. how people differ in their worldviews because of culture), at the moment of testing them in reality they are reduced to a few variables. That is, there are many theoretical propositions explaining how communication is different between cultural groups, but these propositions are eventually reduced to surveys, experiments and general statistics that are not so deep.

The problem we see is not with the statistics themselves, but with the strong tendency to generalize from them when speaking about cultures. Again, the specific and common example in the literature is the dichotomy between collective and individualistic cultures (Giles & Franklyn, 1989; Hecht et al, 1989; Matsumoto et al, 1989; Gudykunst & Yun Kim, 1984, Gudykunst, 1991).

For example, thinking about Southamerican cultures, they appear related to cultures less individualistic (that is, more collective). However, this phenomenon depends on the position from where it is considered. If this phenomenon refers to some Indigenous or African-Southamerican communities, perhaps, it is valid, but if it refers to the dominant social classes which have the power of rule over society as a whole, this is not valid. Those classes promote the most individualistic traits, possibly even more marked than any of the individualistic "cultures" identified above. And here again we arrive at the points mentioned earlier. On the one hand, the fact of not recognizing political, economic or social issues but only culture sometimes leads to superficial assumptions, and on the other hand, there is a current belief that through the generalization of these empirical relations and correlations, certain cultural relationships are being explained.

Gudykunst and Nishida, speaking about the subjective and objective approaches in I.C. - which are mainly those assumptions we are discussing here- state that they are limited to approaches in English-speaking, Western countries (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1989:39). However, an observation that we have is that, if the approaches are from Western countries, the examples (e.g the dichotomies) must also be from the Western countries; however, this is not always the case. The limit that is recognized theoretically, is not recognized methodologically, or better, statistically, because at the moment of generalizing many researchers regularly use as examples the non-Western cultures, and not just Western cultures, as one of the ways of illustrating their theories.

Epistemologically speaking about the traditional use of quantitative methodologies as a dominant tendency in I.C., they are responding, in our opinion, to the premise that research must be objective, without valuation, and almost follow the pattern that maintains, at its bottom, a style of doing research in natural sciences. And here it is important to observe that, among scholars and schools of thought the issue of methodologies is one of those matters "taken for granted" in the sense that the assumption seems to be: if we are doing a statistical study we are doing a scientific study. Johnson & Tuttle have an interesting observation for the field of I.C. in the direction of this discussion. According to them,

"Inherent in the very notion of sampling are Western assumptions of individual autonomy, egalitarianism, and democracy... In non-Western cultures, however, the assumptions underlying sampling may be irrelevant. In these cultures where economic circumstances, elites, and authoritarian power structures run counter to sampling's underlying assumptions, the unquestioned use of random sampling will produce a very distorted picture of the society and how it will relate to others" (Johnson & Tuttle, 1989: 473).

These authors certainly make a very interesting observation about the kind of assumptions "taken for granted" in some cases. Especially in the context of intercultural settings, they suggest, methodologies must be a combination of different strategies.

However, we have a serious observation particularly related to some of the problems suggested by those authors about data collection and research infrastructure. We want to discuss this in a little detail only in order to illustrate once more one of the main issues that this paper has

been trying to underline: that our scientific activities, whatever they are (develop theories, apply methodologies and so forth), are not neutral, objective or free of valuation. Recalling Habermas and also Foucault, it is recognized that between the relationship between science and knowledge, there are power as well as intra-theoretical and extra-theoretical interests. And this is not valid only for theory but also for methodologies. In this particular case, for instance, in order to remind other researchers about possible problems when doing intercultural research, these authors list a series of "simple warnings". However, these "simple warnings" are, of course, not neutral and, as such, they contain political points of view.

First, speaking about selection and training to interviewers who can help the researcher whether in surveys or interviews, some of the suggestions of these authors in order to avoid problems and "bias" in the information, following Brislin et al, are:

"He or she should have a high level of education but should not be a member of the underemployed middle-class common in the third world⁶. These people tend to have low motivation, feel superior to the research, and tend to interject their own biases into the interview" (Johnson & Tuttle, 1989: 475).

In the same vein, relating to the problems of bias in the information, they say:

"...the subjects may wish to please the researcher by giving him or her the responses they perceive the researcher wants to hear. Further, because participation in social research may be a novel experience involving a researcher of higher social status or (a rich American!), subjects may be intimidated into socially desirable responses" (Johnson & Tuttle, 1987:476).

Second, referring to research infrastructure problems, these authors indicate:

"We have come to assume the existence of certain research facilities when conducting social research in the United States. These include readily available, accurate, and current sampling frames like a population census, telephone books, or city directories. These are not available in much of the world. For example, the junior author was involved in a survey in Mexico City. The absence of an accurate sample frame led the research team to take aerial photographs to identify a population of households from which to sample" (Johnson & Tuttle, 1989: 477).

We may observe through these particular quotations. First, according to these authors bias with respect to the collection of information seems to be a condition that belongs to the "third world" and is close to the subjects of research. Similarly, it seems that the "contamination" in the information responds to the condition of being an unemployed professional, and perhaps, to belong to the middle class of these countries. On the contrary, being researchers from the "first world" - particularly the USA in this case- who are assumed to have high status or are rich is a guarantee

6. The underlining is ours.

that the information is not biased. It seems then that the researchers from the "first world" have the authority to see and understand things as "things are" despite "all those problems with those people". Are they the only "real" and neutral scientists who can see reality without valuation?

Second, similar implications can be observed with respect to the problems of resources and infrastructure when doing research. In this particular case, however, the interesting figure seems to be that the rest of the world is a jungle but the USA is a country where everything is available! In our opinion these kinds of statements clearly reveal power relations and hegemonic positions "in the name of science". The fact that researchers cannot adapt to the different conditions and resources in other intercultural settings shows clearly how many scholars today think in a very evolutionist and positivist way, believing that there is a "civilized" world and a "primitive" one.

Something additional, however, that we want to say is that perhaps these authors are correct about their observations of some conditions in the "third world". But, the problem for us is that these are not observations based on the understanding of diversity, differences, and different conditions. On the contrary, these are positions that reject the challenge of being creative. Of course, if we can accept the idea that there can be different methods of research and alternative forms and styles of producing knowledge. In our opinion, this situation cannot be reduced to the simple assumption that the problem is that in the "third world" there is not enough paper or computers! Similarly, in a more methodological sense, these assumptions presuppose that there is an entirely objective world and a truth that, nevertheless, is impossible to find because of the behavior of some people or the condition of some places - of course, in the third world! Paraphrasing Rose who quotes Jackson & Stoller, it would be interesting to remind those authors that this moment is not only urging and egging science but is also urging "a more radical democratization of knowledge, one that simultaneously deprivileges our academic inquiry while serving to help recover ideas and practices from other points of view -whether of marginal or oppressed people, whether close to home or geographically and culturally remote" (Rose, 1990:11).

Intercultural communication and its dimensions

Following some of the dimensions regarding the relation between culture and communication from the field of I.C., we want to examine six of these cultural dimensions regularly reified by different scholars. Indeed, there is no theory or discussion about I.C. that does not discuss them. Sometimes they seem to be more important than the concepts themselves. Some of these dimensions, according to Hecht et al and following Hofstede and Hall's research, are: power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty, low context and immediacy (Hecht et al, 1989:166).

Reviewing in a general way their definitions, Hecht et al speaking about the first four, say:
"Hofstede provides a list of four dimensions of cultural values that have cross-cultural support.... Power distance refers to the degree to which power, prestige, and wealth are equally distributed in a culture. Individualism denotes a culture's emphasis on personal identity or collectivism, and is similar to Altman and Gauvain's

(1981) dimension of identity-communality. Masculinity describes a culture's emphasis on traditionally male attributes such as strength, assertiveness, and competitiveness; and uncertainty concerns cultural values regarding risk" (Hecht et al, 1989:166).

Defining low and high context-communication that characterizes low and high context cultures in the literature, Hall gives his own point of view:

"A high-context communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low-context communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code" (Hall, 1991:48).

The next dimension, immediacy, is understood as communicative actions related to the expression of closeness, approach, and accessibility and from it stems the category of high and low-contact cultures mainly in the context of nonverbal communication as suggested by Hecht et al.

There are two main observations to add to the discussion in terms of these dimensions. On the one hand, the concept of each dimension is given by a comparison fixed in a continuum in which the two extremes conform to a dichotomy. That is, for instance, the comparison of different cultures according to their traits fixes them in the collectivistic-individualistic dimension, which, at the same time, comprises the dichotomy. On the other hand, many theories explaining different phenomena (e.g. communicator characteristics, nonverbal communication, and intercultural competence) in I.C. take, as their theoretical base, the empirical support of these dimensions and from here, almost everything is explained. In this sense, as pointed out before, for example, The Hofstede and Hall studies are "almost" the classical studies that confirm different hypotheses concerned with cross-cultural and intercultural issues.

Considering these dimensions in the light of some of their implicit attributes, they present some problems. Some of them have been already mentioned. For instance, in many cases, the notion of country is applied synonymously to culture and the levels of generalization about each culture ignore completely the diversity at the bottom of each culture. Similarly, characteristics pertaining to social, political and economic arenas in many cultures are explained and reduced to manifestations conceptualized in these dimensions. But, putting aside the problems already illustrated, the central problem that remains aside to be pointed out about these dimensions is related to some implicit assumptions made in their conceptualization.

In the first place, some of the implicit assumptions made in the conceptualization of these dimensions come from the tradition of using the comparative method. As such, then, it is important to realize that the way this conceptualization is made comes from Victorian anthropology and sociology of the second half of the nineteenth century. This historical fact is significant because through it, some of the very pervasive points of view about research, not only during that century but even today might be observed: "the belief that the existing sociocultural system is, in different degrees, comparable with extinct cultures" (Williams, 1992:14) and the idea that the older forms

always are the simpler ones. As a result, of course, the problem, as the same Williams points out was and is that, from more than a century ago, many scholars created continuums and comparisons in which implicitly there are some cultures that are the patterns or the standards for measuring the others. Among some of the most important standards "the English society was presented as the most complex and evolved social form, and the features of this society were assumed to be the most successful in the struggle for survival" (Williams, 1992:16). In this sense, it is our point of view that the dimensions used in I.C. are based on such assumptions and therefore they involved the implicit analogy taken from social evolutionism that is based on the premise of the gradual evolution of species and its operating principle of natural selection. In other words, the modernist principle of inevitable progress and its culmination in Western culture -as the standard to measure the rest of the cultures- is the philosophical base for all those comparisons illustrating these dimensions.

For instance, reviewing the comparisons between individualistic and collectivistic cultures or between high-power distance and low-distance, or whatever other dichotomy, it is clear that they present some of the above mentioned traits. On the one hand, scholars assume that every culture occupies a place in the continuum because its cultural traits, and on the other hand, they state that "degrees" of differences or similarities exist because of the standard traits of specific cultures are those in the extremes of the dichotomy. In the particular case of the collectivist-individualistic dichotomy it seems that individualistic standard tends to be more related to the "civilized" cultures while the collectivist standard tends to be related to the "primitive" ones. Hecht et al, following the Hofstede study, for example, comment that among the nine most individualistic countries, many belong to Western or European cultures! It is necessary however to say that this is not as explicit as was described above. On the contrary, we would like to underline that these assumptions are implicit and "invisible" in the portrayals that many scholars make through these comparisons, reflecting the objectivist premises characteristic of positivist philosophy as well as the ideology of progress.

An additional trait that is ignored in the usage of these dichotomies because of the neutral valuation and the positivist stream of theorizing is the relationship between power and knowledge. That is, to compare, for instance, individualism and collectivism when the world-wide tendency is in favor of one of them through the philosophy of the free and individual will is, in our opinion, an unequal comparison. Especially because the comparison tends to be between some cultural traits in "extinction" and some cultural traits in "rage". In other words, to claim that the conditions for comparing all the cultures are the same is inconsistent. In a certain sense, this is the same as the rhetorical use by the economists when they compare "rich" and "poor" countries based on the standard of materiality gained! Or the psychologists when they compare normal and abnormal, and they implicitly know and have a standard for what is being normal.

In the case of I.C. a supportive example in this direction is between low and high context cultures. If we see for a moment the traditional continuum, Western cultures are set up as low contexts while Eastern cultures are set up in the high context. The question to consider here is which is the predominant and implicit tendency as well as which are the traits in extinction. Is the present in favor of "Westernization" of the world or in its "Easternization." The theoretical assumption that, in order to communicate, everything must be effective, competent, and explicit, whether it is said or written, or even better, expressed through an univocal and homogeneous

"logic", reveals very well how the predominant tendency is in favor of "Westernization". And of course, this "Westernization" means that people have to become "rational", "logical", "able", "explicit", "effective", "competent", and this is only possible through the means of Western culture that has been the culture with the "wisdom" for imbibing those attitudes. Here the consideration that this has been the result of exercising its power and imposing its values as the ideal for what it means to be civilized, is never detailed.

Under such considerations, it could be interesting to think, for instance, about the "dichotomy" between nonverbal communication and verbal communication. Rereading this "dichotomy" it seems that non-Western cultures are more nonverbal because they do not possess the level of discourse and "logic" of Western culture, despite that many scholars recognize that irrespective of culture, nonverbal communication is one of the most significant sources of human communication. The fact we want to underline here is that such comparisons are unjust, and sometimes instead of helping to understand, they re-create and feed all those common stereotypes that cast some cultures as "superior" and others as "inferior". To compare cultural traits without recognizing the political, historical, and economic forces that determine the reality of all cultures when comparing them, is to pretend to assume an equality that does not exist, and it is here that we see the problem with these neutral comparisons among cultural traits expressed through the different dimensions used in I.C..

Elaborating on some of the implicit assumptions in the conceptualization of these dimensions, in the second place, we see another source -together with the comparative method- from where stems this style of conceptualization. This source comes from, or better is, the "mother" of the entire dichotomy characteristic of Western culture: the dichotomy between body and mind. Thinking, for instance, of how social sciences are understood and performed it is necessary to observe that this dichotomy is at the bottom of every conceived form of knowing or epistemology that comes, at least, from the side of so-called scientific knowledge (e.g. theories, methodologies, consideration about human nature, etc.). In this case, the point we want to make is that with such abrupt separation between body and mind, Western culture has condemned humans beings only to be understood and explained from one standard: the rational one. That is, different ways of knowing, being, and thinking, have been reduced to the linear pattern of thinking and the Aristotelian logic which are, among others, some of the mechanisms of legitimization of this culture. And sciences in general, but in particular social sciences as indicated earlier, have had in part the responsibility of perpetuating this current state of things.

I.C., as a particular case considered, is not an exception. However, nowadays an illustrative example that we cannot resist from mentioning in this context is the discussion by Murray⁷ who, using Western standards combined with some ethnic and economic variables, "believes" that there is only one I.Q. that, furthermore, is highest among his own ethnic group. He fails to see that the concept is biased in favor of his own ethnic group, reflecting his own standards of setting up, measuring and reporting the results. The pervasive idea that knowledge is ability and those who have that ability are the most "intelligent" seems to show how the shadow of

7. Charles Murray is a professor at Harvard University who published the book, "The Bell Curve", which is reviewed in Newsweek, October 24, 1994.

superiority, through scientific knowledge and Western standards, serves yet to impose the superiority of a specific culture upon others. The fact that some scholars feel they have the right and the authority in the name of a neutral science to measure others with the same standard they use to measure themselves seems to be a live issue that has its roots in those epistemological and philosophical concerns we are trying to discuss here.

Returning to I.C., which is our central concern, the point we want to address is that many of the dimensions used in this field take for granted the division between body and mind, overemphasizing mind. Furthermore, the meaning given to the concept of mind is focussed mainly in the rational aspect of human beings as conceived by Western culture. Recalling Wierzwicka in this context it is important then to remember how the modern concept of mind encloses an anglocentric perspective that is often justified and imposed in the name of objective and scientific dimensions to other cultures. As she clearly states, "...the stereotype of Anglo-Saxon behavior suggests not only that the Anglo-Saxons tend to see human beings as composed of a body and a mind but their cultural norms encourage them also to behave as if they were composed of two such parts and inhibit overt displays of their emotion and inner life" (Wierzwircka, 1992:60).

A dimension in this context that is interesting to analyze could be masculinity. We see, for example, that the attributions given to men are related to "rationality" while for women they are related to "emotionality", and not vice versa. That is, does it mean that men are not emotional and women are not rational, or that men are up to a certain degree a little less emotional than women and women are a little less rational than men. The point we want to stress here, once more, is that each cultural dimension following this scale of degrees is a kind of game where the rhetoric can be illustrated as: a little more, more than, or a little less, or less than, but always within a rule -- implicitly assuming standards i.e. inside a continuum with their own standards for establishing whatever the comparison might be. But, while those standards according to the positivist philosophy may give the impression of yielding neutral comparisons free of judgment, in fact such comparisons may not be neutral because they contain the philosophical premises that view cultures in terms of an implicit unilineal evolutionism and also because of the preeminent value given to reason, reflecting the body-MIND dichotomy which characterizes Western culture, which can only be a relative rather than a universal concept that a great part of academia wants to make us believe.

Intercultural communication and theorization

Mentioning the different theories in this field, Infante et al said that "even though the study of intercultural communication by communication theorists is relatively new, theories of intercultural communication have developed rapidly" (Infante et al, 1993:435). Furthermore, according to these authors, the most representative approaches are: Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Coordinated Management of Meaning, and the Communication Networks.

The first one, Uncertainty Reduction Theory, comes from a more general theory of communication developed by Berger & Calabrese and states that during relational development, the reduction of uncertainty is one of the goals sought primarily by individuals. In the case of I.C., Gudykunst, Nishida, Yang, and others, have developed an approach based on this premise and through their own research they have added other premises which comprise 6 assumptions and 12

axioms. From this point of view, "cross-cultural studies suggest the theory generalizes to initial interactions in individualistic and collective cultures as well as to acquaintance, friend, and dating relationships across cultures" (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1989:23). Equivalently, according to them other studies reveal that the theory can account for interethnic communication as well as communication between people from different cultures in the United States.

From a viewpoint of this approach I.C. is seen as a kind of intergroup communication. In this sense, a very important concept that permits to distinguish between regular intergroup communication and I.C., is the concept of stranger. According to Gudykunst, "strangers can be conceived of as people who are unknown and unfamiliar and are confronting a group for the first time" (Gudykunst & Yun Kim, 1984:35). Similarly, other concepts that are important are communication competence, intercultural adaptation and personality factors which these authors see as affecting the reduction of uncertainty and anxiety. "Reducing uncertainty and anxiety, in turn, influences interpersonal/intergroup adaptation and effectiveness" (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1989:24). In the particular case of I.C., Gudykunst, proposes two axioms based on cross-cultural variability in order to explain uncertainty and anxiety reduction.

The second representative theory suggested by Infante et al for I.C. is the coordinated management of meaning, which also is based on a more general approach, called the rules approach. As a general approach, the latter has its philosophical tradition in phenomenology, and this is an important fact in the background of social sciences, specifically because, from this tradition comes a radical proposal for changing the conventional concepts represented by the positivist epistemology. That is, the way that individuals relate to reality from this tradition is seen as a process constructed through subjective experience. As such that experience is considered as a form of consciousness. Equivalently, as Williams points out, more than relying on empirical evidence, this tradition "...rather involves...taking the contents of consciousness as they appear while suspending judgement as to whether it is true or false" (Williams,1992:150). Related to the consideration of experience as a form of consciousness, meaning is something that is constructed in the act of consciousness, says Williams. And from here therefore, stems one of the most meaningful concepts for this approach: the process of interpretation.

In the case of I.C., some of the principles of Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory, take root in this tradition. Explaining some of them, Infante et al said, for example , that some of the philosophical assumptions in CMM, on the one hand, reflect the claim that humans are choice-makers, and in this sense, goal-oriented, and on the other hand, the premise that individual meanings and interpretations are the key to understanding communication. In addition, the authors mention five basic propositions in this theory: "1) human beings will create systems of meaning and order even where there are none; 2) human beings organize meanings hierarchically; 3) human beings organize meaning temporally; 4) individuals' systems of meaning are to some extent idiosyncratic, and 5) the behavior of individuals is uninterpretable except in the context of larger systems" (Infante et al, 1993:85). Thus, followers of this approach put emphasis in speech acts and in the social nature of communication. Furthermore, in combination with the propositions, they assume three additional parts in each attempt of interpretation: the context of a conversation, the definition of its rules, and the behavioral rules.

Finally, the last theory mentioned by Infante et al as representative in the field of I.C, is that

which we term Communication Networks. However, it seems that more than the networks itself, the central issue in this approach is related to immigrant adaptation. In this sense, one of the scholars who has worked on this issue says that ..."varied terms have been used in this area including acculturation, assimilation, adjustment, and integration, each of which emphasizes a somewhat different aspect of adaptation from the others" (Yun Kim, 1989:280). But, according to the same scholar, two themes are common to all those different approaches. On the one hand, implicitly or explicitly, all of them recognize that change occurs in individuals when they move from their own culture to acquire traits of another culture. On the other hand, immigrant adaptation is understood as a process in which individuals are seen as differing in their adaptation rate over the same period of time.

From a more general perspective, Infante et al, link this particular approach to the general theory of systems saying that "systems theory is somewhat different from the laws and human action perspectives in that systems theorists do not advocate a particular 'way of knowing'" (Infante et al, 1993:90). Of course, we do not agree with this statement because it is clear that there are epistemological assumptions in this perspective. To see a system as a whole, using for that an analogy with an organism is a very positivist trait. Equivalently, to put emphasis on the aspect of adaptation to the environment is to follow the old assumption of social evolutionism that maintains the survival of the fittest! We definitely do not understand how scholars presenting and discussing theories of communication can argue that in social sciences there are theories, models or methodologies without epistemology or ways of knowing!

Coming back to the theory of immigrant adaptation, Yun Kim said that there are some basic issues for understanding how this process is conceptualized. First, a predominant premise on adaptation that has received ample empirical support claims that it "occurs cumulatively and progressively, that is, immigrants become increasingly better adapted as they continue to interact and deal with the host environment" (Yun Kim, 1989:280). However, contrasting this view, she mentions that there is an alternative view that proposes several possible adaptation "types" and rejects the cumulative-progressive view. Second, among the different factors identified in explaining the immigrant's adaptation rate or level are: "knowledge of the host language, motivation for adaptation, positive attitude toward the host society, participation in interpersonal networks of the host society, and use of the host mass media" (Yun Kim, 1989:283). Moreover, these factors according to Yun Kim are supported by the cumulative-progressive view because, for the pluralistic view, there is no single continuum between minimum and maximum adaptation as it exists for the former. Third, psychological health as a kind of component in this theory has received attention ultimately because, according to Yun Kim, "...increased psychological health is an important consequence of cumulative adaptative experiences over time" (Yun Kim, 1989:285). Under this context psychological health is understood, moreover, as "a progressive adaptative change that occurs along with increased 'functional fitness' and 'intercultural identity' (Yun Kim, 1989:285).

Finally, methodologically speaking about this theory it is interesting to note how Yum Kim recognizes the limit of the quantitative approaches saying, for example, that "...a statistically revealed positive relationship between "host language skills" and "psychological health" fails to describe in detail how these two variables are related in concrete ways as experienced by individual immigrants and soujourners" (Yun Kim, 1989:291). In this sense this author, together

with some others in I.C. proposes a combination with qualitative methodologies. The problem we see with this kind of proposals is, however, that it is not a simple and mechanical process of combination of methodologies, but a problem of epistemological principles. That is, more than the use of methodologies, whatever they may be, the problem is how, and through what kind of concepts, reality is understood and this is an epistemological and philosophical issue rather than a methodological one.

Thus, looking at the particular theories summarized here there are some issues to be addressed. First, reviewing the link that Infante et al made of these theories to approaches such as the Laws Perspective, the Human Action Perspective and Systems Theory, according to Vasco these approaches would be respectively related to the tradition of the empiric-analytical disciplines or the historic-hermeneutic disciplines. This observation is important because, if we recall one of the statements made by this author, it says that at the bottom of any theory in social sciences there are always intra-theoretical and extra-theoretical interests.

In this particular case, for example, relating that observation to these three theories, it is clear how the intra-theoretical interest in the case of Uncertainty Reduction and Communication Networks is for prediction and control, while in the Coordinated Management of Meaning it is for location and orientation. And this fact could be superficial, but it is not especially because those interests as a kind of light that guides the ways of doing research or theorizing, reveal once more, how a compromise for a critical role in those theories does not exist. On the contrary, it could be said, in the context of the relationship between knowledge and power, that the role of these theories is a role pro status quo that avoids any possibility of seeing conflict in the reality conceptualized. And here it is necessary to add that it does not matter if the consideration is ethic or emic, because equally, both ignore conflicting perspectives. It makes sense, therefore, for these theories to ignore political, economic, and social conflicts and to defend the principle of neutrality and objectivity as a central value. Of course, the situation is not the same for both perspectives - empiric-analytical and historic-hermeneutical-. However, at the bottom, they do not differ much at the moment of raising critical questions regarding some of the concepts based on which theories are constructed.

Second, reviewing some of the basic concepts on which these theories are based, they reveal, again, interesting conceptions about the way different scholars understand the realities they study. Very clear, for example, is the case of concepts such as adaptation, uncertainty and anxiety, and stranger. In the first concept, of course, there is not too much for adding that has not been said already. The fact that a theory centers all its assumptions to see if immigrants are adapted or not does not go so far from the nineteenth century or the most conservative points of view which exist, taking their roots in the most classical and positivist foundations.

With relation to the concepts of uncertainty and anxiety that are at the base of Uncertainty Reduction theory, we see too much emphasis on trying to falsify theories around a phenomenon which, up to a certain point, may be obvious, for example, the degree of uncertainty and anxiety that any individual experiences when confronting a new situation, be this a new culture or a new group within its own society. Considerations such as: if high uncertainty and anxiety then no effective communication, or its opposite, if low uncertainty and anxiety then effective communication, diminish too much issues regarding individual abilities and ignore completely the

involvement of society. In other words, an issue like this cannot be seen only in terms of the individual abilities (e.g. second language competence, ethnolinguistic identity, self-monitoring, etc.) because society through its practices has the responsibility to nurture its individuals with open attitudes toward the appreciation of its heterogeneity and diversity; and therefore, not to avoid but to deal with the uncertainties of the individuals. That is, we do not see uncertainty as the problem. The problem is how people have been socialized to engage in new situations whatever they may be. To emphasize the individual characteristics is in our opinion another manifestation of modern positivism, which claims that the idea of the rational individual has to be understood in the context of individual liberalism.

Similarly, the emphasis conceptualizing communication in function of a dichotomy such as certainty-uncertainty is to maintain implicitly that the standard in each situation must be directed to certainty; and here again, the manifestation of positivism appears once more. Particularly, that kind of positivism that philosophers such as Zuleta has revealed, is being transferred from mere idealism of the social sciences to daily life, that is, the idea that everything must be controllable and predictable in order to prevent any signal of uncertainty. Uncertainty implicitly involves the idea of change as, for the Greeks, the concept of crisis involved the search for change and a new engagement with reality. That individuals per se have uncertainty, then, seems to indicate that individuals understand that human relations are complex. Here we experience the need for citing Zuleta, when he says, "in place of a desire for complex human relations that stimulate and make us capable to fight and forces ourselves to change, we wish an idyll without shadows and without risks" (Zuleta, 1980:9). And, of course, believing that there is no risk in any human activity and trying to deny its potential is to believe "positively" that we can control and predict everything!

The last concept we want to review is that of stranger, who we see also as conforming to a dichotomy, in this case, between familiar and strange. Here again an observation of Zuleta in this sense can be appropriated, particularly, that related to the application of "nonlogical" reciprocity when explaining about others and ourselves:

"In other words, the use of a method that is completely different from when we try to give attention to, and discuss with them, the problems, failures and errors of others. In the case of others, we apply an "essentialism": what they have made, what has happened to them, are clear manifestation of their deep being; in our case, we apply a "circumstantialism" in such a way that the same phenomenon happens through adverse circumstances. They are like that; I was obligated. They gather in the thing that they saw; I cannot avoid this result" (Zuleta, 1980:13).

The fact that we are trying to show following this quotation is the same as that we demonstrated with the dichotomies and their standards, that is, nothing guarantees that in this dichotomy between familiar and strange there are no implicit standards "in favor" of the familiar. Put this way, strangers are people who have to be explained as different from us. For example, in this sense, we observe a contradiction in the theory of Gudykunst and Yun Kim: if all the interactions between people share the same underlying communication process, why then is communication with strangers a particular case, furthermore, emphasized and explained through a particular theory? Is it because, despite the process of communication as being judged the same, it

is different in the case of strangers? Is communication with strangers different because they are strangers? Indeed the explanation offered by Zuleta above in relation to how we sometimes try to explain others differently from ourselves is not the same as saying that communication with strangers is different because their cultural backgrounds and their communication patterns are different from ours. While the latter statement is general, Zuleta's indicates that differences tend to be centered at the describer's own vantagepoint. To cast these concepts in terms of familiar and strange, we believe, does not help people to think about themselves when they have the challenge to be related to others. On the contrary, such dichotomy recreates the idea that because others are strange we have to make the effort ourselves to understand them. We have to remember here in a sense, that "others" will always be strangers for us and that it does not matter if they are our own family, or parents, or... strangers!

To conclude, the point we want to underline with the examination of these theories through some of the concepts on which they are based is, again, that they are not neutral and without interests. Underlying all those activities carried out in social sciences there are meanings and conceptions about how we as scholars understand social reality, and how we try to explain it. In the case of I.C, we have tried to examine the approaches that appear to be significant. In doing so we wanted to emphasize mainly that the positivist conception is a very pervasive assumption taken for granted in some of the theories, and methodologies. Interesting to add is perhaps the necessity for extending the analysis to some other concepts such as effective communication, intentionality, intercultural communication competence in which we also observe many epistemological assumptions related to the rational individual, free will, neutral valuation, social unilineal evolutionism and so forth. We believe it is important to do that mainly because I.C. seems to us a curious paradox. In other words, it is a paradox that a new and young field such as I.C. ignores contemporary discussion about the role of social sciences and, on the contrary, recreates the most ethnocentric and conservative points of view when creating theories, conducting research, or proposing philosophical premises such as those related to the understanding of diversity in intercultural settings. We believe that the idea of diversity itself must be at the bottom of the ways in which we attempt to know about others and wonder why, in order to understand them, we have to, instead, convert them to our familiar categories and patterns of knowing.

Intercultural communication and some of its subfields

In order to complete this epistemological panorama in I.C authors, as Gudykunst & Asante point out, two subfields complement this field. These are international communication which defines its main concern around the role played by media, press, and transnational broadcasting, and development communication which defines its main objective as "the application of communication with the goal of furthering socioeconomic development" (Rogers, 1989:67).

Looking briefly at the tendencies in research and the theorization in the subfields, it is interesting to note that the discussion is different from the discussion in intercultural communication. That is, through the contemporary discussion there is a very clear questioning of the positivism as a way of knowing and explaining. This can be observed, for example, in some of the concerns expressed by some authors (e.g. McPhail, Yapple & Korzeny, Rogers) about the homogenization of the world through the mass media, the Western bias in understanding certain problems related to the role of mass media, the predominant use of quantitative methodologies, and

the influence of empirical positivism in the theories used. Similarly, another interesting phenomenon is that this discussion is taking into account perspectives born in those areas different from the perspectives predominant in the hegemonic countries, giving in this way, a different panorama to the views assumed as well as to the discussion. In this sense, it is our perception that in these subfields there are right now serious concerns about the limits of the predominant methodologies, theories and epistemological premises used traditionally for explaining the different issues these scholars want to explain. In others words, the discussion we have attempted here which was centered in intercultural communication already exists in these subfields.

In the particular case of development communication, the tendency is very similar to international communication though this subfield deals with the concept of development that is very controversial. Rogers, for example, mentions that "if the dominant paradigm -the positivist one- of development has not passed, it is certainly much less dominant" (Rogers, 1989:85). Similarly, he says that the current emphasis in this field is focussed on understanding issues such as the distribution of development benefits with a more equal attitude and the participation of people in the definition of their own destiny. In this sense, the old concept of development linked to a passage from the third world, through the second world, to the first world, is no more the old conception of the eighteenth century (savagery, barbarism, and civilization), and seems to be changing the mentality of some scholars. We said, some scholars, only because it is necessary to observe how even today many international agencies that maintain programs of development around the world, inspite of understanding this issue as polisemic and different for each country, believe the problem of development is to become "modern", or implicitly, "civilized", cast in terms of indices developed by the first world.

Additionally, a characteristic that we see in both subfields and, different from intercultural communication, is that this discussion takes into account political, sociological and economic arguments, something that we indicated earlier is sometimes ignored in intercultural communication reflecting the heavy emphasis given to the concept of culture. In this particular context a very interesting discussion is that about whether information is a marketable commodity or a social good. Thinking about this unresolved issue, and relating it to the information produced by the social sciences, we hope not to have to see in the future, scholars claiming that a high or the low production of information is related to the kind of culture that produces it; furthermore, that this phenomenon occurs in the nine most individualistic countries!

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In summary, what we have tried to attempt throughout this paper is to share a deep concern that we have about the state of the art in I.C.. For sharing such a concern, then, we started with the current discussion in the field of communication, revealing for that purpose, the main concerns related to theorization, the methodology, and epistemology under the contemporary context characterized by the discussion on some traits between modernist and postmodernist trends in the social sciences. Doing that, a point we wanted to underline was that social sciences cannot continue avoiding the relationship between knowledge and power. That is, it is very clear right now that our research cannot continue to be hidden in neutral and positivist premises, so far from political, historical and economic issues. To pretend the opposite is to perpetuate the ways of knowing typical of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In the context of I.C. we then brought some of the issues discussed at the beginning , while trying to contextualize them in this field. The discussion pretended particularly to be epistemological, the reason for that being our belief that philosophy in general, but epistemology especially, is at the core of any theory, methodology or intellectual position in any social field. In the case of I.C., we observed that this discussion is not frequent, and perhaps for this reason, from here stems the deficiency shared by some of the theories and methodologies in this field, particularly those related specifically to I.C.. In the consideration of its definition, its dimensions, and some of its theories and concepts, we hope, we have successfully demonstrated this view.

Similarly, the exercise of contrasting modern and postmodern presumptions was attempted with the idea of taking to its limit the different assumptions. That is, we see that through this discussion is appearing a clear break with modern presumptions. In the context of the social sciences, communication, or I.C., it does not matter if the approach has empiric-analytical or hermeneutic perspectives because modernism as a kind of worldview penetrates both. Even worse, it is penetrating not only the space and discourses of social sciences but also our daily activities. Modernism as a pervasive view penetrates our daily activities, specifically when concepts such as control and prediction are transferred from the sciences to the performance of our daily life, avoiding in this way the risk of experiencing uncertainty and crisis in front of any new situation. The way we see them is that they are like states that by "nature" invite us to change, or at least to think about ourselves. Moreover, thinking about uncertainty and crisis, we believe that they are ways of estrangement from ourselves, and for that reason, rather than avoiding them in order to communicate effectively, we have to learn to deal with them in many situations when we interact with others whoever they may be. We do not think that uncertainty and anxiety are exclusive experiences when we engage in contact with "strangers".

This last issue about the theory of uncertainty reduction gives us a reason to mention another concern that we tried to share alongside of this paper: the presence of positivism as a manifestation of modernism at the moment of understanding social reality. In our opinion, all the interests and values in the usage of quantitative methodologies, neutral valuation, homogenization, objectivism, and the usage of the same parameters in the method applied in physical sciences to social sciences, have their explanation here. In this sense our point was to reveal how, to be positivist in social sciences, is almost a certainty because it does not require to be creative in thinking about the complexity of social reality because, up to a certain extent, the technique always is the same mechanical process: a questionnaire, a closed question, a statistic, a hypothesis, a confirmation or deconfirmation of the hypothesis, the relation with a theory, and the suggestion of another research to see aspects that the former does not reveal! In the case of I.C. through its dimensions, concepts, theories, and definition we hope that we have demonstrated that the way of explanation follows, up to a certain degree, this circular process creating more stereotypes rather than truly a challenge to understand why the reality of relations between people from different backgrounds is as they are!

REFERENCES

- Adorno, T.* (1972). Filosofia y Supersticion (Phylosophy and Superstition). Madrid, Taurus.
- Berman, M.* (1989). Todo lo Solido se Desvanece en el Aire: la Experiencia de la Modernidad (All that is Solid Melts into Air: the Experience of Modernity). Mexico, Siglo XXI Editores.
- Clifford, J. & Marcus, G.* (1986). Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. California, University of California Press.
- Chen, L.* (1993). Chinese and North Americans: An Epistemological Exploration of Intercultural Communication. The Howard Journal of Communication. Vol 4 No 4 Summer : 342-357.
- Craig, R.* (1993). Why Are There So Many Communication Theories. Journal of Communication 43 (3), Summer: 26-33.
- Davis, D. & Jasinski, J.* (1993). Beyond the Culture Wars: An Agenda for research on Communication and Culture. Journal of Communication 43 (3), Summer: 141-149.
- Devereux, G.* (1977). De la Ansiedad al Metodo en las Ciencias Sociales (From anxiety to Method in the Behavioral Sciences) Mexico, Siglo XXI Editores.
- Foucault, M.* (1994). The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception. New York, Vintage Books.
- Giles, H. & Franklyn-Stokes, A.* (1989). Communicator Characteristics. In Asante, M. & Gudykunst, W. (edit). Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication. California, Sage Publications.
- Gudykunst, W. & Yun Kim, Y.* (1984). Communicating with Strangers: An Approach to Intercultural Communication. New York, Random House.
- Gudykunst, W. & Nishida, T.* (1989). Theoretical Perspectives for Studying Intercultural Communication. In Asante, M. & Gudykunst, W. (edit). Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication. California, Sage Publications.
- Gudykunst, W.* (1991) Bridging Differences: Effective Intergroup Communication. California, Sage publications.
- Hall, E.* (1991). Context and Meaning. In Samovar, L. & Porter, R. (edit). Intercultural Communication: A Reader. Sixth edition. California, Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Hecht, M. et al (1989). The Cultural Dimensions of Nonverbal Communication. In Asante, M. & Gudykunst, W. (edit). Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication. California, Sage Publications.

Horkheimer, M. (1947). Eclipse of Reason. Oxford, Princeton University Press.

Infante, D. et al. (1993/90?). Building Communication Theory. Second edition. Illinois, Waveland Press Inc.

Johnson, D. & Tuttle, F. (1989) Problems in Intercultural Research. In Asante, M. & Gudykunst, W. (edit). Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication. California, Sage Publications.

Lang, K. & Lang, G. (1993). Perspectives on Communication. Journal of Communication 43 (3), Summer: 92-99.

Littlejohn, S. (1992). Theories of Human Communication. Fourth edition. California, Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Lyotard, J.F. (1987). La Condicion Postmoderna. Tercera edicion. Madrid, Ediciones Catedra.

Marcus, G. & Fischer, M. (1986). Anthropology as Cultural Critique: an Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

McPhail, T. (1989). Inquiry in International Communication. In Asante, M. & Gudykunst, W. (edit). Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication. California, Sage Publications.

Matsumoto, D. et al. (1989). Emotion in Intercultural Communication. In Asante, M. & Gudykunst, W. (edit). Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication. California, Sage Publications.

Newcomb, H. (1993). Target Practice: A Batesonian "Field" Guide for Communication Studies. Journal of Communication 43(3), Summer: 127-133.

Ritchie, D. (1994). Objectivity, Doubt, and the Two cultures: a review essay. Journal of communication. 44(1), Winter 65-72.

Rogers, E. (1989). Inquiry in Development Communication. In Asante, M. & Gudykunst, W. (edit). Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication. California, Sage Publications.

Rose, D. (1990). Living the Ethnographic Life. Qualitative research methods series 23. California, Sage Publications.

Rosengren, E. (1993). From Field to Frog Ponds. Journal of Communication 43 (3), Summer: 6-

17.

Samovar, L. & Porter, R. (1991 (a)). Communication Between Cultures. California, Wadsworth, Inc.

-- (1991(b)). Intercultural Communication: A Reader. Sixth edition. California, Wadsworth, Inc.

Shepherd, G. (1993). Building a Discipline of Communication. Journal of Communication 43 (3) Summer: 83-91.

Sherzer, J. (1987). A Discourse-Centered Approach to Language and Culture. American Anthropologist, 89, 2 295-309

Tyler, S. (1986). Post-Modern Ethnography: From Document of the Occult to Occult Document. In Clifford, J. & Marcus, G. (edit) Writing Culture: The poetics and Politics of Ethnography. California, University of California Press.

Vasco, C.E. (1989). Tres Estilos de Trabajo en las Ciencias Sociales. Documentos Ocasionales 54. Bogota, CINEP.

Walicki, A. (1979). A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism. California, Stanford University Press.

Williams, G. (1992). Sociolinguistics: A Sociological Critique. London, Routledge.

Wierzbicka, A. (1992). Semantics, Culture and Cognition: Universal Human Concepts in Cultural-specific Configurations. New York, Oxford University Press.

Yaple, P. & Korzeny, F. (1989). Electronic Mass Media Effects Across Cultures. In Asante, M. & Gudykunst, W. (edit). Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication. California, Sage Publications.

Yun Kim, Y. (1989). Intercultural Adaptation. In Asante, M. & Gudykunst, W. (edit). Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication. California, Sage Publications

Yung-Ho Im, (1993). Critical Communication Studies in South Korea. Journal of Communication Inquiry. 17:1 (Winter)108-123.

Zuleta, E. (1985). Sobre la Idealizacion en la Vida Personal y Colectiva y Otros Ensayos. Bogota, Procultura.

