

## 19.00.00 – ПСИХОЛОГИЯ ФАНЛАРИ

### INTEGRATIVE POSSIBILITIES OF ECLECTISM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE OPPOSITION OF SCIENTIFIC AND HUMANISTIC APPROACHES

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*Abstract. This article is devoted to the analysis of the integrative possibilities of eclecticism in the context of the opposition of scientific and humanistic approaches. A review of current research has identified different and competing approaches to the study of culture and communication. These approaches reflect different metatheoretical assumptions, research goals, and beliefs about the role of power and relevance in contemporary research. Dialectically oriented scholars consider relations as a dialogical communicative process characterized by the unity of oppositional tendencies that form relations. Researchers of relational dialectics focus on the dialogic and polyphonic qualities of relationships, analyzing the oppositional tendencies inherent in personal relationships. Methods of metatheoretical analysis have been established to legitimize different approaches and promote interparadigmatic discussion, this article first explores the metatheoretical assumptions of current research, and then offers a dialectical approach to science. The dialectical perspective suggests that we must balance both the understanding of the past and the present. Also, the past is always viewed through the prism of the present.*

*Key words: Conflict, dialectics, relational dialectics, personal relationships, dialogic communicative process, eclecticism, humanism.*

### ИНТЕГРАТИВНЫЕ ВОЗМОЖНОСТИ ЭКЛЕКТИЗМА В КОНТЕКСТЕ ПРОТИВОПОСТАВЛЕНИЯ НАУЧНОГО И ГУМАНИСТИЧЕСКОГО ПОДХОДОВ

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*Аннотация. Данная статья посвящена анализу интегративных возможностей эклектизма в контексте противопоставления научного и гуманистического подходов. Обзор современных исследований выявил разные и конкурирующие подходы к изучению культуры и коммуникации. Эти подходы отражают различные метатеоретические предположения, цели исследования и убеждения роли власти и актуальности в современных исследованиях. Дialeктически ориентированные ученые рассматривают отношение как диалогический коммуникативный процесс, характеризующийся единством оппозиционных тенденций, образующих отношения. Исследователи реляционной диалектики сосредотачиваются на диалогических и многоголосных качествах отношений, анализируя оппозиционные тенденции, присущие личным отношениям. Методами метатеоретического анализа установлено, чтобы узаконить разные подходы и способствовать*

*межпарадигматической дискуссии, данная статья сначала исследует метатеоретические предположения текущих исследований, а затем предлагает диалектический подход к науке. Диалектическая перспектива говорит о том, что мы должны сбалансировать как понимание прошлого, так и настоящего. Также доказано, что прошлое всегда рассматривается через призму актуальных событий сегодняшних дней.*

*Ключевые слова: Конфликт, диалектика, реляционная диалектика, личностные отношения, диалогический коммуникативный процесс, эклектика, гуманизм.*

Introduction. Studies of culture and communication also reflect important metatheoretical differences in epistemology, ontology, assumptions about human nature, methodologies and research goals, as well as different conceptualizations of culture and communication and the relationship between culture and communication. In addition, questions about the role of power and the application of research often lead to valuable discussions about the right and wrong ways to conduct research. Although this debate suggests that the industry is maturing, it may be unnecessary when scientists use one set of paradigmatic criteria to evaluate research based on different paradigmatic assumptions. A survey of contemporary research reveals distinct and competing approaches to the study of culture and communication. These approaches reflect various metatheoretical assumptions, research goals, and beliefs about the role of power and relevance in contemporary research.

Literature review. In order to highlight the various metatheoretical assumptions of culture and communication research, we first identify four research paradigms based on L. Burrell and D. Morgan's [9] framework categorizing sociological research. Although this framework has been borrowed often by communication researchers and provides a useful "map" to differentiate and legitimate theoretical research, a word of caution is in order. As S. Deetz [4] notes, L. Burrell & D. Morgan's emphasis on the incommensurability of these paradigms has resulted in a tendency to reify research approaches and has led to "poorly formed conflicts and discussions" [9, p. 119]. Therefore, we present this framework, not as a reified categorization system, but as a way to focus attention on current issues and to legitimate the various approaches. L. Burrell and D. Morgan propose two dimensions for differentiating metatheoretical assumptions of sociological research: assumptions about the nature of social science and assumptions about the nature of society. The assumptions about the nature of social science vary along a subjective-objective dimension, and these categories have been described ad nauseam in communication scholarship. As described objectivism assumes a separation of subject (researcher) and object (knowledge), a belief in an external world and human behavior that can be known, described, and predicted, and use of research methodology that maintains this subject-object separation. On the other hand, subjectivist scholarship sees the subject-object relationship not as bifurcated but in productive tension; reality is not external, but internal and "subjective," and human behavior is creative, voluntary, and discoverable by ideographic methods. W. Gudykunst and T. Nishida [8] used this subjective-objective distinction to categorize then-current culture and communication research.

Also, research using diary and log methods have shown that relational partners' moods influence how negativity they treat each other [11]. Having a negatively stressful day at work, for example, is associated with more marital conflict [2], greater expressions of anger from wives, and more withdrawn behavior from husbands. Such variations in participants' moods probably adds a source of unreliability to assessments that rely on a single encounter. Given this potential for unreliability, analyses based on these measures may actually underestimate the association of

conflict behaviors with relational outcomes.

Conflict scholars investigating how individuals shape their conflicts have sought to explain how conflicts emerge and develop, and have investigated how individuals' cognitions influence the course and outcomes of relational conflict. Again, the literature in this general area is enormous, even rivaling the research on associations between conflict behaviors and relational outcomes. Our focus here is on reviewing several common explanations for conflict and on briefly discussing the importance of interpretations of relational conflict. Much of the work relevant to explaining conflict in romantic relationships does not refer to explicit theoretical models (F. Fincham & S. Beach, 1999) [6], but several common explanations exist (even if sometimes implicitly). The common accounts include references to skills, gender differences, other individual differences, stressors, and goals. Each of these explanations has a number of variants; due to space considerations, we focus on general themes rather than the variations. Also, these explanations are not mutually exclusive; for example, D. Canary's (2003) model of strategic conflict incorporates individual differences, interpretations, and goals. Despite the ongoing pervasiveness of the skills explanation, there are theoretical and empirical reasons to believe that the role of communication skills as a cause of aversive relational conflict behaviors has been overstated [5]. L. Sillars and J. Weisberg (1987) noted that communicators' goals in conflict are often "complex and ephemeral" (p. 141). This makes it difficult to judge whether a conflict behavior was effective; it is possible, for instance, that a behavior that is considered negative might be functional in a given conflict or might effectively serve a goal other than relationship enhancement [12]. Moreover, B. Burleson, W. Denton argued that the skills deficiency approach fails to make the important conceptual distinction between ability and motivation. B. Burleson and W. Denton conducted a study in which they measured skills directly (rather than inferred them from participants' behaviors). They found that communication skills were not reliably associated with marital distress, but expressions of negativity were. Such findings suggest that the behaviors frequently linked to dissatisfaction in relationships "may result more from ill will than poor skill" [3 p. 897]. Similar conclusions can be drawn from studies showing that dissatisfied spouses evince communication skills with strangers that they do not with their partner [10].

**Research Methodology.** This study examined the perceived importance of six basic dialectical contradictions to conflict episodes for 25 marital couples. Using a revised version of the Retrospective Interview Technique (RIT) and questionnaire data, marital couples were asked to recall important conflict episodes, coded for issue type, over a 1-year period. Following in-depth questions about the conflicts, a questionnaire was administered that asked participants to rate 6 basic dialectical contradictions according to their importance for each conflict episode. A second questionnaire was also administered that asked participants to determine whether conflicts were dialectical (antagonistic and non-antagonistic) and/or non-dialectical, relative to each conflict episode. Results reveal that the dialectical contradictions of autonomy-connection and openness-closed-ness were perceived as more important than the other contradictions. Two other contradictions (integration-separation, predictability-novelty) were perceived as important for particular conflict issue types.

**Analysis and results.** First, we identify and describe four different paradigms of culture and communication based on the structure of G. Burrell, D. Morgan's (1980, 1988): functionalist, interpretive, critical humanistic, and critical structuralist. For each paradigm, we identify metatheoretical assumptions, accompanying conceptualizations of culture, the relationship between culture and communication, and examples of current research. Then we propose a dialectical approach that facilitates interparadigmatic dialogue and offers new ways to conceptualize and study

intercultural communication. We offer six dialectics of intercultural communication practice that can guide future research.

The dialectic of intercultural communication exists between the past and the present-future. Much of the functionalist and interpretive sciences that study culture and communication have ignored historical forces. Other scholars have added history as a variable for understanding contemporary intercultural interaction, such as the previous intergroup interaction variable K. A. Finlay, W. G. Stephan (2000), which affects the degree of intergroup anxiety. Instead, critics stress the importance of including history in the current analysis of cultural meanings. The dialectical perspective suggests that we must balance both the understanding of the past and the present. Also, the past is always viewed through the prism of the present [7].

Research in this paradigm often focuses on extending interpersonal communication theories to intercultural contexts or discovering theoretically based cross-cultural differences in interpersonal communication, or both. Researchers have also investigated international and cross-national mediated communication and development communication (see Rogers, 1995). Most functionalist research is conducted from an “etic” perspective. That is, a theoretical framework is externally imposed by the researcher and research often involves a search for universals.

Scholars frequently conceptualize conflict behaviors having positive and negative affect along a single dimension, but most coding systems distinguish between behaviors that are viewed as cooperative and those that are seen as competitive. Whereas countless studies have examined connections between expressions of affect and relational satisfaction, fairly few have examined negativity or positivity as predictors of relational stability. Those that have, however, indicate that negativity during conflict predicts divorce—at least over periods of a few years. Most notably, Cascade Model proposes that the trajectory toward divorce is driven by a progression of increasingly alienating conflict behaviors. In short, research on the connections between conflict resolution behaviors and relational outcomes has proved quite useful. Nevertheless, there are concerns about the research in this area. Because the extant literature is so large and varied, no particular concern applies to all research in this area, but each is prevalent. These concerns pertain to studies that predict divorce, research on the affect dimension of conflict engagement, and some general assumptions of the problem-solving paradigm. In contrast to the assumption that managing conflict is more important than the difficulty and frequency of conflicts, experienced relationships counselors attribute the majority of couples’ troubles to fundamental problems that often cause communication difficulties, rather than to problems managing conflict, per se. Nevertheless, there are growing questions about the utility of the typical observational study for addressing a number of important questions about relational conflict. Consider, for example, the difficulties of studying conflict avoidance in a laboratory setting. Individuals are less likely to withdraw if they are directed by a researcher to discuss an issue for a preset amount of time. Moreover, much conflict avoidance occurs before an issue is even introduced, making it difficult to observe such avoidance. Even if behaviors can be validly assessed in a single observational episode, there are questions about whether a single assessment is always adequate. Retrospective reports of relational change suggest that particular conflict episodes can be critical events or turning points in a relationship. A couples’ “first big fight,” for instance, can have a large impact on the development of a relationship, leading to dissolution of some dyads and heightened interdependence in others. It is unlikely that a single observational period would capture episodes that happened to be the most critical ones; thus, the conflicts that most affect relationships are unlikely to be observed. Unless scholars assume that there are no behavioral differences between the most crucial conflicts and ones observed in research, laboratory studies are likely to miss some of the



most important aspects of conflict. The patterns of behavior that couples enact also create a context that may shape the meaning partners assign to conflicts. For example, romantic partners who routinely express affection to each other appear to be less susceptible to any adverse impact of negativity and demand/withdraw on relational satisfaction. Thus, the meaning assigned to negative behaviors appears to be influenced by the behavioral context that couples create together. Moreover, this behavioral context need not be limited to behaviors that are usually thought of as communication. We argued that one reason why some couples may increase in satisfaction after engaging in demand/withdraw episodes is that the person being asked to change may do so over time, which would influence the ultimate meaning of the conversation. For example, if a husband withdraws while being nagged to pick up his dirty socks, the actual interaction is likely to be unpleasant and associated with concurrent dissatisfaction. However, if this husband begins to put his dirty laundry away without being nagged (perhaps even as a strategy to avoid being nagged again), this may lead the wife to reappraise the conflict episode, downplaying its importance compared to the changed behavior. Furthermore, once the husband has demonstrated a willingness to change despite engaging in avoidance, subsequent episodes of demand/withdraw might be viewed differently (e.g., the complaining spouse may be less frustrated because she recognizes that withdrawal during a discussion does not necessarily imply that the spouse will not comply with a request for change). Considerable advances have been made in identifying conflict behaviors and patterns that are associated with outcomes like dissatisfaction and dissolution. Scholars have also made important progress in understanding why conflict develops in particular ways and why relational partners enact some conflict behaviors rather than others. Although there is certainly room for more research on such issues, our review and conceptual framework suggest two particularly important foci for future efforts at understanding conflict in romantic relationships. First, the impact of conflict on close relationships probably depends on a number of temporal issues that have received scant attention. Although there have been many studies on sequences within particular conflict episodes, understanding the impact of conflict on relationships likely will require more attention to issues involving broader timeframes (e.g., the daily rhythms of conflict, how serial arguments develop over time, how changes in conflict over time affect relationships). Second, there are sound conceptual reasons – and some empirical ones – to believe that the impact of environmental factors on conflict in romantic relationships is greater than that implied by a typical laboratory study. Taking a more contextual perspective on conflict in romantic dyads offers many potentially important insights.

**Conclusion/Recommendations.** We tried to invite researchers of culture and communication to consider the ways in which their production of knowledge is related to the epistemological achievements of people in other paradigms. While there may not be an easy fit between these paradigmatic differences, it is important that we not only recognize these differences but also look for ways to make these epistemological differences productive rather than exhausting. Information overload can be daunting, but our dialectical perspective offers intercultural scholars as well as students and practitioners a way to deal with the many different kinds of knowledge we have about cultures and interactions. In short, the aforementioned assumptions of the problem-solving paradigm may obscure important aspects of relational conflict. In the future, we need more work that (a) recognizes the importance of variations in the frequency of conflict and in the difficulties of problems that couples face, (b) examines temporal features of conflict (e.g., how conflict patterns change over time, how serial arguments are addressed over multiple episodes, how particular conflict episodes can serve as critical turning points in relationships), and (c) attempts to document everyday experiences of conflict in relationships. It is important to

emphasize that we are not just making a call for multiple methods. Instead, we suggest that many of the questions that are important to relational conflict scholars (e.g., how do patterns of conflict unfold over long periods of time and how do such patterns influence relationships?) cannot be answered with the typical observational design.

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