

# Combining Epistemology & Scope in Public Organization and Administration Study : Toward Defining a Methodological Paradigm

HA, MEE-SUNG

*Ph.D, Ministry of Government Administration*

## Abstract

This article attempts to define a methodological paradigm for public administration study by combining epistemology in social sciences and the scope of public administration. The paper first examines the positivist social science approach, which has been a central methodology in the effort to make the study of P.A scientific and objective. It then probes and criticizes the limitation of the positive science manifested in the study of P.A and suggests ways to construct a synthesized mode of inquiry incorporating useful epistemologies beyond positivism into P.A study. While evaluating the positivist approach, examining additional research modes, and suggesting a broader scope of P.A research, this paper consistently joins the paradigmatic dimensions and contexts of P.A to the modes of research. Here, it is suggested that an epistemology should fit the substantive core of a field as it tends to shape or define conceptually the essence and scope of the field. In this article, the scope of P.A is defined by four dimensions : (1) selves and values dimension, (2) political process dimension, (3) programs and administrative/organizational systems dimension, and (4) operations dimension. It appeared that, while the positivist approach tends to fit better the third and fourth dimensions, the interpretive approach is more appropriate for the first and second dimensions. On the other hand, the critical approach may deal with relations between the first dimension and the other dimensions more effectively.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Don K. Price, while dealing with the attractive topic "1984 and Beyond : Social Engineering or Political Values," defines the conflict between science and values as the first of three major dilemmas that modern government has to face. According to him, science and technology have no doubt been beneficial to human beings, but preoccupation with intellectual skills and material progress has often been a threat to humane values (Price, 1975). While scientific concepts and methods can clarify alternatives and quantify their benefits and costs, they rarely provide a realistic, viable basis for determining political issues or comprehending fundamental values. Additionally, they produce "institutional reductionism," which leaves our real political process underrepresented, and distort our humane tendency for instrumental reason.

Recognizing the serious dilemmas that scientific methods bring to the area of public organization and administration (P.A), this paper examines the positivist social science approach, which has been a central methodology in the effort to make the study of P.A. scientific and objective. This paper probes and criticizes the limitation of the positive science manifested in the study of P.A. and suggests ways to construct a synthesized mode of inquiry incorporating useful epistemologies beyond positivism into P.A. study. While evaluating the positivist approach, examining additional research modes, and suggesting a broader scope of P. A. research, this paper consistently joins the paradigmatic dimensions and contexts of P.A. to the modes of research. This was done because an epistemology should fit the substantive core of a field as it tends to shape or define conceptually the essence and scope of the field.

## II. POSITIVIST APPROACH

The positivistic mode of inquiry into public administration has long constituted an essential part of the effort to establish an identifiable paradigm for the study of P.A. It has attempted to make the study of P.A. objective and systematic and to discover the scientific principles of administration and policy choice through which P.A. can develop to a legitimate academic discipline. While positivist approach has essentially been a methodological mode of social sciences and P.A. study, it has never been separable from a substantive focus of public administration, the rational model or the efficiency approach. Thus, the positive science model, as a methodological mode, implies a focal(Paradigmatic) mode of inquiry into P.A. beyond methodology. Thus, although it is a theory of knowledge acquisition(i.e., epistemology), it has also shaped substantive theories of public administration.

### 1. Focus, Method, and Conditions

The positivist approach, standing in the philosophical tradition of logical positivism, focuses on "the control of natural and social events" (J. White, 1986). The goal of the approach in administration is to discover, explain, and predict regularities in human behavior and administrative phenomena under consideration (J.D. Thompson, 1956).

Positivist "control" means methodological regulation (e.g., experimentation) in exploring a valid causal relationship between patterns of behavior and social conditions. In reality, however, the concept of "methodological control" in research extends directly to the idea of "social control" or administrative manipulation in seeking the goals of the society or the organization.

The advantage of knowledge uncovered by controlled social research is that it represents the acquisition of knowledge on ways to control human behavior and social environment. As Denhardt (1984:37) argues, "if we know how people will react to certain situations that we can change, we can begin to alter their behavior." In other words, when one can obtain explanation and prediction under a manipulable condition, he can make certain events or behaviors happen or disappear (J. White, 1986). In an organizational or policy context, the purpose of seeking to explain causal relationships and to predict outcomes is to find proper "means" to achieve a given end through the effective control of behavior and environment. The positivist approach imbedded in the rational models of public administration has, in fact, been pursued mainly for "instrumental" reason (Denhardt, 1984:37).

The positivist approach, following the deductive and inductive models of explanation and prediction, requires "the development of a collection of related and testable laws that state causal relationships among relevant variables" (J. White, 1986). Premises or hypotheses should be sufficiently clear to allow objective analysis, and causal relationships have to be verified through empirical observations to have scientific value (Stene, 1940). The causal theory should also be generalizable in terms of concepts, settings, and geographic locations (J.D. Thompson, 1956; Litchfield, 1956).

In other words, positivism requires that P.A. research meet the criteria of scientific verification, including validity, testability, and causality, before their findings become "usable knowledge" (McCurdy & Cleary, 1984).

Positive research presumes several indispensable conditions for empirical research and scientific analysis: value-fact dichotomy, operationalized concepts and measurability, isolation of particular effect, and stable change and predicability. Scientific research deals with "factual" problems that are scientifically tractable and objectively observable, assuming that one can distinguish values from facts (Simon, 1946; McCurdy & Cleary, 1984). It is also necessary to define and operationalize concepts (objectives or variables)

enough to obtain units and substance measurable in accuracy and observable "from the outside" without being contaminated by value biases (Banfield, 1958; Simon, 1957; 42; Denhardt, 1984:70). In addition, one should be able to isolate the effect of one variable from other disturbing factors in order to detect "real" effects (Banfield, 1958; Simon, 1957: 42). Furthermore, the change rate in behavior and environment should be stable enough to sustain the meaningfulness of data observed and of prediction obtained through the data (Blalock, 1984 : 18-9).

But, do such conditions as presumed by the positivist approach exist in the real world of public administration to an acceptable degree? Even when the assumptions appear reasonably compatible with reality, what important aspects of P.A. are missing in this mode of study? As discussed latter, many have challenged (i.e., objected to) positive science and rational models of P.A., which are inseparable to the positivist's approach. Before moving to the discussion of challenge, we first need to consider how the theories of P.A. reflected the logic of positivism and how positivism has helped the theories of P.A. enhance or limit their value and viability in the real world of P.A.

## **2. Reflection of Positivism on P.A. Theories**

In the earlier period of P.A. study, the generic approach presented by Wilson, Goodnow, Willoughby, and White brought P.A. to scientific study by introducing the notion of politics/administration dichotomy that could be related to corresponding value/fact dichotomy. Assuming that public administration could become a "value-free" science in its own right, L.D. White, in an essay entitled "The Meaning of Principles in Public Administration" (1939), asserted that the meaning of "principle" should be restricted to a hypothesis or proposition that could be "adequately tested by observation" and "or experiment" to indicate causal relationships and guides to administrative action (Henry, 1975; Denhardt, 1984:55). F.W. Willoughby (1927) and E.O. Stene (1940) also presumed that the study of public administration could employ a scientific method, and proposed the exploration of causal relationships and the development of a science that would produce guidelines for efficient action (Denhardt, 1984:55-6). To them, logical positivism and a scientific method could contribute to the discovery of efficiency principles.

The positivist approach flourished best in the era of behavioral movement through the works of Simon, Smithberg, V. Thompson, and soon. Influenced by behavioral sciences such as industrial psychology, they focused the study of administration on the behavior of individuals and groups, claiming departure from the institutional study (Henry, 1975; Mosher, 1975:113-6). H. Simon, pursuing a science of human behavior or "behaviorism" (as a reductionism of psychology; Hempel, 1966:106), attempted to

lay out a comprehensive theory of administrative organization based on a positivist mode of epistemology. To Simon, facts and values were logically separable along the means-ends chain, and the role of the administrative science should be the exploration and test of "factual" propositions based on the observation of manifest behavior (Simon, 1946; Denhardt, 1984:76). The focal questions were like: "What factors determine the degree of efficiency achieved by and organization?" and "How individuals' decision premises can be stimulated so their decision to act comes close to the rationality of the organization?" (Simon, 1946, 1947).

Then, Simon's behavioral rationality can be interpreted as a rule of compliance with an organizational goal, efficiency (Banfield, 1947; Denhardt, 1984:79). Consequently, behaviorism has treated individuals as instruments for organizational objectives rather than as independent actors in their own rights.

Positivism has been reflected even in the human resources models. The Hawthorne Experiments, an experimentation on physical working conditions, were switched to the empirical study of human relations and social psychology. McGregor's "Theory Y" (1957), Blake/Mouton's "concern for people" (1981), and Argyris' "personal growth" (1962), all attempted to conduct empirical studies to predict the organizational outcomes of human variables in hopes that the studies would provide a leverage for effective management of human resources.

Even though the human resources approach has recognized the importance of human factors in organizational life, it still pursues the manipulation of individuals to improve organizational productivity based on the knowledge uncovered by positivist research into the relationship between individual styles and organizational outcomes (Denhardt, 1984:95-101). The problem of control and instrumentalism cannot be overcome as long as a study depends ultimately on the positivist approach, which in turn depends on the control of behavior or social events for causation validity.

Even Organization Development (O.D.) efforts, while trying to connect the goal of the organization (i.e., the "goal-based empirical theory" ; positivism) and humanistic morality (i.e., value laden approach), "do not envision greater worker freedom or satisfaction at the cost of productivity" (Denhardt, 1984: 105). They pursue a balance between productivity and individual freedom, but they are not willing to sacrifice productivity when confronting a conflict with worker freedom. In the domain O.D., positivism has contributed to the side of human resource productivity, but not to the side of human values independent of productivity.

Finally, a modern version of positivist tradition concerning the study of public administration is found in the policy science approach. In the early days of policy science, Harold Lasswell suggested that "systematic inquiry into the policy making process could establish relationships between instrumental policies and end

values" (Denhardt, 1984: 119). Thomas Dye (1970) argued that normative models should be distinguished from empirical approaches, and that policy science could only present positive explanations for the causes or consequences of various policies. Although policy analysis includes instant operational techniques such as dynamic planning, the main stream of policy science requires the establishment of certain causal models about relations among problems, social environments, policies, and policy effects, both in predicting/comparing the consequences of alternative policies in the formulation stage and in evaluating outcomes after the implementation stage (Nagel, 1980; Quade, 1982: 136; Dubnick et al., 1983; 43-7, 203-11). According to Denhardt (1984), "the language of policy analysis is the language of positive social science" (P. 141). Again, the problems of instrumentalism are embedded in the positivist policy study: uncritical acceptance of existing goals, no provision for moral and value consciousness, and the theory-practice dichotomy (Denhardt, 1984: 141-2).

To this point, we have reviewed positivist reflection on the study of public administration. We have considered the connection between positivism and the theories of public administration: how the positivist approach has guided the study of public administration; how the theories of P.A. based on positive research has led to a common direction (in fact, a common "trap"); and so on. Now, we move to a discussion of the challenge the positivist approach faces in the real world of public administration. The purpose is to establish a set of legitimate grounds that will enable us to step beyond the positivist mode of inquiry in the study of public administration.

### III. THE CHALLENGE

The objection to the dominance of the positivist approach comes from doubt about its realizability (i.e., feasibility of P.A. being scientific) and desirability (i.e., goodness of P.A. being isolated from normative and/or unscientific aspects). Our challenge can be seen in these two questions (i.e., feasibility and desirability) along three interrelated aspects of public administration: (1) neutrality vs. normative values, (2) instrumentalism vs. humanism, and (3) rational analysis vs. procedural resolution.

#### 1. Neutrality vs. Normative Values

While the science-oriented approach attempts to construct value-free, factual propositions utilizing neutral languages and observations, a large and more important part of public administration can rarely be objective and unbiased. R. Dahl (1947) asserts that "the first difficulty of constructing a science of public administration stems from the frequent impossibility of excluding normative considerations." Indeed,

individuals or groups possess widely variant and incessantly changing sets of values, preferences, goals, and interests. Those who have different values perceive and interpret facts differently. As an individual's point of view may shadow his/her cognitive process, the fact itself is reconstructed in accordance with the individual's values and perspective. "The scientists also intrude their own values into the research process", in topic selection, evidence assessment, and so on (Denhardt, 1984: 156). Even the post-empiricist K. Popper, who still remains an advocate of new, better social science, contends that the concept of objectivity itself should be shifted from "the neutral observation of facts" to "interpretation, criticism, and intersubjective test of the observation" (J. D. White, 1986). The difficulty in achieving neutrality is that it inevitably makes researchers reduce their attention to those variables that are less value-critical and easily measurable, "neglecting truly important ones" (Blalock, 1984; 29). Positive scientists avoid the big questions in public administration in favor of tractable but less important ones (e.g., operational matters). Here, the problem of feasibility develops to that of desirability.

The fact that the social science approach fails to address more important issues in public administration to elude value penetration suggests a critical limitation of the positivist mode of inquiry into public administration. If it does deal with any value question, the positivist knowledge is viewed irrelevant to the real problem of public administration because public administration "is", in reality, and "ought to" involved in various value-laden, preference-bond, allocative decisions. As New Public Administration directs, by allowing values and norms to play a premier role in guiding the study of public administration, research can produce more relevant knowledge (Frederickson, 1976). At the same time, however, if a study commits itself solely to the value of efficiency, as Waldo (1948) and Dahl (1947) warn, it will fail to address the other normative values, moral philosophy, and "democratic dogma" because efficiency is in conflict with those democratic values. Thus, we cannot "fully engage in broad social choices" without going beyond the positivist mode of study, by failing to define a value system and to examine the normative implications of our actions (Denhardt & Denhardt, 1979).

## **2. Instrumentalism vs. Humanism**

As discussed earlier, the clue to the positive social science lies in the control of human behavior, social events, and environmental condition. And the key role of the positivist approach in developing a theory of public administration is to discover a hypothetical or tested leverage for effective manipulation of malleable factor (e.g., efficiency, program goals). Thus, in a theory of public administration based solely on

positivism, individuals are treated as malleable subjects for collective goals and manipulated for instrumental reasons. Then workers in public organizations play the role of a tool under the dominance of system/program objectives. And citizens, "once considered as a full participant in the governing process," are "replaced by the bureaucrat who operates in an instrumental fashion" (Denhardt & Denhardt, 1979). As action theorists assert, positivist research does not reflect the subjective meanings that individuals attached to actions, systems, programs, and social conditions, so it undermines their sense of autonomy and the human reasons for their actions (Harmon, 1981: 4-5). To achieve democratic morality, however, the human value of the individual must be the major criterion used to judge our political and social systems, and all individuals possess full claim to the attention of the system (Redford, 1969: 8). Human motives, intentions, and shared meanings are not only unexcludable from the world of public administration in practice, but also "ought to" be given a premier role in determining instrumental policies, systems, and programs. Again, we cannot but step beyond the positivist approach if we have to overcome instrumentalism and bring more humane reasons to public administration in pursuing personal and societal goals.

### **3. Rational Analysis vs. Procedural Resolution**

Other grounds for going beyond the positive science, which can also be inferred from the two previous reasons, lies in its workability in solving practical issues in public administration. While most of the important issues in this field are concerned with the change of human behavior, the alteration of social or environmental conditions, and the reallocation of interests and resources, positivist analysis (and other technical models) based on "substantive rationality" can rarely provide viable solution to those "high-game" problems.

First, explanations or predictions obtained through positive research themselves may often be invalid because the analysis can seldom capture the comprehensive reality of human behavior and social phenomena. It is extremely difficult to obtain reliable observations and experimental data on human behavior due to individual uniqueness, a mass of different people, totality in person, and continuous change and unpredictability in behavior (Dahl, 1947; Blalock, 1984: 24-5). Social reality also has an extremely complex nature because of the uniqueness of specific historical events, the flow of indeterministic (i.e., uncertainty) situations, various levels of unmeasurable factors, the uniqueness of particular social settings, etc. (Dahl, 1947; Blalock, 1984: 26-8)

Second, since individuals and parties, including citizens, elected officials, administrators, professionals, and special interest groups, quite often conflict with one another at margins in a valuational decision arena, a single-comprehensive alternative



based on objective analysis may become useless in the final stage of decision-making even when the analysis is valid. of the two levels of "choice" presented by C. Lindblom(1959:79-80), at least, the "choice among values" cannot be made by positivist analysis; and, often, neither can the "choice among instruments."

For the two reasons mentioned above, the practical way to resolve a debatable issue would be through certain "procedural resolutions" such as the incremental approach, pluralist solution(i.e., group liberalism), and various participatory systems. The value of a procedural resolution lies not only in its practicality but also in its normative meanings. The use of procedural tactics, such as compromise and bargaining, facilitates reaching an agreement. And mutuality in face-to-face relations and a balance among competing interests represents the ultimate value of pluralist democracy (Lindblom, 1959:85; Harmon, 1981:5). In addition, procedural resolution may open the opportunity of participation by involving individuals and groups, especially employees clients, and citizens, so they are able to reflect their subjective values and meanings in public policies systems, and programs. Here, since we prefer procedural resolution to rational analysis in high-order issues, we find another reason for searching a better mode of study for public administration beyond the positivist research.

#### IV. NEW MODES OF EPISTEMOLOGY

Two additional approaches have been added the traditional positive approach to the question of knowledge acquisition into the domain of social research: interpretive research and critical research. Although these two modes of research have long been used in the study of history, sociology, and political theory on one hand and in the study of psychoanalysis and social economics on the other, the main force bringing the two approaches to the new, broader epistemology of "science" has been the critical thought of postempiricist philosophers of science(J. White, 1986).

Recent development of the broader epistemology are based on three major critiques by postempiricists. First, postempiricists, including S. Toulmin, M. Scriven, C. Taylor, and T. Kisiel, reject empiricists' concept that interpretation or "understanding" may be pertinent to questions concerning the origin of explanatory hypotheses in the context of discovery, but not to questions concerning the validity of those hypotheses in the context of explanation. Rather, they argue that scientific explanation should impart "understanding" of a phenomenon, and that interpretation plays a significant role in the validation of knowledge as well as in exploration of hypotheses(J. white, 1986). Second, postempiricists (e.g., H. Feigl, M. Hesse) opposed to the criterion that facts should be measured and described in "neutral" observational language. Rather, they contend that the observation of facts itself must be subject to interpretation (J. White,

1986). Third, as K. Popper and T. Kuhn suggest, the concept of "formal rationality" of knowledge based on strict objectivity should be shifted to that of "practical rationality" based on dialogue, intersubjective judgement, and criticism (J. White, 1986). The result from these critical thoughts has been a new, flexible epistemology of social research, including two additional modes of knowledge acquisition.

### **1. Interpretive Theory of Knowledge**

The Interpretive mode of epistemology, standing in Edmund Husserl's philosophical basis of phenomenology, seeks to "understand" the subjective meanings that people attach to their actions, the actions of others, social situations around them, and the programs/systems involve (J. White, 1986; Harmon, 1981: 4-5; Denhardt, 1984: 159). For example, while a positivist tries to predict what the impact of policy X will be or to explain why policy X has failed to produce expected results, an interpretist attempts to comprehend the meaning of policy X and its outcomes to individual in the target population or to administrators implementing it, from their subjective standpoints. The interpretive approach also pursues the understanding of the relationship between policies/programs/systems and socio-political norms/rules/values/culture.

This type of epistemology has been adopted consciously in normative theories of public administration, completely in the action theory, and partly in the New Public Administration. It has also been used in other political or normative studies in public administration, although its epistemological statue has not been so consciously defined as in postempiricist examination. When one emphasizes humane reasons and subjective meaning (i.e., self-reflection) in determining instrumental policies/programs and in designing organizational systems, he should adopt the interpretive approach through which he can overcome the limitations of the positivist epistemology.

### **2. Critical Theory of Knowledge**

The critical mode of research, standing in critical social theory and partly in phenomenological tradition, pursues awareness of certain tensions or limitations existing between the efforts and social conditions of individuals, pointing out what is good or bad in seeking their own wants and freedom (J. White, 1986). M. Horkheimer, leading the Frankfurt School, suggests that "one can evaluate the reasonableness of one's actions" by reasoning through a principle guiding social choices and being spoken "in the language of justice and freedom, violence and oppression" (Denhardt, 1984: 168). Thus, critical epistemology presumes the continuous reconstruction of one's actions, political institutions, social conditions, organizational systems, and even belief

systems, through an on-going process of detection, critical judgement, learning, and conscious choice. It ultimately focuses on some prescription about what ought to be done in pursuit of the elimination of system domination (i.e., emancipation from system restraints) and restoration of human values (j. White, 1986; Denhardt & Denhardt, 1979). While positivist research can use only factual and causal statements, critical research desires evaluative and prescriptive statements. When one stresses meaningful change in systems, programs, policies, or socio-political conditions, critical research is an important mode of study.

## V. A SYNTHETIC MODE OF INQUIRY

Up to this point, we have seen that practical problems in public administration — especially those of political issues and normative values — cannot be sufficiently studied solely through positivist science, and that there are additional modes of research that can be used to gain a better understanding of the dimensions that the positivist approach has been unable to address. To say that the positivist approach holds significant limitations in many ways does not mean that it is no longer useful in studying public administration. McCurdy & Cleary (1984) argue that many subjects that are of great concern to the field may really be susceptible to the elements of positive science such as theory testing, causal analysis, and rigorous research designs, and that “the intangibles inherent in public administration do not rule out systematic inquiry.” They also found that the dissertations (i.e., doctoral students) dealing with a topic central to P.A. are more likely to test theories and causal propositions than those that deal with peripheral topics depending on the capture of field experience (e.g., a master’s) Stalling (1986), while attacking J. White’s effort to equate the logic of positive, interpretive, and critical research with the tasks of public managers, contend that the “study” of P.A. (rather than the “practice”) should be performed based on a certain analytic “form” rather than depending on the “content” of a particular practical problem because it is a way to develop theories and foster the growth of knowledge. In addition, the analytic difficulties that positivism often faces can be considerably lessened through various constructive resolutions such as collective efforts to correct counterpart analysts’ assumptions/biases/omissions/distortions, exposure to well-known principles of analysis, the improvement of scaling/measurement theories, and the development of better research designs and data collection techniques (Blalock, 1984: 32-36). But, whatever effort may be made, we should again remember the missing aspects of the positive approach, which were discussed earlier at great length.

Thus, my basic contention is that one of the ways to balance a systematic policy and management study with an “equally sophisticated” comprehension of our problems

of fundamental values and political process is to construct an integrated epistemology. That is, a combination of positivist science, interpretive research, and critical study. To develop such an integrated theory, we first need to depict a conceptual domain of public administration. This task is necessary because a mode of research in P.A. can never be isolated from the main dimensions and contexts of public administration, so we need to assume the scope of that which is to be studied. In developing this integrated theory, I attempted to align the focal, substantive domain of public administration with the three research methods so the resulting alignment would be a synthetic mode of inquiry into public administration.

### **1. Domain of Study : A Synthesized P.A. Loop**

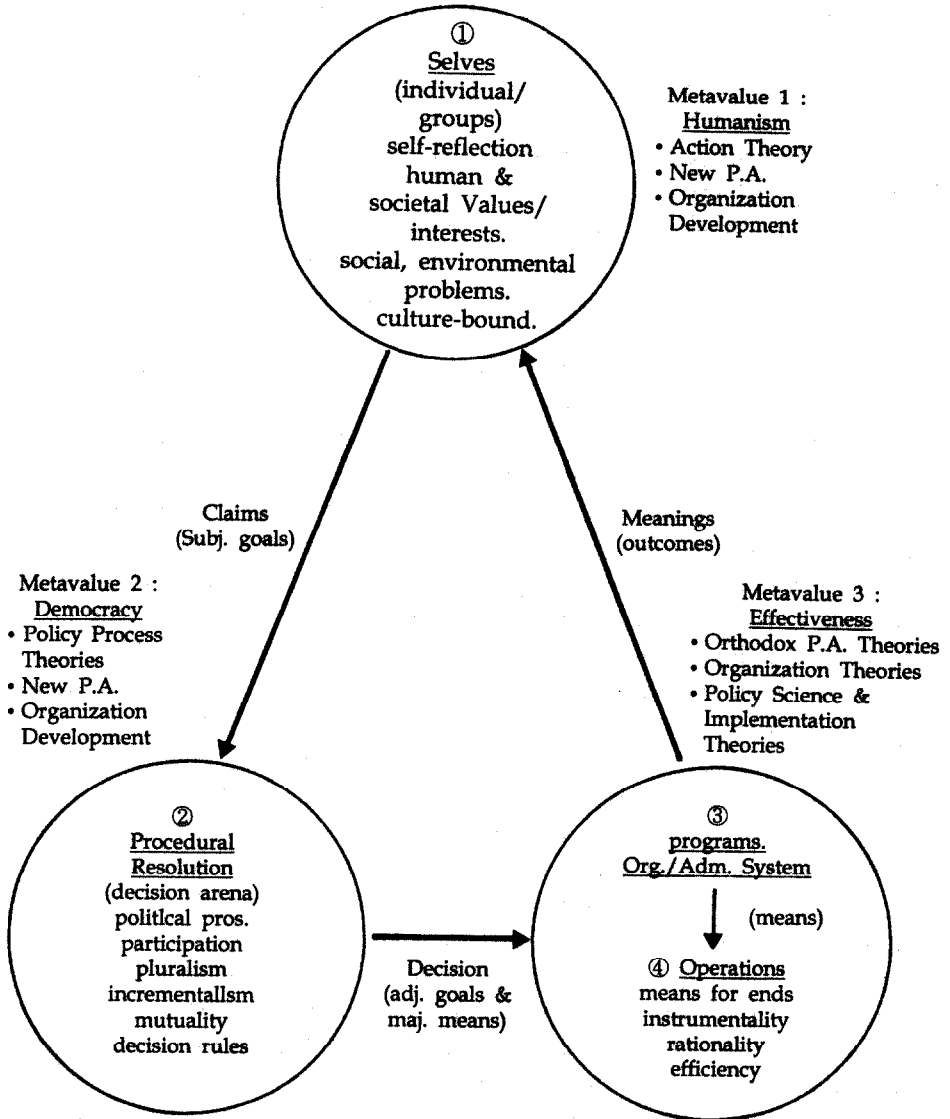
The primary context and process of public administration may be viewed as an iterative loop of three interactive dimensions: (1) "Selves" dimension, (2) "Procedural Resolution" dimension, and (3) "Programs, systems, and Operations" (Instrumental) dimension. This is a normative construct that is based on a reality that has long been observed by many scholars.

First, as exhibited in Figure 1 (P.19), the "Selves" dimension represents the subjectivity and intentional actions of individuals (i.e., both public employees and citizens) and groups (i.e., both internal and external). This dimension involves personal and societal values, interests, and meanings confronting with human, social environmental problems that may demand certain public actions. It connotes morality and humanism as its metavalues. This dimension is a very initiative force behind some collective attention and activities in the public arena. Everything that remains is an instrument serving for this dimension (e.g., the government system itself, public procedure, instrumental policies, programs, and specific systems.)

Second, the "Procedural Resolution" dimension represents a public decision-making process and arena in which instrumental policies, programs, and specific systems (other than the decision procedure itself) are created in order to cope with the issues, problems, and demands that people (i.e., "selves") bring to the public arena (i.e., both internal-organizational and external-political contexts). The process of politics, influence, and exchange is supposed to function under such norms as participation, pluralism, mutuality, and incremental adjustment, and to work with such decision rules as bargaining, compromise, and consensus. The ultimate value in the dimension is seen democracy (esp., the procedural concept of democracy).

Third, the "Programs, Systems & Operations" dimension represents a macro scope of instrumental domain in which substantive programs and administrative-organizational systems operate in accordance with the decision made by the political process

<Figure 1> Domain of study : Loop of public Administration



\* Subj. = subjective; adj. = adjusted or objectified; maj.=major  
 \* This type of P.A. loop can be applied to any level P.A. context : national or local government, organigational context, small group, etc.

dimension 2). In a macro sense, individual policies, programs, and specific systems are seen as major means for publicly defined goals and problems. At the same time, however, consecutive means-ends chains may exist within a particular instrumental policy of program area and within a particular organization or agency. While a certain degree of instrumental control and manipulation would inevitable occur in this subdomain, I contend that instrumentalism can be lessened considerably through the application of the logic of the synthesized P.A. loop to successively lower levels of P.A. contexts (e.g., within an organization or agency). This dimension is more likely to function well in the presents of such criteria as effectiveness, efficiency, and rationality. The degree of success achieved, of course, depends on the level and nature of the P.A. context to which the P.A. loop is applied; the higher and less structured, the less applicable the criteria.

The relationships among the dimensions are interactive with a logically iterative nature. The "selves" bring their competing/conflicting claims or subjective goals to the public decision arena (i.e., internal and external) for procedural resolution. As a reaction or response to the claims, decision are made to create adjusted and objectified (i.e., publicly defined) goals and to provide major governmental means, including instrumental policies, programs, and management systems. Then, in response to the adjusted goals, the programs and systems operate to generate intended outcomes or solutions that will provide some meaning to individuals and groups. The "selves" perceive and judge the outcomes in accordance with their subjective values, interests, and perspective. Their dissatisfaction or new desires will again bring their new claims to the public decision arena.

This incessant, iterative process along the three dimensions represents a typical, simplified picture like any other model or conceptual framework. The framework of P.A. loop, however, is believed to possess many strengths. Although I omitted discussion about its background and strengths, it should be noted that this framework follows the rule of balanced integration by combining the central aspects of public administration : (1) the "selves" dimension from O.D., New P.A., the Action Theory, and the Critical Theory; (2) the "procedural resolution" dimension from the concepts of the political Theory, such as procedural democracy, pluralist liberalism, and incrementalism; and (3) the "programs, systems, operations" dimension from the stream of Administrative Theory and that of Policy Science. The framework may serve to show that the multiple aspects, which some hold to be in conflict, can be conceptually taken together within an integrated context so that a macro paradigm of P.A. can be developed.

## 2. Alignment Between P.A. Domain and Research Modes

Two levels of alignment can be identified between P.A. dimensions and the modes of epistemology: one is a contingency between an individual dimension and a particular mode of research, and the other is the connection of the relationships between dimensions with the combined mode of research. Figure 2(p. 23) displays the alignment between individual sub-domains and different research methods. Simple descriptive research is seen equally applicable to each of four separate dimensions placed in a continuum: (1) selves/values, (2) political process, (3) programs/administrative systems, and (4) operation (I have split dimension 3 and 4). But, simple descriptive research tends to become atheoretical. The positivist approach is more likely to be applicable as the subject matter moves away from the selves/values dimension toward the operation domain, and less likely to be appropriate as the topic lies nearer the value and political process domains. The interpretive mode becomes more appropriate as the focus moves toward the value dimension away from the operation dimension, and vice versa.

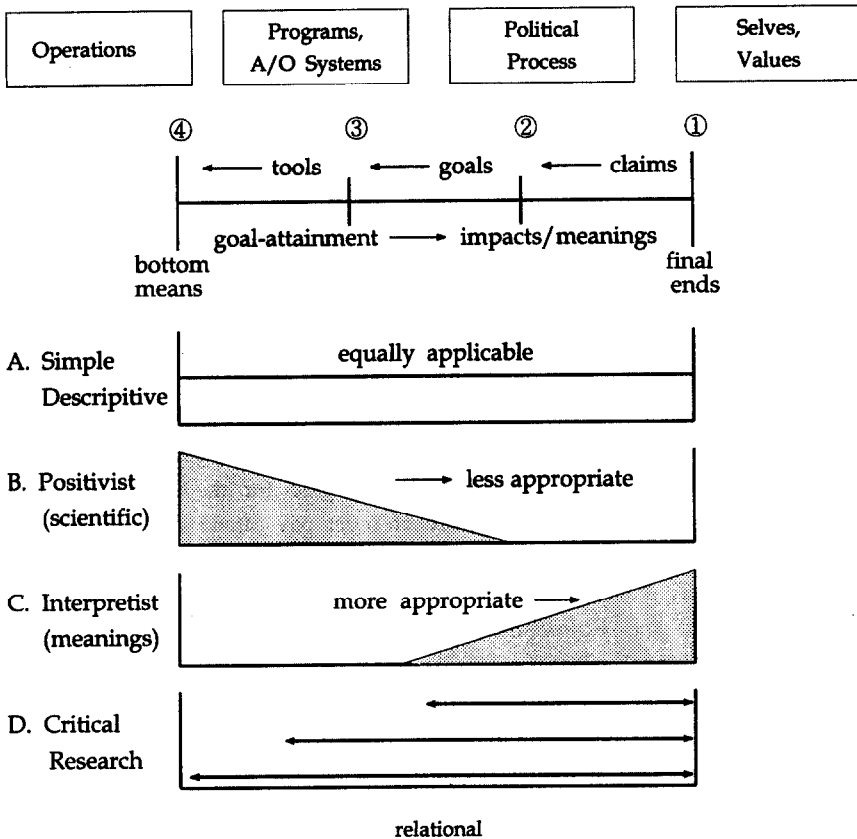
But, critical research does not fit the study of a single subdomain because it intends to study relational problems or gaps between selves' values and the other domains: between the value domain and the political process, between the value dimension and programs/administrative systems, and between the selves and operations. When either interpretive or critical research is independently adopted for the study of any single domain or relational critique issues, a researcher must pay attention to its validity and reliability problem to avoid a case in which the study becomes only an atheoretical essay.

We remember from the earlier discussion that the reason post-empiricists have brought the two additional modes of research to the scientific epistemology is that interpretation and critique can improve the validity or "practical rationality" of a scientific study (J. White, 1986). Although I do not adopt the position that we should use the interpretive and critical modes because they are the elements of the new social "science", I contend that simple interpretive and critical studies without cautiousness about theoretical validity may not contribute to the development of the P.A. theory and will only be useful to practitioners or the advocates of certain policies.

The alignment between the interdomain relationships and the combined modes of research is exhibited in Table 1 (p. 25). The relationship between the selves dimension and political procedure would bring such inquiries as "how easily can subjective goals and claims be reflected on political decision procedure?". To reach a hypothetical answer, a researcher can utilize both critical research and the positivist approach. At the initial stage, he or she can ask individuals and groups about their perception and

judgement of whether they have easy access to the decision procedure concerning policy X, and, if not, why? Then, he/she can move to the construction of hypothetical causal relationships, for example, between the types of the problem (i.e., categorical variable) or the degree of tractability of the problem (i.e., ordinal variable) and the

<Fig. 2> Contingency Between A Dimension And A Research Mode (1)





degree of openness to union participation over time. The former represents a critical inquiry and the latter an example of the positivist inquiry. For the relationship between the political decision procedure and the programs/administrative systems, interpretive and positivist research should often be used when faced with such

<Table 1> Alignment Between the Domain and Research Modes (2)  
 - Study of Relationships between Subdomains -

Relationships	Most Basic Inquiry (illustration)	Research Mode
selves •   • pol. procedure	How well or easily can subjective goals, values, & claims be reflected on decision procedure? (causal and noncausal models)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interpretive &amp; critical research</li> <li>• positivist approach</li> </ul>
pol. procedure •   • policies, procedures, & admin./org. systems	What decisions are made about substantive policies, programs, and admin./org. system as a result of what kind of exchange/interaction/adjustment behavior & practices? (causal or noncausal models)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpretive &amp; positivist research</li> </ul>
programs, etc. •   • operations	Are alternative (means) cost effective? efficient? (casual relationships) What meanings of operational tasks to public employees or citizen clients? Good to them?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• positivist research</li> <li>• interpretive &amp; critical research</li> </ul>
programs, etc. •   • selves	What outcomes to target pop. or others? (casual models) What meanings to them? Good to them?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• positivist research</li> <li>• interpretive research</li> <li>• critical res.</li> </ul>

questions as "Why does interest group A act like B concerning the adoption of budget system C?" or "What category of leadership behavior in the bargaining process is more likely to bring an easy and effective agreement about the adoption of an administrative system?" The relationships between programs/ administrative systems and operations, and those between programs/systems and outcomes to selves are most susceptible to the positivist approach, dealing with such questions as "How cost-effective or efficient is alternative A for program T.T.T.?" or "What and how much outcome has been brought to group X in the target population?" But, without interpretive and critical research, one cannot discover what real meanings the members of group X attach to outcome K, or what perception or subjective evaluation the members of group X hold against program T.T.T."

In other words, as discussed on the first level alignment, a particular mode of research may better fit to a certain subdomain of P.A. than another. As such, we may well prefer one epistemology to another for a specific dimension or focus of P.A. As shown in the second level alignment, however, most of the research questions central to public administration require a synthesized use of two or more research modes to explore the comprehensive dynamics of a public issue.

### **3. Concluding Statement : An Abstract**

The positivist mode of inquiry into public administration has long attempted to discover the generalizable theories of public administration through making the study of P.A. scientific and objective so that P.A. can develop to a legitimate academic discipline. While many of the major theories of P.A. have reflected logical positivism as their epistemology, they have been captured by the inherent limitations of the positive science approach. The attempt to bring neutrality and objectivity has been neither feasible nor desirable (relevant) because normative, societal values cannot be excluded from the real world of public administration, and they "ought to " play a premier role in determining our political issues. The effort to create most productive means for given ends has threatened our humane values by undermining the autonomy of individuals for instrumental reason. In addition, rational alternatives based on positivist analysis have rarely been viable and acceptable to the context of conflicting individuals and groups' interaction, yielding to procedural resolution among competing participants. As an effort to overcome the problems of positivist science, postempiricists have incorporated interpretive and critical research into the epistemology of social science. While I do not adopt the position that we can develop a realizable social science by introducing the two additional research modes, I contend that one of the ways to balance a systematic P.A. study with the comprehension of

our problems of fundamental values and political process is to combine the three modes of research : positivist, interpretive, and critical research. To construct a synthesized mode of inquiry, I first attempted to establish an integrated conceptual framework for P.A. domain, namely "A Synthesized P. A. Loop," bringing three dimensions together : (1) "selves" (humanism), (2) procedural resolution (democracy), and (3) programs/A-O systems/operations (effectiveness and efficiency). Then, I made two levels of alignment or contingency between the dimensions of P.A. domain and the three modes of epistemology : (1) an individual P.A. dimension to an individual research mode, and (2) the interdimensional relationships to the combined modes of research. A particular mode of epistemology may be preferable to another mode in studying a particular subdomain of P.A. It is believed, however, that most of the research questions central to public administration require a synthesized use (i.e., coupled or triple modes) or epistemology. The ways the modes could be combined were illustrated.

## References

- Argyris, C.(1957). The Individual and Organization, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 2(Jun) : 1-24.
- Banfield, E.(1957). The Decision Schema, *PAR*, 17(Autumn) : 278-85.
- Blake, R. & J. Mouton(1967), Grid Organization Development, in L. Boone et al(ed). *The Great Writings on Mgmt. & O.B.*, Tulsa, OK : PennWell, 1980.
- Blalock, H.(1984). *Basic Dilemmas in the Social Sciences*, Beverly Hills, CA : Sage.
- Dahl, R.(1947). The Science of Public Administration, *PAR*, 7(Win.) : 1-11.
- Denhardt, R.(1984). *Theories of Public Organizations*, Monterey, CA : Brooks Cole.
- Denhardt, R. & K. Denhardt(1979). Public Administration and The Critique of Domination, *Administration & Society*, 11(May) : 107-120.
- Dubnick, M. et al(1983). *Thinking About Public Policy : A Problem-Solving Approach*, N.Y. : John Wiley.
- Frederickson, G.(1976). The Lineage of New Public Administration, *Administration & Society*, 8(Aug.) : 149-74.
- Golemabiewski, R.(1977). *P.A. as A Developing Discipline*, N.Y. : Marcel Dekker.
- Harmon, M.(1981). *Action Theory for P.A.*, N.Y. : Longman.
- Hempel, D.(1966). *Philosophy of Natural Science*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. : Prentice-Hall.
- Lindblom, D.(1959). The Science of "Muddling Through", *PAR*, 19(1959) : 79-88.
- Litchfield, E.(1956). Notes On a Theory of Administration, *American Science Quarterly* 1(Jun) : 3-29.
- McCurdy, H. & R. Cleary(1984). Why Can't We Resolve the Research Issues in P.A?, *PAR*, 44(Jan./Feb.) : 49-55.
- McGregor, D.(1957). The Human Side of Enterprise, in L. Boone et al(ed). *The Great Writings on Management and O.B.*, Tulsa, OK : Penn Well, 1980.
- Mosher, F.(1975). *American Public Administration : Past, Present, Future*, University, AL : U. of AL.

- Nagel, S.(1980). *Improving Policy Analysis*, Beverly Hills, CA : Sage.
- Price, D.(1975). 1984 and Beyond : Social Engineering or Political Values? in Mosher, F.(ed), *American Public Administration : Past, Present, Future*.
- Quade, E.(1982). *Analysis for Public Decisions*, 2nd. N.Y. : North-Holland.
- Sharma, C.(1966). Administration as a Field of Study, *International Review of Administrative Science*, 32 : 287-300.
- Simon, H.(1947). A Comment on The Science of Public Administration, *PAR*, 7(Sum.) : 200-3.
- Simon, H.(1947). Administrative Behavior, in Mosher, F.(ed.), *Basic Literature of American P.A.*, N.Y: Holmes, 1981.
- Simon, H.(1958). The Decision Schema : A Reply, *PAR*. 18(Winter) : 60-63.
- Stallings, R.(1986). Doctoral Programs in P.A. : An Outsider's Perspective, *PAR*, 46(May/Jun) : 235-40.
- Stene, E.(1940). An Approach to a Science of Administration, *American Political Science Review*, 34(Dec.) : 1124-37.
- Thompson, J.D.(1956). On Building an Administrative Science, *American Science Quarterly*, 1(Jun) : 3-29.
- Waldo, D.(1948). The Administrative State, in Mosher, F.(ed.). *Basic Literature of American P.A.*, N.Y. : Hopmes, 1981.
- White, j.(1986). On the Growth of Knowledge in P.A., *PAR*, 46(Jan./Feb.) : 15-25.