

1 Paradigm Incommensurability and Multiparadigm research

Competitive Session

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ABSTRACT: *Calls are repeatedly made in cross-cultural management and International Business Studies requesting multiparadigm research. However present multiparadigm strategies and suggestions are considered conceptually vague due to their limited understanding of the key terms paradigm and paradigm incommensurability. This article fills this gap by providing a clear examination of those terms as reflected in the writing of Thomas Kuhn; it then outlines the importance of paradigm incommensurability from a hermeneutic perspective in facilitating paradigm transformation that leads innovative theory development. The authors assert it is only through the acknowledgement of paradigm incommensurability the possibility of seeing from other's perspective and conducting multiparadigm research is opened up. The authors conclude by outlining the theoretical contributions of this article to multiparadigm research.*

Keywords: Cross-cultural management research, Paradigm, Paradigm incommensurability, Multiparadigm study,

Globalisation challenges the fundamental epistemological and ontological assumptions in which cross-cultural research in management and International Business (hereafter IB) is conducted. For it is increasingly recognised there is no basis upon which to assume a universal standard in researching about different cultures. Consequently management academics around the world have made passionate pleas for strides toward embracing multiparadigm research (Chen & Miller, 2010; Okhuysen & Bonardi, 2011; Primecz, Romani & Sackmann, 2009; Sullivan & Daniels, 2008). Similarly review articles in IB and cross-cultural management research have all pointed to the belief that further theoretical development and knowledge generation necessitates more than one paradigm - namely the positivist paradigm (e.g., Boyacigiller, Kleinberg, Phillips, & Sackmann, 2004; Lewis & Grimes, 1999; Sullivan & Daniels, 2008), because the alternative, the status quo of one dominate paradigm turned out to be 'sterile' and 'mostly irrelevant' for operating business in times of globalized opportunities and crises (Lowe, Magala & Hwang, 2012: 763).

Though multiparadigm studies are frequently suggested and requested those suggestions are often considered to be methodologically vague (Romani, Primecz & Topçu, 2011) due to their limited understanding of the central concepts - paradigm and paradigm incommensurability. In fact the notion of paradigm has frequently been objectified, seen as a "thing" to be manipulated or juxtaposed on a board of paradigms and equated to research methodology (e.g., Lewis & Grimes, 1999; Romani et al,

2011). Subsequently the importance of paradigm incommensurability in transforming paradigm limitations and uncovering implicit and tacit assumptions is not realized or utilized in enabling multiparadigm research. As a result iterative pleas have been made for more than two decades (i.e., Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Schultz & Hatch, 1996; Romani et al, 2011), studies that have successfully adopted multiple paradigms are in fact rare and few.

In this paper we are aiming to fill this conceptual gap by providing a detailed examination of the notion of paradigm and paradigm incommensurability. It is our contention, following the writing of Thomas Kuhn, that in order to utilize insights from different paradigms to enrich cross-cultural management research we need to paradoxically first recognize and acknowledge paradigm incommensurability in order to be able to play in the space of difference, which we see as at the heart of Chinese indigenous philosophy of Yin Yang. For “ if we presume that a foreign culture is incommensurable with ours, we might be able to better understand it, while if we assume that we can just translate it into ours, the internal logic and richness of the culture stays hidden.” (Cortois, 2000) In other word it is only through the unprejudiced acceptance and acknowledgement of other’s difference the possibility for what Hans George Gadamer calls the expansion of horizons for new way of seeing and being from a different perspective is opened up. It is important to point out that it is not that we want to eliminate difference but to be able to play with difference; to see the same in the other and the other in the same -- a perspective central to Yin Yang attunement.

In order to explicate the term paradigm and paradigm incommensurability, and to demonstrate why only through the acknowledgement of paradigm incommensurability a new way of seeing through other’s perspective is made possible, our paper begins by clearly identify three IB meta-paradigm perspectives and their interpretations of paradigm incommensurability which constitute the current paradigm debate in addressing the multiplicity of paradigmatic references. We then offer a hermeneutic view of the term paradigm and paradigm incommensurability as a contrast to the current limited understanding of those terms and outline their implications. Lastly the paper demonstrates why only through the acknowledgement of paradigm incommensurability that a Yin Yang approach

to paradigm transcendence and multiparadigm study is made possible.

THE PARADIGMS DEBATE AND INCOMMENSURABILITY

The paradigms debate (see Fabian, 2000; Greene, 2008; Hassard & Kelemen, 2002; Scherer, 1998; Scherer & Steinmann, 1999) addresses the plurality of paradigms in which there are three main meta-paradigm perspectives that illustrate this plurality: the segregation perspective, the integration perspective, or the multiparadigm perspective (Romani et al., 2011). The concept of paradigm incommensurability has frequently been a point of departure for most paradigm debates as it is either used to support or to oppose the three meta-paradigm perspectives. Briefly stated, paradigm incommensurability in general has frequently been referred to as: scientific paradigms are qualitatively different or in some cases contradictory, they can neither be merged or interact with each other in a meaningful way.

What is called the segregation perspective maintains that different paradigm represent distinctive research approach because researchers in addressing their subject are always influenced by 'explicit or implicit assumptions about the nature of the social world and the way in which it may be investigated.' (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, pp. 1-4). Burrell and Morgan (1979) claim that differences in ontology, epistemology, methodology as well as assumptions about human nature create insurmountable barriers between different paradigmatic perspectives therefore they can not be related to each other in a meaningful way. The segregation perspective is often labeled protectionist or isolationist (e.g., Scherer, 1998) and it tends to perceive the functions of paradigms are to preserve and to maintain their own specific research practices (Romani et al., 2011).

From the segregation perspective Burrell and Morgan's (1979) claim of paradigm incommensurability serves two purposes: first it advocates the legitimacy of different research paradigms within cross-cultural organizational science, and second, the incommensurability thesis prevents paradigm domination and paradigm synthesis by stating that each paradigm must be separately developed and applied (e.g., Jackson & Carter, 1993). However many have strongly criticized Burrell and Morgan's (1979) paradigm categorization as 'a structure of simplistic and ambiguous dimensionality where

complex and diverse notions are forced into artificial and ill-fitting unity' (Greenfield, 1991/1993, p. 178) and their proclaimed use of Kuhn's (1962) incommensurability thesis is in fact a form of denial of the very transcendental dynamic of paradigms put forward by Kuhn (Lowe, Moore & Carr, 2007). It holds on to an implicit belief in a monolithic universality.

The second perspective is known as paradigm integration. Proponents (e.g., Pfeffer, 1993 and Donaldson, 1998) of this perspective argue in favor of abandoning all but one paradigm to unify a scientific field of research and to increase its influence. For example in organizational research Pfeffer (1993, p. 611) has made a strong hegemonic argument that 'without some minimal level of consensus about research questions and methods, fields can scarcely expect to produce knowledge in a cumulative, developmental process.' This argument essentially promotes paradigm hegemony and views the existing plurality of research paradigms as a sign of lacking paradigmatic maturity in organizational science.

The incommensurability argument in this case opposes the integrationist perspective. In response, some reject the notion of paradigm incommensurability all together (e.g., Donaldson, 1998) while others use Kuhn's view of incommensurability that is revolved around relationships between paradigms to support their argument. For Kuhn (1962) states that there is no common ground for different paradigms to compare and relate to each other therefore paradigms are incommensurable. The integrationist argues, though there is no existing common ground for comparisons but in developing mutual understanding between paradigms new rules and grounds can be developed and build for paradigmatic integration, therefore toward establishing a common agreement (Scherer & Steinmann, 1999).

Nevertheless, in reality when one paradigm dominated a research field, what have been seen are the marginalization of other perspectives rather than the integrationist ideal of paradigm mutual understating. As an example, in cross-cultural management research the positivist paradigm has dominated the field for decades (Jackson & Aycan, 2006; Jack, Calás, Nkomo & Peltonen 2008; Primecz et al., 2009), with its immense influence in dictating how cross-cultural research should be

done it has not only restricted the development of the field but also marginalized other research perspectives. Furthermore according to Schultz and Hatch (1996) the research framework developed based on an integrationist perspective frequently includes terms and arguments abstracted from paradigm context, that are grounded in different research paradigms without considering and understanding their paradigmatic ontologies and epistemologies thereby producing misleading and less relevant research outcomes.

The third perspective is known as "multiparadigm" it grants that paradigms as distinctive academic worldviews legitimate in their own terms, it differs from the previous two perspectives by advocating the possible associations and interactions between paradigms without integration (e.g., Lewis & Grimes, 1999; Romani et al., 2011; Schultz & Hatch, 1996). From this perspective researchers are encouraged to recognize and engage with multiple paradigms rather than disregarding them as the integrationist perspective, or refusing to confront them as the segregation perspective. It urges the use of multiple paradigms in enabling researchers to produce novel and relevant insight through sustaining a healthy assessment of the world (Currie, Knights, & Starkey, 2010) and avoiding generate 'isolated silos' of knowledge (Okhuysen & Bonardi, 2011, p. 6).

The multiparadigm perspective appears to deny the fact that researchers are condemned to paradigm incommensurability instead it calls for a kind of playfulness or border crossing between paradigms. For example, Schultz and Hatch (1996, p. 530) claim:

Our denial of incommensurability does not mean that we accept an integrationist view.... we explore the possibilities of paradigm crossing as a third metatheoretical position that resists both incommensurability and integration. We contribute a new paradigm-crossing strategy that we label interplay, defined as the simultaneous recognition of both contrasts and connections between paradigms.

Nevertheless the refutation of incommensurability is not enough to deny incommensurability. Indeed if paradigms are incommensurable then there exists no common measure to compare and contrast different paradigms. Schult and Hatch (1996) have not shown this to be the case. Furthermore, it raises the fundamental question as to where do we compare and contrast them from? A neutral space outside of paradigms? Or, as we will show in the space of being caught between paradigms?

In sum, the various perspectives of the paradigms debate disclose beliefs of the perceived appropriate way to conduct research. The protectionists use incommensurability as an emancipatory tool to promote knowledge generations from separate and diverse paradigms; the integrationists use it to argue for a unified paradigm in theory development through accumulation. The proponents of multiparadigm perspective assert that they reject both isolation and integration in favor of paradigm interactions through language learning (Romani et al., 2011).

HERMENEUTIC DIMENSION OF PARADIGM AND PARADIGM INCOMMENSURABILITY

Seen from a hermeneutic (Heidegger, 1985) point of view regarding paradigm and paradigm incommensurability is that there is more to paradigm incommensurability that meets the "eyes" of the latter three perspectives. While we have no sympathy with the first two perspectives discussed above, we adopt the same view as the multiparadigm perspective in terms of working through paradigm difference. Similarly, we agree that knowledge generation and theoretical development can be enriched from insights drawn from a dialogue across different paradigms.

However, it is concerning that the multiparadigm perspective has by-passed the significance and fruitfulness of working through paradigm incommensurability. We want to explore paradigm incommensurability instead of seeing it as a limit or obstacle to working in the space between paradigms, it becomes the basis for helping us become new kinds of researchers. This perspective is expressed by the hermeneutic philosopher Richard Rorty (1979) who maintains that genuine rather than defensive meetings between researchers of different paradigms offers us the opportunity:

To reinterpret our familiar surroundings in the unfamiliar terms of [the other]. ... Discourse [with the other] is supposed to be abnormal, to take us out of our old selves by the power of strangeness, to aid us in becoming new beings. ... The attempt to edify [ourselves or others] may consist in ... the attempt to reinterpret our familiar surroundings in the unfamiliar terms of" our encounter with other "culture[s] or historical period[s] ... (1979, p.360)

Rorty enables us to see that working between paradigms is one, which cuts to the bone of our identity as researchers. It is not an emotionally easy task and can produce much defensiveness on the part of researchers. He also fore fronted that working through objective paradigm interaction through paradigm language learning is in fact a paradigmatic ideal and cannot be achieved. Moreover by equating the objective research methodology with paradigm has in fact oversimplified the notion of a paradigm therefore downplayed the importance of paradigm incommensurability in enabling paradigm transformation.

Hence it is our contention that only through encountering and acknowledging the paradigm incommensurability we have the opportunity to uncover our own and other's tacit and implicit assumptions thereby opening up the possibility for a new way of being that is inclusive of different paradigmatic assumptions and insights.

We believe in order to discuss the possibility of multiparadigm research we need to first clearly understand Kuhn's terms "paradigm" and "paradigm incommensurability". Our understanding of the terms "paradigm" and "paradigm incommensurability" differs from the three meta-paradigm perspectives in a qualitative way that is focused on the hermeneutic phenomenological dimension of the term paradigm and incommensurability. As we argue that a paradigm includes not only research methodology but shapes our way of what Martin Heidegger calls (1985, p. 233) "being-in-the-world". This means that it operates on both explicit and implicit levels. We conduct research through the taken for granted ontological and epistemological assumptions of a paradigm without even being aware that we are doing so. In other words, we do not simply have our ontological and epistemological assumptions before us as objects or principles to be manipulated. We need, as Heidegger (1985) calls it to "destroy" our paradigms in order to make them explicit. And one strategy of destruction is the willingness to see our own perspective through the perspective of another. Acknowledging and embracing incommensurability is the first fundamental step for transcending paradigm limitation and not only embracing multiparadigm perspectives but in becoming new beings.

The original term paradigm is derived from the Greek word “paradigm”, meaning distinct shared pattern or common measure. Thomas Kuhn (1962) the philosopher of science gave it its contemporary meaning in his discussion regarding the phenomenology of scientific progress. Kuhn defines paradigm as a set of received ontological, epistemological and scientific assumptions that form a theoretical framework. In this theoretical framework theories can be tested, evaluated and, if necessary, improved.

Additionally, a paradigm is also a cognitive framework with ‘an entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on, shared by a given [scientific] community’ in which ‘universally recognised scientific achievements ... for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners’ (Kuhn, 1962, p. 175). In other word paradigm is seen as a temporary theoretical framework and a structure of thought that provides a particular vision of reality that guides the way we perceive, think and act during out daily researching activities.

What we observe is conditioned and mediated by our paradigm. Paradigm dictates what considered to be rational and relevant and it manages expectations by telling us what we are expected to see. In our normal day-to-day activities our paradigmatic assumptions are exceedingly difficult to notice. It is only in the scenario of “break down” or the encounter with the incommensurable other who adopt a different set of assumptions our own implicit assumptions become explicit.

In this context, theories developed by a community of scientists only make sense in their own paradigm and incommensurable with the others. Whether scientists want to admit it or not, they are always knowingly or unknowingly under the influence of a paradigm; one that discloses the world in certain ways and closes down the world or blinds the scientist in other ways. Even the most rational and objective of scientists is operating in terms of a particular paradigm -- indeed for Kuhn “rationality” and "objectivity" are part of the principles of a particular paradigm. There is no view from "no-where;" only views from "some-where." Therefore the essence of Kuhn's incommensurability thesis is that there is no common measure in terms of which all paradigms can be

situated in relationship to each other and there is no universal or meta-paradigm language in terms of which all paradigms can communicate with each other.

From this standpoint, the multiparadigm perspective's suggestion of objective paradigms interaction through language learning that respects the difference of each paradigm is simply a liberal paradigmatic ideal and cannot be achieved because it completely dismisses Kuhn's incommensurability thesis. For whose language and assumptions should we to adopt conducting such an objective interactions between two different paradigms when there isn't a paradigm neutral language and for where do we find such a paradigmatic neutral space when we are always under the influence of a paradigm. Indeed, as an example the indigenous Chinese philosophy of Yin Yang has always stated that we are always situated in a phenomenon never outside of it, similarly Heidegger also claims we are beings within a world. This has clearly shown that the ideal of a paradigm neutral place is in fact an implicit assumption of a paradigm rather than a point that has been demonstrated.

Furthermore the indiscriminate interchange of the term paradigm and research methodology (for example see, Romani et al, 2011) has in fact objectified and oversimplified the term paradigm and downplayed its significance in dictating our actions through its range of tacit assumptions. For the subjective paradigm comprises of objective research methodology but more. In other word, paradigm is both a cognitive and a theoretical framework in which we may develop various objective research methodologies that guide our research activities.

The ability to master different research methodologies cannot be compared or equated to the ability in mastering different paradigms. For example, there are positivist or interpretive researchers in both formal logical dominated cognitive framework of "either or" society, and paradox oriented cognitive framework of "both and" society. By equating the methodologies they use to their implicit overall paradigm is indeed oversimplifying and limited the range of assumptions that influence and provide meaning for their actions. Hence restricted our understanding and instigated generalization and prejudice. The over simplification of the term paradigm and the limited understanding of paradigm

incommensurability has explained in large part why there are plethora of suggestions and requests for multiparadigm research but in reality the existence of such studies are rare and few.

The nuanced paradox that is not always visible in Kuhn's writing is that although he believed in paradigm incommensurability, he also believed movement between paradigms is possible. Paradigms are not immutable or ahistorical. On the contrary, they are dynamically socially constructed conventions. They come into being and they pass away. Paradigm moves are possible but they are through the transformative movement of a paradigm shift rather than objective paradigm interactions as suggested by the multiparadigm perspective, such shifts have a particular logic or phenomenology of their own, they are qualitative rather than quantitative.

Paradigm shift requires a leap into the incommensurable that provides a new and emerging way of seeing things. This faith in leaping into the incommensurable is central to the paradigm transformation. It is only later, once the rules and conventions of the new paradigm begin to be defined, that not only will it be demonstrated but that the very criteria of proof will be established. In this sense the movement between different paradigms is not itself rational for what counts as rationality is determined from within a paradigm and thus to move between different paradigms is to move between different assumptions about the nature of rationality.

In reflection on his own encounter with paradigm incommensurability and paradigm transition Bohr once said: 'Every great and deep difficulty bears in itself its own solution. It forces us to change our thinking in order to find it.' Echoing this point Einstein also made clear that a paradigm problem is not solved in the same terms or with the same set of assumptions, which led to the identifying of the problem in the first place. Heidegger takes this a step further by asserting that 'there where the danger is, so the saving power grows.'

In sum, to be able to utilise insights from different paradigms requires a fundamental rethinking of conducting IB research in the space between paradigms. Such a paradigm shift expands the limit of the old paradigm to include new assumptions and insights from other paradigms. Paradigms are much more than a set of logical propositions to be put in a four by four table. They are tacit or implicit ways

of seeing and being in the world that shape the way we do research. The proposed objective paradigm interaction and paradigm learning might seem conceptually logical but unattainable in reality because such suggestion simplified and objectified the notion of paradigm and dismissed essence of Kuhn's incommensurability thesis that there exist no paradigm neutral place and paradigm neutral mindset to conduct such an interaction.

PARADIGM TRANSCENDENCE THROUGH THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PARADIGM INCOMMENSURABILITY

As fore fronted by Bohr, Einstein and Heidegger paradigm incommensurability plays a key role in making paradigm shift possible. Paradigm incommensurability applies not only to paradigms but to "cultures" as well. It reveals our implicit and taken for granted paradigm and culture assumptions therefore opening up new possibilities for seeing the world from others' perspectives. For it is only when we can let go of the need to reduce the others to our own perspective that we can see the world from other's perspective thereby our own limited paradigm has been transformed and expanded.

As Bernd Jager (1994) puts it paradigm incommensurability is a space of, "self-showing". It is entered only when our habitual everyday world is ruptured such that, we can no longer be fully absorbed or engaged in this everyday world of activities, we begin to see ourselves in our everyday world of activities. The incommensurable other allows us to see our culture heritage in a way that we cannot do whilst absorbed in the everyday world of our own scripts for doing things. For when we dialogue with those who share our culture or paradigm, we take the paradigm for granted. In the face of the stranger, the incommensurable, however, it is our very paradigms or cultures, which become explicit themes of concern, in which we come to see the very language and logic of our own paradigm (Segal, 1999).

In this context the rupturing of our everyday by the incommensurable other is the condition through which we have been given access to our own historicity. The experience of the incommensurable other is in fact the basis where we can rediscover our own culture, history; our taken for granted beliefs that regulate our way of doing things in a vastly different way. In another word it is only through the experience of paradigm incommensurability we are engaged in the activity of revealing and exploring the implicit paradigm and culture assumptions (Heidegger, 1985). For Lyotard (1990,p.3) claims the

activity of exploring tacit and hidden assumptions ‘refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable’ and this is indeed the space that International Business and cross-cultural research also needs to enter to go beyond.

However it must be emphasised that the activity of exploring implicit assumptions can only begin where cultural or paradigm incommensurability is acknowledged. Thus admitting paradigms and cultural matters can no longer be verified empirically through scientific and social scientific research but only through uncovering and exploring of assumptions without prejudice. Emmanuel Levinas (1985) would call such an acknowledgement of incommensurability the ethical encounter with the Otherness of the other. Prejudice stops where there is an appreciation of the fact that the other cannot be contained in but always exceeds my research perspective on the other. The other always exceeds ‘the idea of the other in me.’ (Levinas, 1985, p. 51). It is the acceptance of the incommensurable and this irreducibility of the other to my perspective our own culture and prejudice is prevented and the exploring of the implicit assumptions begins.

Furthermore working with incommensurable paradigms allows us not only to see our own habitual and taken for granted ways of seeing the world but also opens up new possibilities for seeing the world from others’ perspectives. For example, sociologist Zigmund Bauman (1990) have stated that it is only through working with the incommensurable others both the self and the other can be understood. Similarly American philosopher Richard Rorty (1979, p. 360) states that working with the unfamiliar other in expanding our own paradigm limitation ‘is supposed to be abnormal, to take us out of our old selves by the power of strangeness, to aid us in becoming new beings.’

Thus it is only through the encounter of the incommensurable our own implicit paradigm and cultural assumptions become explicit theme of concern. In order to transcend our own paradigm limitations we need to acknowledge paradigm incommensurability so that the ethical exploring of our own and other assumptions can begin and the paradigm shift is in a working progress. It is in this context Fang's (2012) research into cross-cultural management becomes important, for he has shown us that through Yin Yang we are not reduced to an either or logic but that we can always find the Yin in the

Yang and the Yang in the Yin. The psychological flexibility contained in such an approach to IB is central for research today. The need to have one dominant paradigm is a dangerous anachronism for working in the sphere of difference. We need to work with our differences to be edified by them.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In times of today's globalised risks and opportunities it is increasingly recognised that the ability to master different perspectives and generating new ideas is essential (Chen and Miller, 2010). As a result academics around the world have made passionate pleas for multiparadigm studies that utilises insights from different perspectives to improve theoretical development and knowledge generation in cross-cultural management research (e.g., Boyacigiller et al., 2004; Redding, 1994). In view of the limited understanding over the key concepts: paradigm and paradigm incommensurability, which resulted in vague multiparadigm suggestions and strategies, few researchers have ventured down this path.

This paper fills this gap by first offering a detailed hermeneutic analysis over the term paradigm and paradigm incommensurability. It explicitly demonstrates how the current understanding over the term paradigm and paradigm incommensurability has in fact oversimplified and objectified the notion of paradigm therefore completely dismissed the significance of paradigm incommensurability in revealing implicit cultural and paradigm assumptions; and its ability in transforming paradigm limitation and enabling multiparadigm studies. In contrast to the previous multiparadigm suggestions that downplay the importance of paradigm incommensurability, our paper shows that it is only through the unprejudiced acceptance and acknowledgement of the paradigm incommensurability the possibility for a new way of seeing and being from a different perspective is opened up.

In sum, we provide more than a theoretical contribution in enabling multiparadigm research in cross-cultural management and IB. We explicitly examined the key terms of paradigm and paradigm incommensurability to provide clarification and to prevent further objectification and simplification. In so doing we also shown that instead of perceiving paradigm incommensurability as formidable differences between paradigms it is indeed the key to paradigm transformation and enabling multiparadigm research. Although it is not within the scope of this paper to offer a detailed

methodology for conducting multiparadigm research we believe our conceptual clarification of the important terms paradigm and paradigm incommensurability serves the purpose in encouraging future researchers to fully utilize incommensurability in transforming paradigm limitations and conducting multiparadigm research that enriches cross-cultural management knowledge generation and theoretical development.

DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

We believe that a dialogue between the indigenous philosophy of Yin Yang and hermeneutic phenomenology would be fruitful in revealing how the East in the West and the West in the East. In moving cross-cultural management research in the field of IB forward such a dialogue is necessary and it will be the theme for our future paper.

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