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# Paradigm Interplay for Theory Development: A Methodological Example With the Kulturstandard Method

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## Abstract

Cross-cultural management research is done in both the positivist and the interpretive paradigms. Calls are repeatedly made to consider this diversity, thus asking for more multiparadigm research, which is both challenging and methodologically vague. This article proposes a clear method for a bi-paradigm study leading to theory development. Multiparadigm studies present challenges that are first explained and then addressed with the strategy of interplay. The authors assert that interplay is a paradigmatic conversation that respects and builds upon the connections and differences between paradigm's components used by Kuhn to stress continuity and change during scientific revolutions. With the *Kulturstandard* method, the authors illustrate the feasibility of interplay between the positivist and the interpretive paradigms. Interplay is reached by first conducting analyses in their respective paradigms. Then, in light of each other, they reveal mutually enriching themes that lead to a shift of attention toward a venue of interplay. This venue is then explored to investigate its respectful consideration of the paradigms and how it contributes to theory. The authors conclude by underscoring the methodological contributions of this article to multiparadigm research.

## Keywords

philosophy of science, qualitative research, research design, interpretivism

## Introduction

What is the relevance of an article on multiparadigm studies in a post- “paradigms war” era (see Jackson & Carter, 1993)? Although the paradigms debate has settled down, and paradigm diversity is generally acknowledged, the end of the paradigms war did not lead the former adversaries toward

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interaction. However, one precisely calls for this interaction in cross-cultural management research for theoretical and methodological developments. The purpose of this contribution is to present how to perform a bi-paradigm study in the form of paradigm interplay and show implications for theory development for cross-cultural management.

Review articles on cross-cultural management have long pointed to improvements seen as necessary within the main (positivist) stream of studies (e.g., from Adler & Bartholomew, 1992, to Boyacigiller, Kleinberg, Phillips, & Sackmann, 2004). Frequently, recommendations concluding these reviews hold that methodological and theoretical improvement necessitates more than one paradigm, and the interpretive paradigm is suggested. Although studies combining emic and etic views already strengthen cross-cultural management research (see the review by Schaffer & Riordan, 2003), they often do so in a same paradigm, for example, the positivist one (e.g., Farh, Earley & Lin, 1997; Yan & Sorenson, 2004). Studies combining interpretive and positivist methodologies—in other words, bi-paradigm studies—are rare (see, e.g., Harris, 2000), even if more of them are requested (Jackson & Aycan, 2006). This scarcity is explained by the difficulty to master several methodologies and the challenge to perform in practice a multiparadigm study (Lewis & Kelemen, 2002). These two aspects are, indeed, rarely explicitly addressed—even in bi-paradigm studies, with a detailed methodological example. We propose to fill this gap.

We illustrate the feasibility of a bi-paradigm study, explicating how one is conducted and highlighting contributions to theory development. We first acknowledge that multiparadigm research is debated and present specific stakes and challenges. In view of our aim toward theory development, the strategy paradigm interplay is adopted. Interplay is a respectful interaction between analyses performed in different paradigms; we compare this interaction to a conversation. Respecting their paradigmatic integrity, the interaction builds upon the tension created by the simultaneous consideration of how the analyses are connected and what differentiate them. To highlight connections and differences between analyses, we adopt a view of paradigm as a disciplinary matrix (Kuhn, 1996, p. 182) that is created by various components (metaphysical parts, symbolic generalizations, exemplars, and values). Some of these illustrate continuity and change during scientific revolutions, that is to say connections and differences between the paradigms.

Interplay between the positivist and interpretive paradigms is then examined with the use of the Kulturstandard method that investigates critical incidents (Flanagan, 1954) with semistructured interviews. This method serves as a simple illustration of the feasibility of paradigm interplay in cross-cultural management. Interplay is explicated as a three-step process: First, separate analyses are conducted in each paradigm; second, the analyses are then contrasted, and in light of each other, they indicate possible improvements and point toward a venue for paradigm interplay (in our example, this is achieved with a new theoretical framework). Third, the analyses are placed in interaction in this framework, revealing implications for theory development in cross-cultural management research. We conclude by underscoring the unique features and value of this methodology for multiparadigm studies.

## The Paradigms Debate and Multiparadigm Studies

The paradigms debate (see Fabian, 2000; Greene, 2008; Hassard & Kelemen, 2002; Scherer, 1998; Scherer & Steinmann, 1999) addresses the plurality of paradigmatic references. We present here three positions that discuss this plurality promoting: isolation, integration, or multiple references (the latter supports multiparadigm studies).

One position maintains that different paradigms represent unique approaches because researchers address their subject with “explicit or implicit assumptions about the nature of the social world and the way in which it may be investigated.” This implies a separate ontology, epistemology, and methodology, as well as separate assumptions about human nature (Burrell & Morgan, 1979,

pp. 1-4). This position that is labeled *isolationist* (e.g., Scherer, 1998) or *protectionist* tends to see the function of paradigms in the preservation and perpetuation of their specific scientific practices. Paradigms “are not so much complementary as competing” (Hassard & Kelemen, 2002, p. 344).

Pfeffer (1993) and Donaldson (1998) advocate a second position, known as *integration*. Pfeffer argues in favor of an ontological and epistemological consensus for the advancement of knowledge in organizational science. “Without some minimal level of consensus about research questions and methods, fields can scarcely expect to produce knowledge in a cumulative, developmental process” (Pfeffer, 1993, p. 611). This argument encourages integration in a dominant paradigm and tends to view the existing diversity of research paradigms as the sign of a lack of scientific maturity.

A third position is known as *multiparadigm*. Although this approach grants paradigms as separate academic worldviews, legitimate in their own terms, it advocates possible connections and exchanges between paradigms. The multiparadigm position urges the use of multiple paradigms to acknowledge the variety of ontological and epistemological standpoints; it argues that the partial understandings that each paradigm gains can be associated, thereby, researchers can achieve richer knowledge (e.g., Hassard & Kelemen, 2002; Lewis & Kelemen, 2002). This position is favorable to paradigm interplay—this is also our position.

Van Maanen (1995) shows that the paradigm’s debate evolves around normative and moral arguments as well as authoritative discourses in fields of studies. Because the notion of paradigm incommensurability either supports or works against the stakes of the three main positions, it is central to the paradigm debate. Briefly stated, paradigm incommensurability poses that scientific paradigms are so different—or, in some case, seemingly contradictory—that they can neither interact meaningfully nor be merged.

For example, the claim of Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 25) that paradigms are incommensurable serves two purposes: It first underscores that organizational science is plural (there are different and equally legitimate scientific paradigms), and second, incommensurability prevents potential imperialist claims from another paradigm and a paradigm synthesis (which is what the integrationists wish). However, this leads to paradigm segregation, which grieves the proponents of multiparadigm studies.

The incommensurability argument works against the integrationist position. In response, some reject incommensurability (e.g., Donaldson, 1998) and some adopt a view of incommensurability that revolves around the idea of a relationship between paradigms. Inspired by Kuhn (1962), this states that different positions are incommensurable as there is no neutral ground they can use to relate to each other and be assessed. Kuhn mentions the examples of terminologies such as *mass* and *molecule*, which convey different meanings for Newton or Einstein, for physicians or for chemists. In this line of thought, Scherer and Steinmann (1999) suggest concentrating on mutual understanding to develop new rules and finding new grounds for paradigm interaction, toward a common agreement.

Kuhn’s views on paradigm incommensurability changed from a focus on relationship to a focus on communication and discussed translation failure (see Kuhn, 1970 postscript and Kuhn, 1990; Sankey, 1993). Adherents to multiparadigm studies (the third position) tend to adopt this later view, because it supports their ambition. Although there are different languages, the prerequisite “is not translation, but language learning” (Kuhn, 1990, p. 300, cited in Weaver & Gioia, 1994, p. 573). Incommensurability is primarily seen as the impossibility of a neutral common language between paradigms, however, not as the impossibility for them to understand each other because, as Kuhn insists, language can be learned.

In sum, the various positions of the paradigms debate translate beliefs on the perceived proper way to conduct research and science. The proponents are eager to develop knowledge and fields of study, yet their views on the means to reach these goals differ. The isolationists use incommensurability as an emancipatory tool; the integrationists use it to make a case for an integrated

paradigm. The proponents of multiparadigm studies resist both segregation and integration because they want to promote interaction; they also argue in favor of paradigm/language learning, which they propose doing so in three main ways.

### *Multiparadigm Studies*

Classification of multiparadigm studies separates them into three main groups (see Lewis & Grimes, 1999; Lewis & Kelemen, 2002; Schultz & Hatch, 1996). The first group, *multiparadigm review*, displays the various paradigms. This helps researchers to reflect on their paradigmatic positioning, focusing their attention on the implications and limitations of their choice. Examples of such reviews are Smircich (1983), Alvesson (1987), and Morgan (1986).

The second group, *multiparadigm research*, applies distinct paradigmatic approaches either in “parallel” or “sequentially” to provide a richer understanding. Parallel studies apply paradigms on equal terms and show the multiple facets of a phenomenon through various “lenses” (see Bradshaw-Camball & Murray, 1991; Hassard, 1991; Martin, 1992). In sequential studies, investigations in one paradigm serve as inputs to the subsequent study in the next paradigm (e.g., Gioia, Donnellon & Sims, 1989; Lee, 1991; Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988).

Lewis and Grimes (1999) categorize a third set, termed *metaparadigm theory building*. These studies seek to build more accommodating understandings by juxtaposing and linking distinct approaches. Paradigm “bridging” highlights transition zones (theoretical views that span paradigms) between neighboring paradigms, thereby initiating new theory development (e.g., Gioia & Pitre, 1990). Paradigm interplay (e.g., Schultz & Hatch, 1996) also belongs to this third group by considering both paradigms’ connections and distinctions and, to foster knowledge development, the resulting tensions they create.

### *Challenges to Multiparadigm Studies*

Multiparadigm research raises questions and is subjected to various criticisms, where incommensurability is a key argument. The isolationist view argues the impossibility to think in distinct paradigms and, thus, combine them. This opposition is easily surmounted on the basis of experience (as researchers who changed paradigms, see examples in Burrell & Morgan, 1979, and Kuhn, 1996), and on the basis of the socialization that a scientific community performs on its members. Kuhn’s description of components of a paradigm (in the sense of a disciplinary matrix) reveals the socialization mechanisms that are in play. For instance, the “symbolic generalizations” or the “exemplars” serve to teach the novice to recognize the same things when confronted by the same stimuli and to build upon similar laws and tools. Researchers can learn different paradigms; Kuhn insists that understanding another paradigm is “what the historian of science regularly does (or should do) when dealing with out-of-date scientific theories” (Kuhn, 1996, p. 202).

The difficulty for multiparadigm studies is, therefore, not so much sequential and separate paradigmatic analyses, but the practical possibility of simultaneously performing an analysis in several paradigms (e.g., interplay). The view of incommensurability as the absence of a neutral ground on which the paradigms can relate to each other pinpoints this challenge and questions the criteria by which research should be assessed. Adopting a meta-paradigmatic position can be viewed as a rhetorical device to hide the role of researchers in the elaboration of the reality that they are investigating (see Chia, 1996; Woolgar, 1988). Therefore, it is important to explicitly address a framework for multiparadigm research, which Lewis and Kelemen (2002) help to do by insisting on the “accommodating” ideology and “plural” ontologies and epistemologies of multiparadigm research. We propose to address the challenge of paradigm interplay by decomposing it in separate analyses—in each paradigm—before placing the analyses in interaction. In other words, we assert interplay

as the interaction of analyses and not as an analysis that is simultaneously performed in several paradigms. The assessment of interplay is done in view of the juxtaposed criteria of the paradigms in question.

Some have attacked multiparadigm research along a different line of thought. For example, Scherer and Steinmann (1999, p. 523) argue that any paradigm perspective is defective; therefore, the end result of applying a multiparadigm approach would not be a “more comprehensive and better explanation, [but it] would be even worse.” The multiparadigm approach, however, does not consider that paradigms have deficiencies but propounds that they present legitimate, coherent, and distinct positions of study that can be juxtaposed (accommodating ideology). Multiple paradigms offer diverse and complementary views, research methods (in the sense of research goals and concerns), and analyses; this provides new light and overcomes limitations of existing research and increases researchers’ reflexivity (for a thorough discussion of multiparadigm studies’ advantages, see Lewis & Kelemen, 2002). This diversity leads to new perspectives and creative thinking. Multiparadigm studies are not necessarily “better” or “more appropriate” than a single paradigm study; however, they tend to lead to innovative outcomes.

Examples of this innovativeness are provided by Bradshaw-Camball and Murray (1991), who analyze politics around the budgeting of a Canadian hospital; they unveil three structural levels of understanding that are applicable to other situations and provide novel perspectives. By combining emic and etic insights, Morris, Leung, Ames, and Lickel (1999) also advances our understanding of justice judgment and develops a new framework for cross-cultural standardization of a firm’s policy. With two perspectives, Ybema (1996) reveals the role that organizational stakes play in the development of organizational culture. Schultz and Hatch (1996) advance the understanding of organizational culture as dynamic using the strategy interplay. Harris (2000) shows how to improve the international relevance of measurement tools by combining positivist and interpretive research methods, and overcoming the limitations repetitively addressed to these tools. In sum, we support multiparadigm studies for the novel and relevant insights they foster.

### *Our Views on Paradigms and Incommensurability*

Our views on paradigms are consistent with the conception of a paradigm as a worldview or a disciplinary matrix (Kuhn, 1996, p. 174-190). We share Kuhn’s (1996, p. 201) views on incommensurability as the impossibility of a unique meaningful language between paradigms. We assume that there can be no neutral expression of the symbolic generalizations and exemplars with which researchers have been intellectually socialized and which are the tools they use to approach (experience), to investigate, and to understand the world (in the sense of reasoning). Thus, there can be no paradigm integration. However, in our opinion, the lack of a common language does not mean that communication and learning from each other are impossible. It means that some different languages must be learned.

### **Paradigm Interplay**

We adopt the view of interplay of Schultz and Hatch (1996) as a “strategy” that maintains the distinctions between research paradigms while acknowledging the connections between them. However, their standpoint does not explicate how to do interplay in practice; it is conceptual.

### *Defining Interplay in Practice*

We define paradigm interplay as a venue of respectful interaction between different paradigmatic analyses. This implies three significant features. First, we affirm that interplay is located at the level

of an interaction between analyses, inscribed in their own paradigms. In other words, we do not regard interplay as a meta-paradigmatic analysis, performed above paradigms; rather, we see it as a framework of interaction associating (not integrating) several paradigms, through the analyses. Second, we call interplay both the interaction and the outcome of this interaction. The interaction of analyses can, for instance, reveal a new theoretical framework. This framework is the interplay: the outcome of the interaction. Third, interplay is a respectful relation, which means that the integrity of each analysis is respected in the research concerns and methodology of the paradigm to which it belongs. What the paradigms stand for is respected in holding the distinctions (and connections) between the separate analyses. In sum, we submit the key features of paradigm interplay: (a) Interplay is an interaction between analyses and, as a result, between paradigms; (b) interplay is an interaction and the outcome of this interaction; and (c) interplay is respectful of each analysis' position and that for which they stand (integrity).

Schultz and Hatch (1996) explain that both interplay and bridging strategies share the premise of permeable boundaries between paradigms—in contrast to the sequential and parallel strategies. The strategy interplay also differs from the sequential and parallel strategies in regard to the interactions that it creates between paradigms, rather than solely considering them separately (Schultz & Hatch, 1996, p. 535). Interplay differs from the bridging strategy, however, in that the researcher is not in a gray area (in-between paradigms) focusing only on connections or aiming at finding “compromises” (Harris, 2000). Indeed, the bridging strategy tends to emphasize what paradigms (or analyses) have in common, which can downplay their distinctions. In other words, the bridging strategy can somewhat neglect paradigms' or analyses' integrity by not stressing their differences. This respect for differences and paradigms' integrity is expressed in strategy interplay, especially in the way in which we propose that interplay can be done in practice.

### *Conducting Interplay in Practice*

Previous studies using interplay (e.g., Lewis & Grimes, 1999; Schultz & Hatch, 1996; Ybema, 1996) are convincing about its contributions; however, they leave researchers helpless regarding how precisely one is to reach interplay. We address this limitation and propose that the process of paradigm interplay can be reached in three steps. First, to fully understand and respect paradigms, we suggest performing separate analyses. We then propose contrasting the analyses, especially with regard to what differentiates or connects them, to fully reveal how they can enrich each other. This points to a potential venue of interaction, which is the interplay. The last step presents the interplay and highlights connections and distinctions between the (previous) analyses and opens the ground for new contributions.

If we were to use the (limited) metaphor of paradigms as languages, we could compare the interplay to a bilingual conversation and its possible outcome. A francophone and an Anglophone talk about management in their respective mother tongues, well known to their interlocutor (Step 1 of the interplay). In light of each other, the words reveal differences and connections between their semantic fields. For example, the interlocutors realize that the French “gérer” is strongly associated with the verbs *direct* and *administrate*, while the English “manage” is related to the idea of being in charge and successful despite obstacles. Yet, both “gérer” and “manage” contain the idea of organizing. From their conversation (Step 2 of the interplay), they may start seeing management as a control of a situation by organizing it. For example, the control is about “administrating” or being “successfully in charge.” The interlocutors open a new angle to their conversation (the interplay *control*).

This conversation is not about creating a new language; neither is it about creating a new word that would merge both meanings (as in the integration strategy). Nor is it about restricting the use of “gérer” and “manage” to what they have in common (as bridging strategy can do); it is more than

increasing the awareness of the semantic field attached to the words, and perhaps enrich them (as in the parallel and sequential strategies). This is about providing a new perspective on their views of management with the attention given to control. Interplay can, thus, be seen as a paradigmatic conversation and the outcome of this conversation.

### *Elements Involved in Paradigm Interplay*

Interplay is a venue of respectful interaction between different paradigmatic analyses, considering conjointly their distinctions and connections. But which are they? Kuhn's argument on the structure of scientific revolutions evolves around several main components of scientific paradigms that display continuity and ruptures during the periods of change. These components (metaphysical parts of the paradigms, symbolic generalizations, exemplars, and values in Kuhn, 1970, 1996, pp. 174-190) help us stress distinctions, as well as connections between paradigms and, thus, key aspects to respect and place in interaction in paradigm interplay. Considering the literature on cross-cultural management, we illustrate these components below for the positivist and interpretive paradigms.

*Metaphysical parts.* Metaphysical parts of the paradigms are beliefs in a particular model and permissible analogies. Metaphysical parts touch upon how the scientists view the world they are approaching and the way in which they will investigate it. For positivist researchers, the world they study is independent of their observation. Their purpose is to explain the regularities or law-like phenomena that they observe and develop a model to explain and predict them (Chalmers, 1978; Donaldson, 2003). For example, values and/or behavior are independent items used to measure culture in positivist cross-cultural management. This contrasts the beliefs of interpretive researchers and their view on knowledge, which is based on intersubjectivity (see, e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 2000). A permissible analogy for interpretive researchers is the definition of culture in terms of "shared meanings" as an integrated part of management (rather than an external variable). The aim is to understand (as in *verstehen*, see Weber, 1911/1978, and Schwandt, 1994) the meanings that the actors use to make sense of their reality.

However, positivist and interpretive researchers accept society as given. The study of patterns across or within groups (that is to say, the study of regularities) is their focus of investigation. This stands out against for example, the postmodern paradigm (that wants to favor change, by stressing fluidity and discontinuity, and by denouncing discursive closures—see Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Chia, 1996; or Deetz, 1996). Studies in both the positivist and interpretive paradigms adopt the premise that investigations are to discover underlying patterns through their superficial expression (either in behavior or in symbols).

*Symbolic generalizations.* Symbolic generalizations are the readily formalizable components of the disciplinary matrix: agreed definitions, formulas, and laws that researchers use in their scientific practice. In the social sciences, symbolic generalizations do not necessarily adopt the form of theorems and laws; however, they can be seen as the available analytical frameworks and processes (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Schultz & Hatch, 1996). For example, in the positivist paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Donaldson, 2003; Gephart, 2004; Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Lee, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 2000), frameworks tend to be theoretically predefined. The model of analysis is causal and the analytical process is convergent, in the sense that it aims to reduce the complex reality observed to be the relationship of causality between condensed dimensions. Positivist cross-cultural management research tends to investigate culture through cultural dimensions (e.g., power distance, individualism collectivism), which are ready-made symbolic generalizations from a predefined theoretical framework, to investigate the role culture plays in organizational behavior (e.g., Hofstede, 1991; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Pothukuchi, Damanpour, Choi, Chen, & Park, 2002) and individual behavior (e.g., Gibson, 1999; Gomez, Kirkman, & Shapiro, 2000; Thomas & Au, 2002).

In contrast, theoretical frameworks tend to be emergent in the interpretive paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Gephart, 2004; Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Hatch & Yanow, 2003; Lee, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Schwandt, 2000) with an inductive process toward theory development. With an associative model of analysis, researchers stress the similarities between meanings attached to management practices and meanings found in the society to which belongs the group under study (e.g., Chevrier, 2009; d'Iribarne 2009; Globokar, 1997). Schultz and Hatch (1996) see the divergent analytical processes and the associative model of analysis as key symbolic generalizations of the interpretive paradigm.

*Exemplars.* Exemplars for Kuhn (1970) can be seen as the problem-solution tools that scholars learn and then use to resolve new problems (e.g., the inclined plane or the conical pendulum) and the work of a scientist that is seminal for a paradigm (e.g., Newton's treatise of light in 1704). In the field of cross-cultural management, the work of Hofstede (1980) is considered to be an exemplar for positivist analyses; it is a large-scale, quantitative investigation of the patterns found in respondents' views on management throughout many countries. By showing a significant relationship between a theoretically developed cultural dimension and a management practice, the researcher highlights the argued causal influence of culture on management.

In contrast, the work of Geertz (1973/1993) is regarded as an exemplar for interpretive research on culture. It centers on one society at a time and investigates, for example, how an event (e.g., cock-fights) reveals the cognitive structures of a studied group (the Balinese). By showing the patterns of interpretation that the members of a group share, the researcher underlines the culture of that group. The association of patterns is reached through thick ethnographical descriptions and emic understanding. Another instance of exemplar for interpretive researchers is Weick (1995).

*Values.* Shared values are also an important component that stresses connections and distinctions between paradigms. For instance, shared values about predictions are that they should be accurate, preferably quantitative, and have an agreed margin of acceptable error. When researchers aim to design a model and make predictions, values of predictability and possible replication are important, although they are less so in the interpretive paradigm where researchers are concerned with understanding actors' views and meanings (*verstehen*). In contrast, they are likely to appreciate such values as closeness to the informant and emergence (as opposed to predefinition).

Yet, values are more widely shared among different communities than, for example, symbolic generalizations "they tend to do much to provide a sense of community to scientists as a whole" (Kuhn, 1996, p. 184). Values such as rigor, consistency, reliability, and fruitfulness are strongly shared across the positivist and interpretive communities, for example, although they are enacted through different methodologies. For instance, advanced statistical tools are used to perform reliable and rigorous measurements indispensable for the study of cultural dimension constructs and their relationship to attitudes or management practices in positivist cross-cultural management research (e.g., House et al., 2004). In the interpretive paradigm, methodologies often use the rigor of data collection and categorization developed in ethnography to explicate the relevance of the sample selection, the emergent development of constructs, and then verify their relevance by reporting to the informants.

The four paradigmatic components provide illustrations of what separate the positivist and interpretive paradigms as well as what can connect them. The symbolic generalizations and exemplars represent strong discrepancies between the positivist and interpretive paradigms, whereas metaphysical parts and values present connections. Multiparadigm interplay can use these differences and connections to foster creative tensions with the interaction that interplay creates.

Returning to the metaphor of interplay as a conversation, we can now imagine a dialogue between a positivist and an interpretive researcher on the definition of culture. The interlocutors soon realize that they connect when it comes to the idea that culture is a social regularity: something that is shared, to a certain extent, by its member (metaphysical parts). However, they disagree in their symbolic generalizations and exemplars regarding what is shared and how to study it. The positivist



researcher emphasizes measurable values and behavior (inspired by Hofstede, 1980), while the interpretive researcher insists on Geertz's (1973/1993) idea of culture as being shared meanings. In their argumentation, they both use examples from systematic empirical research on culture (thus, connecting again in their values linked to scientific investigation). Their respectful conversation brings to their attention that culture, as something shared, implies others (those who do not share the same values or meanings). This leads them to introduce a new aspect to their definition of culture: Culture is about distinction, about a differentiation from another group; they reach the interplay *distinction* (see e.g., Ybema & Byun, 2009).

In sum, we use the metaphor of interplay as a respectful paradigmatic conversation, building upon the paradigm components. How this conversation can be conducted in cross-cultural management is now presented with the example of the Kulturstandard method.

## The Kulturstandard Method

Initiated by Alexander Thomas, the Kulturstandard method centers on the analysis of critical incidents taking place in a bicultural interaction. Critical incidents are recurrent situations, in which foreign cultural partners act in unexpected and not immediately explicable ways. Critical incidents are seen as pointing to a cognitive or behavioral difference between partners, and their analysis enables us to identify the Kulturstandards<sup>1</sup> (i.e., cultural cognitive schemata) of the persons in presence. In sum, the Kulturstandard method aims to identify cultural cognitive schemata (Thomas, 1988, p. 159) mobilized for action, through the analysis of bicultural interactions and the critical incidents they foster.

The Kulturstandard method appears as a convenient methodology for a bi-paradigm interplay between a positivist and an interpretive analysis. The method has been addressed through epistemological, ontological, and methodological reviews (e.g., Dunkel & Mayrhofer, 2001; Fink, Kölling, & Neyer, 2005; Topçu, Romani, & Primecz, 2007) in its positioning between the methodologies traditionally associated with positivist and interpretive cross-cultural management research. Many studies have used the method (see e.g., Fink & Meierewert, 2001; Thomas, 1996a; Thomas, Kinast, & Schroll-Machl, 2003a, 2003b) and contributed to strengthen its core: the critical incident technique that uses critical incidents as tangible manifestations of a cognitive discrepancy between interlocutors (see Chell, 2004; Flanagan, 1954). Developed in the positivist paradigm, this technique is also applicable to the interpretive one (Chell, 1998). In brief, the Kulturstandard method includes a set of well-known methods (critical incident technique, semi-structured interviews) that can serve as a methodological framework for paradigm interplay, because it allows for both positivist and interpretive analyses.

### *Methodology of the Kulturstandard Method*

The aim of the method is the disclosure of distinct systems of orientation (Kulturstandards) between individuals of, for instance, the same occupational group, however, who come from different countries. Thomas (1988, 1996b) presents the methodological steps for the elaboration of Kulturstandards; further details can be found in Fink et al. (2005) or Topçu, Romani, and Primecz (2007).

*Sample selection and interviews.* Interviewees are representatives of a country A (e.g., Germany) living in a country B (e.g., China). Interviews aim to collect critical incidents that cover both positive and conflict-laden unexpected situations. Thomas (1996b, p. 120f) relates a critical incident: His Chinese students answered positively when he inquired whether they understand what he teaches them. However, when he posed a specific question, no one replied. Interviewees are asked what explanation they have of this unexpected situation. The interview is completed with a standardized questionnaire depicting the interviewees' demographic variables and indicating their familiarity with the foreign environments.

*Feedback with culture experts from the home and foreign culture.* The descriptions of the critical incidents are presented to experts on the culture to which the participants of the intercultural situation belong. Thomas defines experts as people who have an extensive knowledge of the foreign country. They are asked to identify the described behavior and to explain its cultural causality (Thomas, 1988, p. 155). In our example, the German narratives of critical incidents are presented to German experts on China and Chinese experts on Germany.

*Development of Kulturstandards.* Recurring examples of critical incidents collected in interviews indicate distinct cognitive schemata between encounters. In the previous example, Thomas's interpretation of the silence of his Chinese students was that they conceal the fact that they do not understand the training. According to Thomas, this reveals cognitive schemata called social harmony (Thomas, 1996b, p. 124), which can be considered a Kulturstandard.

*Validating the Kulturstandards as cultural.* To verify that they are cultural (linked to the national or societal culture), the Kulturstandards are compared to other academic research on culture (Thomas, 1996b, p. 121). They are not derived from but are rather supported (and confirmed as cultural) by culture-historical, philosophic, and country-specific sources. In the previous example, Thomas (1996b, pp. 124-125) demonstrates a relationship between social harmony and Chinese history, political conceptions, and Mengzi philosophy. He, thereby, validates the Kulturstandard social harmony as being cultural.

## **Paradigm Interplay With the Kulturstandard Method**

The possibility to use the Kulturstandard method with either a positivist or an interpretive methodology provides a convenient methodological framework for a bi-paradigm study. It highlights the distinctions and connections between the analyses performed on the same analytical level, which later facilitates placing the analyses in light of each other to foster interplay. We start paradigm interplay with separate analyses and emphasize the use of different symbolic generalizations and exemplars, as well as underscore some connections in values and metaphysical parts.

### *The Identification of Kulturstandards in the Positivist Paradigm*

The positivist investigation and analysis of critical incidents follows the metaphysical parts and symbolic generalizations of its paradigm; it aims to identify Kulturstandards (cultural cognitive schemata) at the origin of the incidents, and a model of how this influence is exerted. In other words, the positivist investigation aims to identify the independent variable Kulturstandard through its influence on behavior (dependent variable). The investigation can be summarized as follows: The Kulturstandard method contends that cognitive schemata cause behavior. Recurrent incidents between two distinct samples inform us on cognitive schemata in each sample. If these schemata can be validated as cultural (in line with previous research on culture), then they are, therefore, Kulturstandards, which reveal how culture influences behavior.

*Interviewing.* Information on critical incidents is gathered with semistructured interviews. The interview guide is developed to investigate whether recurrent critical incidents are identifiable when individuals from different national cultures interact. Previous research and measurements of cultural differences between the countries under study help draft the interview guide. For example, if power distance score discrepancy between the two studied countries is important, this should lead to critical incidents in the intercultural interactions of superiors and subordinates. In consequence, questions related to superior-subordinate relationships are included in the interview guide.

The selection of interviewees aims to a sample representative of the chosen population. The complement of the interview with a demographic questionnaire offers the possibility to control for external variables in the analysis (e.g., length of residence in the foreign country) and, therefore,

provides a more accurate model of the relationship between a type of critical incident, a Kulturstandard, and moderating variables.

Fink et al. (2005) provide a detailed (positivist) methodological article for the Kulturstandard method, which addresses the potential biases interfering in the collection of data (the interview) and the analysis. For example, they discuss how to control for a disruptive impact of the subjectivity of the researchers (e.g., their cultural background, age, gender, and so on) during the interview (by choosing interviewers who are culturally similar to the interviewees). This control for bias is central to positivist and objectivist researchers, so that data are not distorted and can most precisely reflect reality through “the pipeline” of the interview (Alvesson, 2003). This is in line with the metaphysical parts of the positivist paradigm.

*Analysis.* The use of software for content analysis of data is recommended, because it also limits researchers’ bias and facilitates independent data recoding. This includes the use of a systematic method for coding the reported critical incidents and then arranging their classification into types of critical incidents according to values such as rigor, reliability, and traceability (see, e.g., Charmaz, 2000; Neuendorf, 2002). At this stage, the verbatim of the recurrent critical incidents is coded in several categories, having as a title the perceived central theme of the incidents. For example, recurrent incidents linked to superior–subordinate relationships may be labeled power distance. They are the provisional name of the Kulturstandards of the country, which is foreign to the interviewees. At this stage, the narrative of the interviews is simplified and condensed into categories; this is in line with the convergent analytical process (part of the positivist symbolic generalizations).

The heuristic value accorded to the incidents is external to the informants, in similar ways as reality is external to the objectivist researchers according to the metaphysical parts of the paradigm (see, e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Donaldson, 2003). For example, this means that, in an Austro-Hungarian relationship, the narrative of the critical incidents experienced by the Hungarian interviewees inform us about the Kulturstandards of their Austrian interlocutors and reciprocally.

The preliminary categories need then to be validated as Kulturstandards. Triangulation and mirror studies are important criteria for validation. Mirror studies are investigations that are undertaken in a mirrored sample of the population in the counterpart culture. For example, interviewed Hungarian managers may complain about the direct and almost “rude” manner in which the Austrian managers whom they meet formulate their criticism. Interviewed Austrian managers, in turn, may complain about Hungarian managers who sometimes keep silent and do not express their opinion. Meierewert and Horváth-Topçu (2001, pp. 112-113) see here two aspects of a common Kulturstandard called *communication style*. Fink et al. (2005) use only mirrored critical incidents in the elaboration process of Kulturstandards, thereby avoiding a potential construct bias by simultaneously developing the same categories in both the cultures. This validation process establishes the reliability of the Kulturstandards in line with strong values of the positivist paradigm, such as objectivism or generalization. The analysis centers on recurrent critical incidents, on regularities across countries and, therefore, favors etic constructs; that is to say, cultural constructs that are consistent across countries (see the exemplar of Hofstede, 1980).

Fink et al. (2005) then consult experts and explore expatriate and cross-cultural management literature for theoretically predefined cultural constructs (symbolic generalizations such as cultural dimensions) that can explain the identified types of critical incidents and that relate to their central theme. This external validation aims to eliminate critical incidents that may not be of cultural origin (Fink et al., 2005, p. 17). At this stage, some categories are abandoned (perceived as noncultural) and some are labeled along the name of established cultural dimensions. For example, Topçu (2005) shows that some Austrian managers experience critical incidents with Hungarian employees who do not always comply with rules. In view of the cultural dimensions constructs, this Kulturstandard can be called *particularism* (from Trompenaars’s 1993 dimension). The Kulturstandard is validated as a cultural cognitive schema influencing behavior.

In sum, the positivist analysis follows the “exemplar” of cultural dimensions frameworks, with a focus on the regularities of the social order (metaphysical parts); it achieves a categorization of a small number of Kulturstandards with a convergent analytical process and sustains the cultural origin (cause) of the critical incidents. This process is in line with the positivist symbolic generalizations. The concern for biases follows the ambition to develop reliable models that are not distorted by methodological noise (in line with the metaphysical parts). The investigation enacts values such as reliability, rigor, and consistency.

### *The Identification of Kulturstandards in the Interpretive Paradigm*

The goal this time, in view of the metaphysical parts and symbolic generalizations of the interpretive paradigm, is to identify Kulturstandards associated with the incidents and, thereby, understand (*verstehen*) the (societal) culture of the interviewees. Culture is not seen as external to management; rather, it is constitutive of it: Management is culture (to paraphrase Smircich, 1983). First of all, the analysis identifies sensemaking processes (see below) used by the interviewees (emergent analytical frameworks), and second, it shows their similarity to other sensemaking processes (associative model of analysis), which are present in other spheres of the society of the interviewees. By showing that these processes are shared, it reveals that they are cultural (following Geertz, 1973/1993, exemplar); thus, they can be labeled Kulturstandards. With the identified Kulturstandards, researchers can interpret and, therefore, understand (*verstehen*) aspects of the societal culture of the interviewees. This interpretive analysis follows the metaphysical parts of culture as shared meanings, and the symbolic generalizations of emergent analytical frameworks and associative models of analysis.

*Interviewing.* Semistructured interviews collect narrative of critical incidents, and previous research helps draft the interview guide. The endeavor this time is to explore various themes that will help identify the emergent content of the Kulturstandards. The selection of interviewees seeks a sample with the maximum differentiation (Agar, 1996). If similar types of critical incidents are identified across the internal diversity of the population, then this implies shared beliefs or meanings, thus cultural schemata: Kulturstandards. This contrasts the sample selection of the positivist analysis that aims to representativity. Demographic questions are posed in the end of the interview to grasp more of the elements of diversity encompassed in the sample.

When positivist researchers develop a methodology that addresses researchers’ biases, the interpretive ones tend to favor the implication of the reflexivity and subjectivity of the researchers in the data collection. They are inclined to consider the interview as a conversation with empathic understanding (Alvesson, 2003) with “give and take” that aims to place the two interlocutors on equal footing. Therefore, the opinion or the feelings of the interviewer may be voiced, so that the conversation can be seen as true and the collected information as reliable (Fontana & Frey, 2000). This also follows the values of reliability and trustworthiness, however, in precisely the opposite way as in the positivist analysis. The positivist scientist sees the involvement and subjectivity of the researcher as a form of contamination of what ought to be objective data and analytical processes. In contrast, interpretive researchers use their subjectivity as a means to reach a reliable understanding of the other people (similar human beings) and their socially constructed world, in other words, to reach *verstehen* (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Schwandt, 1994, 2000; Weber, 1911/1978). Thus, similar values are enacted in distinct epistemologies, themselves addressing contrasting metaphysical parts between the positivist and interpretive paradigms.

*Analysis.* In the analysis of the text of the interviews, researchers’ distance to the content is not so much achieved by external tools (such as the positivist analysis using statistics, independent recording, mirrored incidents, and so on); however, this is by an inductive code analysis that takes interviewees’ (and experts’) subjectivity into account (see, e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Gioia & Pitre, 1990). Researchers are not alone with the text; the coping strategies that the interviewees use when

experiencing the critical incident multiply the voices in the analysis. A systematic coding of the reported critical incidents and their classification into types of critical incidents follow values such as rigor, reliability, and traceability (see, e.g., Charmaz, 2005).

The analysis centers on recurrent critical incidents and on regularities (in line with the metaphysical parts), which help unveil meaning associations between symbols: the expression of the social order. In addition, subjectivity and intersubjectivity is central in the interpretive analysis (see Hatch & Yanow, 2003, or Schwandt, 2000, and metaphysical parts). Consequently, the critical incidents are seen as informing researchers foremost on the Kulturstandard of the ones reporting the incident, rather than the ones with whom they are experiencing it. This means that critical incidents reported by Austrians in interaction with Hungarians inform us on Austrian Kulturstandards. This is in total opposition to the positivist analysis.

At this stage, the recurrent critical incidents are coded in several categories. Their label is the one of the perceived central themes of the critical incidents, which is often taken directly from the verbatim. For example, when they relate critical incidents that happened with Austrian managers around the respect of rules or regulations, interviewed Hungarian employees use a sensemaking process that relate to rules as something that can be bent. This sensemaking denotes a Hungarian Kulturstandard called *ingeniousness* that contains meanings such as ingenious, flexible, successful, and irregular (see Topçu, 2005, p. 113f). The content of the Kulturstandard is emergent and inductively defined (symbolic generalization of emergent frameworks), rather than theoretically predefined such as in the positivist analysis that adopted the cultural dimension particularism from Trompenaars (1993). The unique sensemaking used by the Hungarian interviewees that combines meanings such as ingeniousness and irregularity is considered in the Kulturstandard ingeniousness.

The cultural validation of critical incidents is done with a divergent analytical process and an associative model of analysis (symbolic generalizations). In other words, the interpretive researchers seek similar associations of meanings in the society of the participants than the ones that the critical incidents reveal. For example, the sensemaking process used by the interviewed Hungarian to relate to rules as something that can be bent is also used in other spheres of society (outside of work, in the family, and so on; see Topçu, 2005). Understanding is reached with the interpretation of this association of meanings.

The interpretive paradigm assents to the nonequivalence of a construct across countries. In contrast to the use of mirror studies in Fink et al. (2005), nonsymmetric (emic) categories are, thus, viewed here as legitimate to reveal national cultural frames of action and are not excluded of the interpretive analysis. This is in line with the exemplar of Geertz's (1973/1993) analysis, focusing on one societal culture and oriented toward emic understanding.

In sum, the interpretive analysis of the critical incidents aims to highlight how interviewees share similar (thus cultural) sensemaking processes. This sensemaking is then compared (associative model of analysis) to similar sensemaking processes used in other spheres of the society to reveal their societal cultural nature. When similar processes are identified, the Kulturstandard is confirmed as cultural. The aim of the analysis is to better understand part of the social order (the societal culture of the interviewees), through its superficial expression in the critical incidents. The analysis follows the values, symbolic generalizations, and metaphysical parts of the interpretive paradigm, and the exemplar of Geertz (1973/1993) in its research goals. Table 1 sums up the differences and connections between the positivist and the interpretive analyses in their paradigm components.

### *Analyses in Light of Each Other*

The second step toward interplay places the analyses in light of each other, which enriches them and reveals venues for interaction (interplay). We use the following example of a cross-cultural management study to detail this second step. Romani (2008) explores recurrent critical incidents between

Japanese and Swedish medical researchers in their collaborations. Many recurrent critical incidents are related to superior and subordinate relationships; using the two analytical processes presented in the previous section, we obtain separate analyses that are first summarized and then placed in light of each other.

For Sweden, the positivist content analysis of the interviews of Japanese researchers shows recurrent (and mirrored) critical incidents linked to aspects of the cultural dimensions power distance and masculinity (Hofstede, 1980). The descriptions of the nature of relationships and the leadership styles associated with the Swedish research environments corroborate the characteristics of low scores on both dimensions (e.g., delegation, flat hierarchy, cooperation, and solidarity). In consequence, the positivist analysis develops Kulturstandards and labels them as these two cultural dimensions. The interpretive content analysis of the interviews of Swedish researchers talking about hierarchical relationships underscores the repeated references made to their attachment to the values of equality. This is similar to the sensemaking structures for leadership styles revealed in Abrahamsson (2007) and Holmberg and Åkerblom (2006). A resulting Kulturstandard is labeled *democracy*.

For Japan, the positivist content analysis highlights references made by the Swedish interviewees to the cultural dimension power distance, however, this time expressing a high score of this dimension (e.g., directive leadership, formality, and high hierarchies). The interpretive analysis brings to light that interviewed Japanese researchers interweave their superior—the hierarchical system—and the group of researchers to which they belong when they discuss their views on hierarchy. This framework is similar to the one revealed by Nakane (1970) on the hierarchical organization of social interactions in Japan, and the interdependence of individuals to a group and a superior (Doi, 1973). This association indicates a Kulturstandard that is labeled *group-hierarchy*.

*Enrichment of the positivist analysis.* The positivist analysis of Swedish Kulturstandards does not explain why power distance and masculinity—two separate predefined constructs—appear simultaneously in the sole theme of hierarchical relationships. In view of the interpretive analyses, the theme of democracy and the interconnection between hierarchy and group indicates that the two Kulturstandards might, in fact, be related. Power distance is linked to the leadership style of the superior and masculinity to the type of environment in which this style is enacted. Explaining this interconnection enriches our views of the two constructs that are separate symbolic generalizations.

Similarly, the positivist analysis of Japanese Kulturstandards remains silent on masculinity, although this dimension is the one with the strongest possible score discrepancy between Japan and Sweden (Hofstede, 1980). Why are there not recurrent critical incidents linked to masculinity? In light of the interpretive analyses, it seems that Swedish researchers place a strong emphasis on values such as equality and democracy. Could some Kulturstandards (in this case, power distance) be dominant in the experience that Swedes have of their environment? The positivist analysis is enriched by the interpretive one, which suggests a possible hierarchy of importance between the cultural dimensions' constructs, independently of their scores.

In this example, the positivist analysis is enriched in its symbolic generalizations of cultural dimensions. These conceptually separated constructs seem to be expressed interdependently and in contingency with external variables. This triggers new research questions because their scores are not a sufficient predictor: when and which cultural dimensions will matter most in a bi-cultural situation?

*Enrichment of the interpretive analysis.* The interpretive analysis of Swedish Kulturstandards reveals that interviewees have a strong meaning association between the use of formal titles and an unequal society. Contemporary Swedes tend to look back to their former society, when the use of titles was common, as an unequal one that was modernized and democratized by the Social Democrat political shift post-1950s. A new light is shed by the positivist analysis, which emphasizes that Swedes tend to praise a nonmasculine society, that is to say, values such as quality of life and noncompetition. The interpretive analysis is enriched by a wider perspective brought by the positivist analysis that

**Table 1.** Distinctions and Connections Between the Positivist and Interpretive Analyses Using the Kulturstandard Method

		Positivism	Interpretivism
Metaphysical Parts		<p>Researchers' goal is to predict and explain the influence of Kulturstandards on action. Investigations are to discover underlying patterns (of the influence of culture on management) through their superficial expression in behaviors or attitudes. Positivist ontology, realism, and objectivism</p> <p>Investigation of social regularities: the social order perceptible through superficial expressions Focus on similar types of critical incidents and the search for associated Kulturstandards</p>	<p>Researchers are to understand (verstehen) and interpret the culture of the interviewees with Kulturstandards. Investigations are to discover underlying patterns (of culture) through their superficial expression in sense-making processes and interpretations. Subjectivist ontology (e.g., nominalism)</p>
Investigation	Interview	Semi-structured interview and demographic questionnaire	Semi-structured interview
	Sample selection	Representative	Maximum differentiation
	Involvement of researchers	Data collection and model elaboration should be exempt of the influence and the biases of the researchers and their methods	Use of subjectivity and reflexivity to reach understanding
	Views on knowledge	Verified hypothesis or theoretical frameworks are established as (scientific) laws	Consensus (intersubjectivity) in the interpretation constitutes a temporal (scientific) knowledge
Symbolic generalizations	Theoretical framework	Predefined. Reliance on existing cultural dimensions framework and other cultural studies to elaborate the Kulturstandards External validation with the use of experts	Emergent. Kulturstandards are first developed inductively and then compared to previous research Internal validation with reporting to the interviewees, external validation with the use of experts (persons or literature)
	Analytical process	Convergent with the elaboration of Kulturstandards and the clarification of a relationship between culture and management	Convergent with the elaboration of Kulturstandards; divergent with the interpretation of the societal culture of the interviewees
	Model of analysis	Search for causality of Kulturstandards on action	Associative. Underlines similarity in the sensemaking processes revealed in the critical incidents and other spheres of society
Instances of exemplars		Hofstede (1980); House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta (2004); Thomas (1996b)	Geertz (1973), Weick (1995)
Values		<p>Predictability (of the influence of culture on management)</p> <p>Generalization of the forms of influence (Kulturstandards)</p> <p>Objectivism (cultural neutrality of the frameworks)</p> <p>Replicability (of the link between Kulturstandards and management practices)</p> <p>Causation (of Kulturstandards on management)</p>	<p>Trustworthiness (of the analysis and to the informants)</p> <p>Intersubjectivity (in validation of the theoretical developments)</p> <p>Contextuality (in knowledge development)</p> <p>Interpretivism (in revealing culture by symbols)</p> <p>Reflexivity (of the researcher during the research process)</p>
		Rigor, reliability, systematic inquiry, traceability, consistency of the scientific investigation, and model development (data analysis, coding, statistical analysis, or systematic construct development)	

indicates that the Kulturstandard democracy does not refer to a preferred political system; rather, it is a form of social interaction between the ones holding power and the group.

The interpretive analysis reveals Japanese researchers' meanings associations between the superior and the group of subordinates. They describe two very different types of superiors and leadership styles (directive and demanding and their opposites); however, they associate hard work with both. The positivist analysis specifying that the Japanese context is a masculine one resolves this apparent contradiction. Leadership styles may be different, yet they have to be adapted to the same competitive reality. The consideration of a broader view (with the symbolic generalizations of the cultural dimensions) enriches the interpretive analysis.

Symbolic generalizations used in the positivist paradigm counterbalance the limitations of the interpretive analysis. This triggers new research questions, for example, on the relationship between systems of sensemaking and their link to action, because two distinct interpretations of leadership lead to the same behavior of employees (hard work).

*Venue for interaction.* The two analyses enter in interaction on the similar themes of superior-subordinate relationships, because they both pay attention to the regularities of critical incidents on this theme. Their connection on metaphysical parts (study of social regularities) enables a shared topic of conversation. Their symbolic generalizations and exemplars lead their analyses of critical incidents to separate, but mutually enriching views (see Discussion and Conclusion). The enriched positivist analysis shows that it is not only about the unequal distribution of power (Kulturstandard power distance); it is also how this power is accepted in the environment (masculinity). The enriched interpretive analysis reveals that it is not only about meanings associated with leadership styles (directive and demanding and their opposites), it also concerns their fit into the competitive reality (hard work). Both enriched analyses stress the link between power and the environment in which it is exerted. They highlight how and why the power of the leader is accepted, that is to say the leader's authority. The theme of the leader's authority is a shift in the conversation. In sum, in light of the diverging symbolic generalizations, and because they were connected by a shared focus on social regularities (metaphysical parts), the analyses revealed another path of study. They showed that the leader's authority is a theme that complements both analyses; they revealed a venue for interaction: interplay.

### *Analyses in Interplay*

Can the framework of leader's authority be a venue for interplay? Can it respect both types of analyses and provide additional insights? These are the conditions and expected contributions of interplays.

The notion of authority encompasses a form of organization including hierarchical interactions and the normative regulation of power (see, e.g., Scott, 2006; Scott, Dornbush, Bushing, & Laing, 1967; Zelditch & Walker, 1984). Leader's authority associates the general theme of power with the particular (emic) theme of legitimacy. Legitimacy can be termed particular in the sense that it refers to normative belief systems that constrain and support the expression of power. Normative belief systems can be viewed as the cultural expression of a group.

The framework of leader's authority combines the notion of legitimacy to that of power, thereby, including the particular local support of legitimacy that makes the leader's style accepted. Combining these notions underlines the tension between an etic aspect (leadership and power in organizations) and the particularities of its local expression in a legitimate form (normative belief systems). In other words, the framework of a leader's authority can hold two distinct symbolic generalizations: the predefined and "positivist" one of power and the emergent and "interpretive" one of legitimacy.

At the same time it provides a venue for interaction, the framework of a leader's authority does not force analyses into new paradigm components. Both types of analyses can maintain their



integrity. They can study a leader's authority in their respective paradigms. Interplay provides a venue for interaction where separate analyses can interact and push their investigation further. For example, this interplay provides additional insights into the analyses of the critical incidents between Swedish and Japanese medical researchers. The framework of a leader's authority explicates the observed connection between power distance and masculinity in interviewees' description of the Swedish context. Power distance is based upon the acceptance of an unequal repartition of power, but for what social purpose? Masculinity indicates that it is toward achievement, whereas femininity implies that it is toward concerns for the social environment. When power distance designates the exercise of power, masculinity refers to its legitimacy. The two Kulturstandards are, in fact, elements of a broader frame: authority. The Swedish and Japanese interviewees refer to systems of authority: where the Swedish scientists express their attachment to a modern/democratic type of authority and where the Japanese interviewees refer to two coexisting types of authority.

In sum, when the analyses are in interaction in the "leader's authority" interplay, they go beyond a mutual enrichment (as in the previous step); they reach a different level of understanding and analysis. The interplay shifts the analytical focus from Kulturstandards to the theoretical framework of a leader's authority. This framework can hold in tension different paradigmatic analysis and, thus, provide a venue for interaction between them.

### *Theoretical Contributions to Existing Research*

The leader's authority interplay provides a new analytical framework that brings novel insights into other research (e.g., positivist cross-cultural leadership studies). Extant research on the relationship between power distance and empowerment highlights that employees tend to show aversion to empowerment (see, e.g., Carl, Gupta, & Javidan, 2004; Hui, Au, & Fock, 2004) in environments with high power distance. Furthermore, in an environment of high power distance (in contrast to one of low power distance), subordinates are, for example, more reluctant to challenge their superiors and more fearful of expressing disagreement (Adsit, London, Crom, & Jones, 1997), want more guidance from their hierarchy, appreciate "status-conscious," "elitist," and "domineering" attributes in leaders, want less participative leadership, and see directive leaders as more effective (Dickson, den Hartog, & Mitchelson, 2003, pp. 737-768). The description is compelling; however, it does not answer the question "why"? Why do individuals in an environment of high power distance not want delegation, whereas delegation is desirable in a setting of low power distance? The answers that are frequently provided are tautologies: Individuals in high power distance environments do not want empowerment because they are "accustomed to taking orders from their supervisors and may neither expect nor desire to be delegated" (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006, p. 266).

In light of the framework of a leader's authority where positivist and interpretive studies can enter in interplay, it is possible to explain the reluctance to accept empowerment. If employees view their organization or the social organization of their business environment in light of a traditional type of authority, empowerment can be seen as illegitimate because it is initiated by individuals rather than through traditional forms such as norms and practices in use. In addition, Weber (1911/1978) explains that in a traditional type of authority, status is ascriptive rather than based on achievement. This type of authority does not promote the development of generally applicable rules (independent of the context) and, thus, enables personal appropriation of power. Authority is pervasive because there is a lack of specified spheres of competence. These three characteristics are reflected in the cultural dimensions of achievement ascription, universalism particularism (Trompenaars, 1993), as well as Laurent's (1983) perceptions of authority as instrumental or personal.

Zander (1997, 2002) tests the relationship between cultural dimensions and empowerment across countries. She notes the correlation between preference for empowerment and the cultural dimensions of achievement, universalism, and authority as instrumental; however, the connections are left

unexplained when, in fact, they give strong support to the present claim that traditional authority explains employee aversion to empowerment. Zander shows that empowerment is not desired in an environment characterized by ascription and specific and personal authority (characteristics of traditional authority). The leader's authority interplay can, thus, provide a theoretical framework to the hitherto repeatedly acknowledged, but not yet explicated, correlations between some leadership styles and cultural dimensions.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Review articles (e.g., Boyacigiller et al., 2004; Redding, 1994) argue that further theory development can be achieved by considering the paradigmatic diversity of cross-cultural management research, thus, not only combining etic and emic approaches, but different paradigms. In view of the difficulty of bi-paradigm studies and the lack of clear methodological examples, few researchers have ventured down this path. This article provides a detailed presentation of a bi-paradigm methodology. It explicitly addresses the challenges linked to multiparadigm studies and proposes a detailed methodology to conduct bi-paradigm interplay that leads to theory development.

In contrast to previous studies of paradigm interplay (e.g., Lewis and Grimes, 1999; Schultz & Hatch, 1996), we have deliberately limited our methodology to a bi-paradigm interplay and the necessary knowledge of only two paradigms. Schultz and Hatch (1996) also illustrate bi-paradigm interplay; however, they map the connections between the two paradigms using a third one that they call "postmodern." We demonstrate that interplay can be performed with (only) knowledge of the investigated paradigms, by showing that the paradigmatic components stressed by Kuhn (1970) are already sufficient to reveal connections and tensions. This makes interplay strategy more accessible.

We offer a methodological presentation of strategy interplay, using the framework of the Kulturstandard method as a convenient illustration. In each paradigm, the goal of the investigation, the practicality of interviews, and the analyses are detailed to highlight how they differ, for example, in their symbolic generalizations and use of exemplar, and how they present some connections in their values and metaphysical parts. When multiparadigm studies use very distinct methods of data collection and analytical levels (see, e.g., Hassard, 1991), the outcome of their combination is not always explicit. However, when studies concentrate on one material (with one primary methodological approach), then the juxtaposition leads to more immediate insights (see Alvesson, 1996). This is a major advantage of using the Kulturstandard method, because it enables interpretive and positivist investigations for the collection and analysis of interview material, on a similar level of analysis. An additional advantage is that it includes a set of well-known methods (neither new nor novel) such as semistructured interviews or the focus on critical incidents: This facilitates its adoption. The example of the Kulturstandard method shows how accessible and feasible a bi-paradigm study can be. Other methods presenting the same advantages can equally serve paradigm interplay.

Previous research on paradigm interplay does not explicate the methodological process to reach interplay; rather, it presents several interplays and details their implications. In contrast, we center on only one interplay and elaborate the process of interplay as threefold: The first step is a separate analysis in each paradigm (such as in the parallel strategy); the second step places both analyses in light of each other, and reveals venues for interactions; the third step explores the respectful and fruitful interaction of the analyses. These three steps explicit how to conduct a paradigm interplay.

Performing first separate analyses in the positivist and interpretive paradigms appear to us as a necessary condition to fully respect, acknowledge, and understand each paradigm. Drafting separate analyses was not done in previous studies of multiparadigm interplay (e.g., Lewis & Grimes, 1999; Schultz & Hatch, 1996; Ybema, 1996). However, we believe that the active use of each paradigm—not only data coding but also analysis and draft of the analysis—is an important step in actively

understanding each paradigm and being able to later reach a respectful position in interplay. Brocklesby (1997) also recommends this active use of each paradigm for multiparadigm research.

The second step toward interplay is the contrasting of the two different analyses. Placing the analyses in light of each other does not here serve the purpose of completing one analysis with another (such as in Lee, 1991); rather, it is to enrich both performed analyses (such as in e.g., Bradshaw-Camball & Murray, 1991; Morris et al., 1999). Unlike other studies, the finality of this second step is not enriched analyses; it is a new research venue. For example, in Morris et al. (1999), the etic and emic studies on justice judgment are combined and form an integrated framework that provides an enriched answer to their research question. In contrast, this second step of the strategy serves the purpose of revealing a venue for interplay. This mutual enrichment of the analyses is not for the development of an integrated and richer answer to the research question; it is to shift the focus of the analyses to interplay.

The third step explores the venue indicated by the simultaneous consideration of both enriched analyses. Interplay operates a shift of the analytical focus of each separate analysis, because they go beyond their initial ambition to identify Kulturstandards, to the consideration of a theoretical framework. The interplay turns the researchers' attention to authority and suggests investigating a leader's authority in a theoretical framework allowing for positivist and interpretive components of the paradigms. The interplay is successful if it can respect both types of analyses and if it generates new contributions. This was the case for both of our examples of the Swedish–Japanese interaction of medical researchers and the broad field of positivist cross-cultural leadership studies. Interplay points to new research paths and contributions, it fosters innovativeness.

In sum, we provide more than a theoretical contribution from a bi-paradigm study to cross-cultural management research. We propose a methodology for interplay and explicate this in detail. The novelty of this methodology is the illustration that the knowledge of two paradigms is enough to conduct interplay, provided researchers use Kuhn's paradigm components. We show that these components can reveal connections and differences between paradigms and, therefore, between analyses. When many associate multiparadigm studies with the mastery of unfamiliar methodologies, we demonstrate that a simple method composed of well-known techniques is suitable. To complement hitherto conceptual views on interplay, we clearly define interplay and then explain a concrete and detailed process toward paradigm interplay. We assert that this process occurs in three steps: separate analysis, analyses in light of each other, and, finally, in interplay. Unlike some other bi-paradigm studies, the interplay strategy is not to provide an enriched analysis; rather, it is to show the path toward new research questions or a theoretical framework. In brief, the value of this methodology is in its accessibility, feasibility, explicitness, and innovativeness.

As a final comment, we would like to highlight that not only performing, but also writing a multiparadigm study, is not an easy exercise. The researchers need to adopt distinct languages in the separate analyses, for example. But, what language is to be used when distinct paradigms are brought together, as with interplay? Our previous attempts to draft this contribution with two languages proved to be unclear to readers in the interpretive and the positivist paradigms. The lesson learned was that it is easier to explain interplay if one focuses on one audience at a time. We chose to adopt a positivist language, mainly because of its prevalence in cross-cultural management studies, and the repeated calls for more multiparadigm studies as concluding comments of reviews of positivist cross-cultural management research. The positivist language is either used by, or familiar to, a larger audience in cross-cultural management research than the interpretive one. In addition, we believe that presenting multiparadigm interplay in this language is a newer form of contribution than in the interpretive language. Using the positivist language, we do not aim to signal that it should have primacy, but we do hope to contribute to more diversity in the future, by convincing more cross-cultural management researchers to use the multiparadigm strategy of interplay.

## Notes

1. The term Kulturstandard encapsulates the meanings of cultural normality (i.e., something in line with a habit: a common and shared way of thinking and acting). The German term standard conveys the sense of a cognitive and behavioral norm. We are aware that Kulturstandard has hitherto been translated as “culture standard” in the English publications of researchers using this method. We believe, however, that the German terminology is more suitable, because “standard” in English has different semantic associations than it does in German.

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