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# Cross-Cultural Management Studies: State of the Field in the Four Research Paradigms\*

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*Abstract:* Cross-cultural management research is often confined to the positivist tradition, which is archetypically illustrated by the seminal work of Hofstede. However, this gives an incomplete overview of the field to which three additional research paradigms contribute: interpretivist, postmodern, and critical. Our ambition is to raise awareness of the presence of multiple paradigms in cross-cultural management research. This meta-theoretical positioning allows researchers to consider the insights and contributions from the different paradigms. We aim to achieve this by presenting a brief overview of the state of the field in each paradigm, thus, stressing areas of studies that enrich our understanding of the interaction between culture and management (at the national, organizational, interpersonal, and individual levels). We then highlight the specific contributions of these four paradigms, drawing especially upon the postmodern and critical works, as they have been repeatedly overlooked in reviews. The article concludes by mentioning how more interactions between the paradigms can be developed and can lead to further knowledge development.

**Keywords:** Cross-cultural management research; paradigm; interpretivist; postmodern; critical; knowledge development

## INTRODUCTION

The majority of research conducted in the field of cross-cultural management has long been acknowledged to adhere to the positivist paradigm (Boyacigiller and Adler 1991; Jack et al.

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**TABLE 1**  
 Prototypical Discursive Features of the Four Paradigms

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Positivist</i>	<i>Interpretivist</i>	<i>Postmodern</i>	<i>Critical</i>
Basic Goals	Law-like relationships among objects	Display regularities and shared meanings	Reclaim conflict	Unmask domination
Method	Nomothetic	Hermeneutics	Deconstruction, genealogy	Ideology critique
Problem Addressed	Inefficiency, disorder	Meaninglessness, illegitimacy	Marginalization	Domination, consent
Concern with Communication	Fidelity, influence	Group affirmation	Discursive closure	Misrecognition, distortion
Mood	Optimistic	Friendly	Playful	Suspicious
Social Fear	Disorder	Depersonalization	Totalization	Authority

Extracts from Deetz (1996, 199).

2008) with the major focus on the measurement of culture primarily through cultural dimensions (Taras, Rowney, and Steel 2009). However, cross-cultural management is performed in other paradigmatic traditions (Mahadevan 2017).

We aim to present a more inclusive and balanced overview of the field, briefly reviewing contributions from four major research paradigms: positivist, interpretivist, postmodern, and critical. We broadly refer to “paradigm” as the shared ontological assumptions and epistemology of a research community and its scientific production. In other words, a scientific paradigm can be understood as distinctive views on reality, a distinctive set of cognitive interests, theoretical frameworks, research questions, and methods used by scientists in a dialogue about knowledge development. We adopt the Tsoukas and Knudsen (2003) classification and terminology of paradigms, and we use Deetz (1996) to illustrate a few key distinctive features between the paradigms (see Table 1).

Reviewing four research paradigms presents real challenges, not only in terms of the amount of significant works of reference, but also in terms of the inherent differences between the paradigms. Considering the limited length of an article, we address the first challenge by privileging references to articles that are literature reviews and by focusing exclusively on a few core topics at four major levels of study: national, organizational, interpersonal, and individual. The second challenge is more problematic: each research paradigm has preferred levels of analysis, research questions, and vocabulary. Therefore, which paradigm should we adopt for a consistent review? Our ambition is to raise awareness of the presence and strengths of the multiple research paradigms in cross-cultural management; therefore, we have chosen to draft this review in a way that is sensitive to positivist concerns and vocabulary—for example, using the term *cross-cultural* rather than *intercultural*—since we believe those to be the most familiar and understandable to most readers. We purposely devote more attention to postmodern and critical studies in order to compensate for the reduced exposure these paradigms of cross-cultural management research have received thus far.

Our second ambition is to encourage researchers to consider the insights and contributions from other research paradigms to further the development of the field. This reflects our beliefs that research paradigms and epistemologies can be multiple, juxtaposed, and that multi-paradigm research is possible—and even preferable. In consequence, we conclude with a

discussion of the possible ways multi-paradigmatic studies can be performed and can contribute to new research questions and further knowledge development.

## POSITIVIST STUDIES

The positivist paradigm in cross-cultural research defines cultures as self-contained, separate, and stable phenomena comprised of distinct characteristics that can be observed, measured, and manipulated (Yeganeh et al. 2004). Culture is typically understood as a system of values mapped in cultural dimensions (Hofstede 1980; Schwartz 1994; House et al. 2004). Comparing national scores on these dimensions and management practices across countries help analyze and understand differences in management behavior. Requests for research on more culture-specific values as well as the integration of multiple contextual variables for national analyses have been recently raised (Tsui, Nifadkar, and Amy 2007).

### Studies at the national, organizational, interpersonal, and individual levels of analysis

From the onset, the positivist approach to culture from a cross-cultural management perspective has been concerned with comparisons of various modes of management (Sackmann and Phillips 2004). Hofstede's seminal study showed quantifiable relationships between national culture (value dimensions) and management and organizational practices, thereby establishing a long-lasting focus on national culture (Kirkman, Low, and Gibson 2006; Nardon and Steer 2009). Much attention has been given recently to studies that focus on specific cultural environments, such as the United Arab Emirates (Kemp and Williams 2013), Asia (Chen, Watkins, and Martin 2013), or Africa (Cronjé 2011). Additionally, works by Thomas (e.g., Thomas et al. 2003) developed the *Kulturstandard* method for qualitative bi-cultural (national) comparisons, examining behavioral rather than value differences.

Studies at the level of the organization have investigated aspects such as the role of culture in mergers and acquisitions (M&A). Particular emphasis has been placed upon the influence of cultural distance, or the degree of difference between national cultures of merging organizations (Kogut and Singh 1988). Researchers continue to identify convincing patterns (Weber, Tarba, and Reichel 2009) and propose further developments, for example, the perceived status of national cultures in interactions in M&A (Yildiz 2014). The complex nature of M&A and the various influencing factors mediating the role of culture continue to provide rich opportunities for investigation (Dauber 2012).

Hofstede's seminal work inspired the study of a wide range of topics at the interpersonal level, including leadership, conflict management, group process, and more (Kirkman et al. 2006). For example, studies of multi-national teams examine the effects of diversity at a team level (Stahl et al. 2010); they also look at how culture influences perceptions of trust and communication (Mockaitis, Rose, and Zettinig 2012), efficacy (Hardin, Fuller, Davison 2007), leadership (Zander and Butler 2010), or how it impacts virtual management (Saarinen and Piekkari 2015).

At the individual level, research investigates how individuals effectively manoeuvre in cross-cultural environments. While some people pay attention to bi-culturalists (Brannen and Thomas 2010; Lee 2010; Hanek, Lee, and Brannen 2014), others work on skills development. As a complement to the literature on training (Littrell et al. 2006), this field investigates the concept of cultural intelligence (Earley and Ang 2003) by addressing individual capabilities to effectively adapt to a new cultural setting. Furthermore, the concept of global mind-set has been suggested (Gupta and Govindarajan 2002), which puts more emphasis on (managerial) capabilities to integrate across cultures. The concept's key contribution can be seen in the introduction of "metacognition," understood as the ability to be aware of one's own thinking and learning activities.

## INTERPRETIVE STUDIES

Shared sense-making of experience stands at the heart of interpretive studies of culture (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Geertz 1973). Cultures are seen as interpretive frameworks that are shared, within a group, by those with a common socialization; yet, they also differ in their social positions and opinions (D'Iribarne 2009). Attention is, thus, given to meanings and sense-making, where a focus on interactions is usually favored. Inspired by the interactionist school, communication studies, and anthropology (see Hall 1959), interpretive researchers appear to prefer the label "intercultural management" and tend to use (emic) inductive qualitative studies and sometimes ethnography (Headland, Pike, and Harris 1990; Primecz, Romani, and Sackmann 2011; Gertsen, S oderberg, and Z olner 2012).

### National and organizational meaning systems, interpersonal interactions, and individuals

A stream of research investigates national business systems (Whitley 1999) and varieties of capitalism (Hall and Soskice 2001), thus, studying the relationship between systems of meaning and national institutions (Redding 2005; Witt and Redding 2009). The work by D'Iribarne (1989, 2009) reveals underlying historical rooted assumptions that influence national management practices and the use of key semantic references such as "the contract" in the United States of America, "consensus" in the Netherlands or "honor" in France. He inspired studies that demonstrate specific national shared meaning systems used in relation to management. These studies cover many countries and continents, as depicted in Chanlat, Davel, and Dupuis (2013). Other examples include Kamdem (2002) for Cameroon, Joly (2004) for Latin America, Segal (2009) for France, and Chevrier (2009) for Switzerland. They show the culture specific and emic importance of diverse meanings and interpretations of alleged universal concepts such as leadership, empowerment, or quality.

Studies have investigated at the level of the organization, for instance, the difficulty of meaningful interpretation of signs in international communication and information processes (Holden 2002). One stream of research investigates how organizational practices such as

planning, decisions, and control in international companies result from negotiated meanings between the different companies involved (Brannen and Salk 2000; Clausen 2007). Another stream of study explores the local reinterpretation of management processes and tools, for example, during the transfer of corporate values and code of conducts or knowledge management systems (Brannen 2004; Barmeyer and Davoine 2011; Gertsen and Zølner 2012).

Interpersonal interactions are viewed as a system of social interactions with negotiated contextual meanings (Søderberg and Holden 2002; Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009). In France and Germany, intercultural management studies tend to investigate bi-cultural interpersonal interactions (Barmeyer and Davoine 2014). Findings show how individuals in interactions tend to mobilize their respective cultural meaning systems to make sense of practices (e.g., delegation) in radically different ways. Works on bi-cultural teams—for example, in Vietnam or Cameroon (e.g., Henry 2007; Chevrier 2011)—tend to illuminate how actors need to develop a new (joint) meaning in their collaboration in order to be successful.

Very few studies were initially concerned with the individual levels of analysis since the interpersonal or intercultural levels appear to be the dominant areas of investigation. However, Pierre (2015) identifies the emergence of an interpretive stream of studies that investigates how representatives of minority groups in a society (e.g., expatriates or migrants) build or develop a cultural identity at work in response to, and distinct from, the professional identity of majority groups (Fernandez, Mutabazi, and Pierre 2006; Kim 2007; see Pierre 2013). Furthermore, some interpretive studies can be found, which focus on individual intercultural competence that link individual competences to context (Dreyer and Höbller 2011).

## POSTMODERN STUDIES

In order to guide the reader who is not familiar with postmodernism, we offer here a brief introduction. Similar to interpretive work, studies inspired by postmodernism emphasize a local understanding. They value context-specific rich descriptions of cases, while including stronger assertions on ambiguity, fluidity, and constant transformation, as well as immanent contradiction. Another distinctive trait of postmodern studies is their focus on language, texts, and discourses (see Derrida 1967; Foucault 1977), as they do not see texts as a simple mirror of reality; they see the world and organizations as a series of texts performing reality instead.

The postmodern approach dispenses with grand narratives (Lyotard 1979) and single explanations to celebrate multiple meanings. Hofstede's (1980) or GLOBE's (House et al. 2004) theories are examples of what can be seen as a totalitarian attempt to describe the world with omni-competent answers. Postmodern researchers often challenge the concept of national culture, which they view as a narrative (Vaara 2002; Tienari et al. 2005; Jack and Lorbecki 2007): a construction that promotes a stable and rather homogeneous understanding (McSweeney 2009). The commonly used construct of national culture is said to erase tension, paradox, ambiguity, and even the juxtapositions that are part of everyday life. Culture is studied in the juxtapositions of symbols, people, issues, policies, and actions that are sometimes poorly understood, and are perhaps even random. All participate in the development of what actors refer to as "culture" (see Martin 1992).

### Studies of culture's national and organizational (grand) narratives

Magala (2009) approaches cross-cultural management explicitly from postmodern stances and writes about contemporary society as consisting of “networked, mobile and hyper-communicative individuals” (Magala 2009, 45). This work illustrates the change in focus from abstract society (scientific-rational pattern) towards the intermediate, interactive, and organizational realities that surround us, thus leaving little meaning to the concept of national culture.

Fougère and Moulettes (2007) apply the deconstruction method to excerpts of textbooks to show how power and inequalities are hidden behind many of the seemingly neutral positivist presentations of cultural framework models. Prasad (2009) applies Foucault's genealogy method to highlight the hegemony of the West-centric assumption of universality and search for representation of non-Western peoples, especially those on the periphery and those of systematically oppressed groups. Jack and Lorbiecki (2007) also use the Foucauldian theoretical frame and discover that (rigid) national culture constructs are obstacles, rather than helpful analytical categories in the investigation of Britishness.

Narrative approaches have been adopted to study the discourses of managers and how they explain the success and especially the failure of M&A (Vaara 2002). Similarly, Tienari et al. (2005) show in their analysis of how Danish, Swedish, and Finish male executives talk about culture that national identities at the organizational level were constructed to explain and justify the exclusion of women from the top management of this multi-national corporation. Riad (2005) goes further, investigating regimes of truth in organizational culture and shows, with a Foucauldian analysis, how discourse naturalizes inequalities (that is to say, presents them as “normal”) during post-merger organizational integration.

### Studies at the interpersonal and individual level of analysis

In keeping with postmodernism, studies at the interpersonal level question the fixed nature of cultural settings. Barinaga (2007, 319) uses a discourse analysis to show that individuals were treated in a culturally heterogeneous group as “dopes of their culture,” which helped group members make sense of what went on among them. The national cultures of individuals were to justify decisions and give the group a *raison d'être*. Tukiainen (2015) also applies discourse analysis to investigate a Finnish–Polish cooperation, revealing that alleged cultural differences reflect power struggles between the two parties.

As Magala (2009) underlines, individuals with dual cultural identities are not passive members of the given cultural groups; rather, they are autonomous self-reflexive subjects and agents. Individuals can mix or hybridize cultural ambiguities, cultural multiplicity, multiple national identities and multiple value systems, like an “experienced disc jockey” (Magala 2009, 927). This kind of postmodern multiple identity system is not only true for bi-cultural or multi-cultural individuals; it is the case for all of us, since several identity categories play a role in every individual's life with the given context and circumstances mobilizing certain identity parts to dominate the moment.

## CRITICAL STUDIES

For those readers less familiar with critical studies, we offer here a short outline. Studies in the critical paradigm share the emphasis on the relationship between power, knowledge, and theory with research that results from a postmodern inspiration. However, in contrast to postmodernism, critical theories are inclined to draw upon grand narratives, because they focus on power dichotomies, oppression, and reproduction of the status quo, investigating how power structures (e.g., social, economic, military, and political) influence management (Jack et al. 2011; see Alvesson and Willmott 2012). Critical researchers tend to see their role as activists—not as bystanders, as in positivist and interpretive approaches—and may engage in critical performativity (Spicer, Alvesson, and Kärreman 2009) and the promotion of silenced voices (Jack and Westwood 2009; Miike 2010).

First and foremost, culture is considered a narrative and discursive construction, yet with a stronger focus on domination and resistance than in postmodernism. For example, inspired by the work of Stuart Hall in the tradition of cultural studies (e.g., Morley and Chen 1996), researchers approach culture as meaning struggles: a place of contested meanings between different cultural groups in a relationship of unequal power (Sorrells 2013; Romani and Claes 2014). The investigation of culture as a narrative and discursive construction leads researchers to study, for example, the metaphors used to talk about organizational culture (Alvesson 2002), the form of literary production about a given culture or region of the world (e.g., Said 1978), and the impact upon today's management in the chosen region (Hartt et al. 2012).

### Studies at the national, organizational, interpersonal, and individual levels of analysis

Studies that consider the discursive construction of national culture examine how, for example, national culture is taught (Tipton 2008) or how theories of culture developed (e.g., cultural dimension frameworks), as well as the power structures reproduced by these constructions. Some argue that the definition of differences builds upon Western types of categorizations (Lowe 2001), yet presents them as “objective” and “scientific” (Ailon 2008). Such Western defined objectivity tends to rely upon colonial discourses (Westwood 2006), which leads to dichotomies, exclusion, and denigration of cultural differences. Similar definitions of cultural differences in management are made using essentialization (for example, personal attributes are associated to nationalities) and stereotyping. For example, employees hide power inequalities and struggles for influence under the cover of national cultural differences or stereotypes (Ybema and Byun 2009; Mahadevan 2011, 2017).

Critical studies offer a context and power-sensitive approach to the management of organizations (Boussebaa and Morgan 2014). For instance, Bouquet and Birkinshaw (2008) study how low power actors gain influence and centrality in organizations. Researchers with a post-colonial sympathy study the legacy of colonialism or its perpetuation (neo-colonialism) through MNCs, international regulatory bodies, English supremacy, or even business school



education. Examples include how organizations favor certain forms of knowledge flows from center to periphery (Rittenhofer 2011); how management practices are locally transformed (Yousfi 2014), what form of English is used at work (Boussebaa, Sinha, and Gabriel 2014), or how expatriates from “developing” countries are managed differently to expatriates from “developed” countries (Gertsen et al. 2012; Muhr and Salem 2013).

Critical intercultural communication research (Nakayama and Halualani 2010) aims to understand the role of power and contextual constraints on communication between different groups. Historical, economical, institutional, and political forces at play in interpersonal communication can be hidden under the label of “cultural differences.” For example, Cheng (2010) reflects upon how cross-cultural training was used by the Taiwanese management of their factory in Mexico to increase control over the work and the bodies of the Mexican (female) employees, and how the employees developed strategies of resistance. Cultural disparities between Mexican and Taiwanese employees went hand in hand with differences in hierarchy, gender, historical, and political inequality, as well as disparate economic status and (un)attainable social positions.

Critical and post-colonial research tends to study cultural identity through metaphors of displacement, struggle, and resistance, at the intersection of nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, and social class (Özkazanç-Pan 2015). “Identity and identification can be seen as both voluntary and imposed, both embraced and struggled over and with, both rejected and claimed” (Nakayama and Halualani 2010, 41). For example, Moore (2016) studies how individuals strategically play with their multiple identities. She emphasizes how Taiwanese respondents gain access to knowledge (and power) networks by sometimes identifying with “not-mainland” groups, or building upon their identity as “Chinese” to benefit from China’s positive manufacturing reputation. Her study reveals how individuals’ identities partake in power games, for access to knowledge and influence, using institutional, industrial, or geopolitical dimensions.

## DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE PARADIGMS

The previous sections gave a concise overview of the field of cross-cultural management across four paradigms. We believe the purpose of this contribution is already served by this modest presentation: multiple voices are heard, and their unique contributions to the field have been broadly delineated (see Table 2). For example, despite the restricted presentation of studies in the positivist paradigm, the main contribution from these works is sketched: culture is tangible and measurable, the impact of culture on management is clear, and individuals can develop skills to address these differences. Similarly, contributions outlined from the succinct review of interpretivist studies reveal the importance of local (historic and political) culture’s meaning systems on management, how interpersonal interactions depend upon the negotiation of these interpretations, and how intercultural interactions lead to emerging interpretations. As the postmodern and critical paradigms have been repeatedly overlooked in cross-cultural management reviews, we highlight here their most distinctive contributions.

TABLE 2  
Four Paradigms in Cross-Cultural Management

	<i>Positivist</i>	<i>Interpretive</i>	<i>Postmodern</i>	<i>Critical</i>
Agenda	Efficiency of cross-cultural situations	Ease of intercultural interactions and misunderstandings	Assertion of the multiplicity and flexibility of culture	Unmask domination done under the cover of 'culture'
Typical Concern	Impact of national culture on management practices	Identification of cultural meanings used at work	Discursive or narrative constructions of culture in management practices	(re)production of power inequalities with the use of "cultural differences" in management
Distinctive Investigation Method	Large-scale quantitative studies and questionnaires	In-depth qualitative method, ethnography, and idiographic studies	Narrative, discourse analysis, genealogy, and deconstruction	Critical discourse analysis and critical ethnography
Distinctive Contributions to CCM	Setting the agenda of culture in management, measurability and comparability of cultures, impact on management	Emic and local knowledge, context-rich understanding of interactions	Cultural dimension frameworks and cultural differences as narrative construction, performativity of language	Hidden power structures at play in our approach to culture and cultural differences

### Contributions from the postmodern and critical paradigms

Three major contributions to the field of cross-cultural management can be attributed to the postmodern and critical paradigms. The first of these is the opportunity to reflect upon the development of knowledge and especially its link to power. By scrutinizing the production of theory (Lowe 2001; Ailon 2008) or of texts (Tipton 2008; Fougère and Moulettes 2007), their cultural and institutional nature clearly appears (see Jack and Westwood 2009). Viewing theory as a representational form brings new questions to the fore, namely: *What is considered relevant knowledge? For what and for whom is this knowledge developed? How is knowledge validated? Who has a voice, and whose interests are served by the theories we craft and the research we do?* By addressing these questions openly, research in these paradigms helps revise our understanding of the objectivity of cultural theories and their purposes (Romani, Mahadevan, and Primecz forthcoming). Researchers and authors are expected to critically reflect upon how they are a part of the knowledge creation process (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009).

The second major contribution of these paradigms is the demonstration of the role of power at play in connection to culture, either in the narrative construction of national culture differences or individual identities (Ybema and Buyn 2009; Tukiainen 2015; Moore 2016) or in the use of cross-cultural training (see Cheng 2010). Referring to culture can hide social, political, or other forms of inequalities that the individuals who are interacting are experiencing (Primecz, Mahadevan, and Romani 2016). Consequently, this contribution helps us to see our respondents' talks about cultural differences in a new light: they are not solely telling us about cultural differences; they are conjointly expressing potential power struggles that they

frame as cultural. Moreover, postmodern incredulity toward grand narratives and belief in the “undecidability of meaning” also questions interpretive research on national culture. These studies, which claim to have stable national cultural meanings, are invited to consider many more (national cultural) interpretations.

Methods of investigation favored by the postmodern and critical researchers constitute a third distinct area of contribution. Prasad (2009) demonstrates how the use of genealogy in cross-cultural management can modify the claims of culture theories and their study of notions such as power. Deconstruction (see Fougère and Moulettes 2007) also offers an incisive method for the investigation of implicit meanings and power structures in texts and can be used, for example, in the study of cultural critical incidents (Romani, Primecz, and Bell 2014). Similarly, narrative inquiry can also reveal key learning moments in expatriate experiences (Gertsen and Sørderberg 2011).

### WHERE THE STUDIES FROM THE FOUR PARADIGMS CAN MEET

The various paradigms offer distinct strengths in the study of the relationship between culture and management and, inevitably, limitations due to their ontologies and epistemologies (see Adler 1983; McSweeney 2002; Jack et al. 2008; Jack and Westwood 2009). Not a single paradigm is equipped to provide the full picture of a phenomenon; this is where the idea of multi-paradigmatic studies comes into play. The various paradigms are not to fix each other’s limitations; rather, they enrich possible analyses (by providing several angles to the analysis) and they trigger new research questions. In other words, multi-paradigmatic studies can be done in three ways: by placing distinct paradigmatic analyses next to each other to shed different light upon the same phenomenon (parallel); by using the outcome of one analysis to perform a new one in a distinct paradigm (sequential); or by combining the separate analyses into a new one (interplay)—see Lewis and Grimes (1999) and Lewis and Kelemen (2002) for a thorough discussion.

If we consider the concern of studying the impact of national culture upon management, an interplay between studies from distinct paradigms can “place in tension” (Schultz and Hatch 1996; Romani, Primecz, and Topçu 2011) several elements such as the search for regularities (patterns) with the search for emergence, the co-construction and negotiation of values and meanings with structural influences and discursive elements. For example, researchers would analyze meanings and values expressed by respondents in the light of the geopolitical position of their country of origin (or the one of the organization for which they work), while searching for hidden ideologies in their narrative accounts. This could lead to new research concerns, from *what is the influence of national culture on management* to *what are the conditions for claimed cultural differences to influence management practices*.

Other interplays can take place around the study of culture at the organizational level. For example, studies could consider the impact of the respective status (linked to geopolitical and industrial history of countries of origin) of two organizations involved in a merger. *Do employees from a western company perceive management practices and forms of organizing developed in an organization from an emerging country as being equally legitimate? Can*

*this impact how the new organizational culture (values, meanings, and discourses) will develop?* (see Yildiz 2014). One can come closer to answering these questions by taking into account hidden power structure (critical), discourses (postmodern), values (functional), and meanings (interpretivist).

Studies that are inspired by different research paradigms can enrich our understanding of interpersonal interactions by providing a multi-faceted image of a phenomenon. Primecz, Romani, and Topçu (2015) demonstrate how interactions between Turks and Hungarians regarding customer service dissatisfaction can be fully explained when cultural (values and meanings) as well as political and discursive analyses are juxtaposed. Another example of paradigmatic perspectives placed in parallel comes from Romani, Primecz, and Bell (2014), which elucidates a critical incident between expatriates and local employees. These findings show, for example, how expatriate's narrative construction of cultural differences adds to the actual differences and organizational tensions.

Whereas juxtapositions of perspectives lead to richer understanding, interplay is likely to lead to new research questions and theorization (Lewis and Grimes 1999). Multi-cultural team literature is said to overlook dimensions of power (Maznevski 2012), and this invites critical perspectives. An interplay between functionalist and critical perspectives could shed new light upon multi-cultural teams' dynamics in a time of shift of demographic and economic prosperity outside of Europe and the United States. This could investigate what Söderberg (2015) suggests: that power struggles between partners seem to moderate the expression of (assumed) cultural differences.

At the individual level, the fluidity of (narratives associated with) culture, cultural interactions, and identities is already a theme that the four research paradigms share. Literature on bi-cultural employees and cosmopolitans (see Brannen and Thomas 2010; Hanek et al. 2014; Moore 2016) as well as expatriates (Guttormsen 2015) emphasizes the malleability of cultural identities. Studies of cultural identities taking intersectionality into account are similarly increasing (Özkazanç-Pan 2015). As a result, the topic of multicultural identities is a very promising venue for multi-paradigmatic studies.

The study of globalization's impact on management is another possible venue for multi-paradigmatic research. When much attention has been paid to national culture's impact, globalization is a phenomenon that requires the study of geopolitical forces, virtual reality of interactions, flows, and discourses. This clearly invites the expertise of various paradigms, as much as the study of language and its imbrication in international business and organizational practices (Brannen, Piekkari, and Tietze 2014; Mughan 2015). Generally speaking, we believe that the combination of studies from the various paradigms enriches our understandings and leads to what Witte (2012) calls "post-national cultural analysis of organizations."

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The cross-cultural or intercultural training field currently builds upon functionalist and interpretive paradigms (Jack and Lorbiecki 2003). Consequently, cultural differences tend to be presented as inevitable: as the characteristic of a given group and a situation to which one

should adapt. For example, to the affirmation that decision making is done with consensus in Sweden, practitioners can add critical and postmodern views. They can ask themselves who claims that consensus is the norm and maybe realize that this statement rests mostly on studies done with middle managers during the 1980s or 1990s. They can wonder whether consensus is the norm across the entire society (across social classes, linguistic minorities, and ethnic backgrounds of the population) or whether it is mostly associated to a discourse endorsed by white middle-class Swedish males (Wahl and Linghag 2013). They may realize that what is presented as cultural (that is to say, consensus decision making) might be something presented as ideal by some groups in the population. Keeping the four paradigmatic perspectives in mind, leaders of multi-cultural workforces may shift their stance from a position of blind adaptation to a (given and narrow) norm to the active negotiation and invention of inter-cultural behavior.

## CONCLUSION

Our contribution to this special issue, in fact, aims to go beyond a review of works in four different paradigms and the presentation of how various strengths of paradigms can lead to new research questions or managerial practices. Our agenda is also to increase our reflexivity as researchers involved in the development of (cultural) understandings. We are not praising multiplicity in the sense of adding more variables to our models and understandings (see, e.g., Tsui, Nifadkar, and Amy 2007). Our aim instead is to encourage fundamentally different views and epistemologies to meet and interact in order for us, as researchers, to become more aware of our role in scientific knowledge creation. We also believe that such interactions can lead to exciting and ground-breaking studies for the “reimagination” of cross-cultural management research (Jack et al. 2013).

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