LIVING WITH MULTIPLE PARADIGMS: THE CASE OF PARADIGM INTERPLAY IN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE STUDIES

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This article presents a new strategy for multiparadigm research that promotes interplay between paradigms. We develop interplay across the border of functionalist and interpretive paradigms and use organizational culture studies as an example of how interplay affects multiparadigm relations. In addition to clarifying paradigm contrasts, the article points to connections between paradigms by taking a postmodern perspective.

Organizational researchers in the late 20th century face a variety of paradigms with which to theorize their subject matter. This article develops a new strategy for multiparadigm research that promotes paradigm interplay. Interplay complements well-known contrasts between paradigms with connections proposed by postmodern critiques of modernist social science. Considered simultaneously, these contrasts and connections position the researcher to move back and forth between paradigms and invite researchers to see and use the diversity of organization theory in new ways.

The paradigm diversity of organization theory was mapped by Burrell and Morgan (1979), among others, who claimed that there are at least four paradigms defining the field of organizational sociology. Burrell and Morgan took the position that the paradigms represent incommensurable approaches to the study of organization, which means that each must be separately developed and applied. Our definition of paradigm follows Burrell and Morgan's—paradigms are sets of ontological and epistemological assumptions—but we do not accept the paradigm incommensurability argument. Instead, we follow those who recommend that researchers chal-

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lenge and cross paradigm borders (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Hassard, 1988; Parker & McHugh, 1991; Weaver & Gioia, 1994; Willmott, 1990, 1993a,b). We prefer the paradigm-crossing position because we find it impossible to ignore the multiplicity of perspectives that make up our field of study and wish to take advantage of the diversity organization theory offers. We believe the debate is important because regardless of whether organizational researchers acknowledge paradigmatic assumptions, they make and use them when they develop or apply theory.

Our denial of incommensurability does not mean that we accept an integrationist view. Although it is difficult to find organization theorists who openly advocate an integrationist position, there are many who practice integration by merging paradigms without respecting their differences. In this article, we explore the possibilities of paradigm crossing as a third metatheoretical position that resists both incommensurability and integration. We contribute a new paradigm-crossing strategy that we label interplay, defined as the simultaneous recognition of both contrasts and connections between paradigms.

In addition to well-known paradigm contrasts (e.g., differences of ontology and epistemology), we argue that significant connections can be made. In this article, these connections are established within postmodern critiques that reveal several characteristics held in common by modernist paradigms. Somewhat ironically, we find that it is postmodernism that inspires interplay between paradigms. When framed within paradigm contrasts, postmodernists either ignore paradigm boundaries as mere modernist conventions or deconstruct paradigms in order to expose oppressed oppositions (e.g., Calás & Smircich, 1991; Kilduff, 1993; Martin, 1990). However, through the connections it establishes between modernist paradigms, postmodernism is also able to contribute constructively, as opposed to deconstructively, to the modernist paradigm debate. In this regard, interplay stands in stark contrast to previous uses of the postmodern perspective.

We contend that paradigm interplay produces a new form of understanding that some may equate with paradox. However, interplay differs significantly from previous uses of paradox in organization theory (e.g., Poole & Van de Ven, 1989; Van de Ven & Poole, 1988) by stressing the interdependent relationship between constitutive oppositions. We argue that emphasis on the interdependence of opposed elements indicates a contribution of interplay to cross-paradigm thinking. We are not interested in accepting, clarifying, or resolving the contradictions of paradoxes, but rather in preserving the tension between contrasts and connections at the metatheoretical level in order to theorize organizations in new ways.

In developing the interplay strategy, we limit our discussion to the following two paradigms, functionalism and interpretivism, recognizing that we must ignore a number of others in the process. We chose functionalism, as defined by Burrell and Morgan, because this has been the dominant paradigm within organization theory (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Morgan & Smir-
cich, 1980). Interpretivism was selected because it offers the greatest contrast to functionalism's assumptions, and in recent years it has received increasing research attention, particularly in organizational culture studies, institutional theory, and in studies of organizational identity, learning, and cognition. Simplifying the issues of paradigm crossing to the case of crossing between two paradigms helps researchers to develop the interplay strategy in an explicit way.

As several multiparadigm theorists have demonstrated (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Weaver & Gioia, 1994; Willmott, 1993a), grounding in a specific research domain is a useful first step toward paradigm crossing. In this article, we ground our approach in organizational culture studies, for three reasons. First, many culture researchers evidence consciousness of the paradigm disagreements within organization theory (Alvesson & Berg, 1992; Martin, 1992; Martin & Frost, In press; Pondy, Frost, Morgan, & Dandridge, 1983; Putnam, 1983; Schultz, 1995; Smircich, 1983), and we believe this evidence indicates that organization culture studies provide a rich ground upon which to develop our interplay strategy. Second, the paradigm disagreements within organization culture studies have been especially pronounced in the case of functionalism and interpretivism. Third, our familiarity with the development of organizational culture studies provides intimate knowledge of the issues and debates that constitute both functionalist and interpretivist approaches. Although we ground our discussion in the example of functionalist and interpretive culture studies, we argue that interplay has implications for other domains than culture and for crossing other paradigms' borders than those between functionalism and interpretivism.

In this article we develop the idea of interplay as a new strategy for engaging with multiple paradigms. First, we present a brief overview of the various strategies that others have offered for handling multiparadigm relations. Then we use paradigm contrasts between functionalism and interpretivism as a beginning point for developing the interplay strategy. From there, we examine the opposing theme of connections between these two paradigms, using postmodernism to identify the connections. We then formulate interplay as a metatheoretical strategy for crossing paradigms and discuss the new form of understanding that emerges from interplay in relation to the field of culture studies. In this context, we will illustrate several implications, including generality/contextuality, clarity/ambiguity, and stability/instability. We conclude by discussing what the interplay strategy might contribute to other domains of research within the field of organizational theory and to the paradigm debate within organization studies.

**MULTIPARADIGM RELATIONS**

We have argued that students of organization theory are faced with multiple paradigms and that it is possible to distinguish three different metatheoretical positions for doing multiparadigm research: (a) paradigm
incommensurability, (b) paradigm integration, and (c) paradigm crossing (see Figure 1).

Paradigm incommensurability has been the point of departure for most of the paradigm debate within organization theory. The incommensurability position argues for the separate development and application of each paradigm (e.g., Jackson & Carter, 1991, 1993). As Weaver and Gioia (1994) demonstrated, the idea of paradigm incommensurability originated at the beginning of this century, but within organizational theory it is generally attributed to Burrell and Morgan (1979). Kuhn (1970: 103) also discussed paradigm incommensurability, but in the context of paradigm "revolutions" rather than multiple paradigms. Burrell and Morgan claimed that differences in ontology, epistemology, and methodology as well as assumptions about human nature construct insurmountable barriers between paradigmatic perspectives. That is, each paradigm engages a unique perspective from which concepts are defined and theories are developed, preventing combinations of concepts or analytical methods across paradigm borders. Because each paradigm defines a different domain in which theories can be conceived, there is little or no possibility of effective communication between their adherents.

Paradigm integration is a second metatheoretical position described by Willmott (1993a) and Reed (1985). From this metatheoretical position, it becomes possible to assess and synthesize a variety of contributions, thus ignoring the differences between competing approaches and their paradigmatic assumptions. In some cases, the integration position repre-
sents simple resistance to multiparadigm thinking. Pfeffer (1993), for example, proposed a strong hegemonic argument that advocates abandoning all but one paradigm in order to increase the influence of organization theory as an academic field. More often, however, the integrationist position provides an overall framework that mixes and combines terms and implications of arguments grounded in different paradigmatic assumptions without considering the relationship between the assumptions themselves.

We argue the necessity to define a third metatheoretical position, which we label paradigm crossing. The focus of the crossing position is on how multiple paradigms might be engaged by individual researchers. From this position, the researcher recognizes and confronts multiple paradigms, rather than ignoring them as in the integrationist position, or refusing to confront them as in the incommensurability position. The result of previous attempts to cross paradigms has been the use of several quite different strategies for conducting multiparadigm research. We review and explicate these strategies and suggest our own, which we call interplay.

According to the first strategy, which we label sequential, specific paradigms are mutually complementary rather than exclusive. Paradigms operate as complements by revealing sequential levels of understanding within an integrated research project. Within organizational research, Lee (1991) presented a sequential multiparadigm model, in which interpretive methods are used prior to the application of functionalist methods, so that the insights derived from interpretive studies serve as inputs to functionalist research. Similarly, Gioia, Donnellon, and Sims (1989) demonstrated that functionalist research can inform interpretive studies, thereby inverting the more typical sequence from interpretivism to functionalism. The sequential strategy allows one paradigm to inform another; however, this influence operates only in one direction. Thus, the sequential strategy constructs the relationship between paradigms as linear and unidirectional, although it can move in either direction.

A second strategy is termed parallel, because different paradigms are all applied on equal terms rather than sequentially. Hassard (1988, 1991) provided an illustration of the parallel strategy in his study of the British Fire Service, in which he applied a theory and methodology from each of Burrell and Morgan’s four paradigms. In cultural studies, Martin (1992: 5) made a similar argument, stressing that each paradigm must be applied separately: “What is to be learned from culture research is, in part, the usefulness of preserving the differences between these social scientific perspectives and deepening rather than eradicating, the conflicts between them.” According to this strategy, maintaining an attitude of tolerance is advocated, in order to enrich the field of organization studies with the diversity produced by applying different paradigms. The parallel strategy allows the researcher to compare paradigms but encourages
a "hands-off" policy by emphasizing differences and conflicts between paradigms rather than similarities.

Although sequential and parallel strategies leave the boundaries of each paradigm intact, according to the bridging strategy, the boundaries separating paradigms are more permeable than proponents of incommensurability admit. The ambition of paradigm bridging was articulated by Gioia and Pitre (1990), who argued that there are transition zones between paradigms that disallow their being completely isolated. Paradigm crossing, they proposed, is accomplished within these transition zones by the use of second-order theoretical concepts that act as bridges.

Examples of such second-order concepts include structuration (Giddens, 1976, 1979), negotiated order (Strauss, 1978), and organizing (Weick, 1979). In an elaboration of the structuration argument, Weaver and Gioia (1994) argued that structuration theory not only creates transition zones, but also resolves other classic divides in addition to the agency/structure and interpretive/structural-functional dichotomies. These researchers claim that paradigm boundaries like objective/subjective, causation/meaning, and description/prescription either disappear or are replaced by alternative social inquiry. Within transition zones, paradigms become indistinguishable to the researcher. Thus, the bridging strategy emphasizes similarities between paradigms rather than differences.

We develop a fourth strategy—interplay—as a new way of conducting paradigm crossing. Interplay refers to the simultaneous recognition of both contrasts and connections between paradigms and, thus, to both the differences and similarities between paradigms that are emphasized by the parallel and bridging strategies, respectively (Figure 2). As we argue at length in following sections of the article, what is essential to an interplay strategy is the maintenance of tension between contrasts and connections.

**FIGURE 2**
Basic Interplay Strategy

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![Diagram of Basic Interplay Strategy](image-url)

Paradigm A

Paradigm B

**CONTRASTS**

**CONNECTIONS**
The interplay strategy differs from both sequential and parallel strategies (and is similar to the bridging strategy) in that the permeability of boundaries between paradigms is assumed. The parallel strategy invites researchers to “look but not touch,” that is, paradigm boundaries are considered to be insurmountable barriers to paradigm exchange. Researchers can produce findings within any paradigm, but are intolerant of any notion of cross-fertilization between them. The sequential strategy also assumes nonpermeability of paradigm boundaries; however, in this case, a specific form of cross-fertilization occurs. Researchers using this strategy transpose the findings from studies conducted in one paradigm into the theoretical frameworks offered by another. This transposition allows the findings of one paradigm to be recontextualized and reinterpreted in such a way that they inform the research conducted within a different paradigm.

Interplay differs from the sequential, parallel, and bridging strategies in the nature of the relationship it constructs between the researcher and the multiple paradigms that it specifies. The sequential strategy positions the researcher to move unidirectionally from one paradigm to another. Because the parallel strategy asserts that paradigms are independent of one another, researchers are forced to separate between paradigms, which leads to the emphasis on differences noted above. The bridging strategy places the researcher in a grey area between paradigms (Gioia & Pitre, 1990), a position that necessarily blurs paradigm differences and thus focuses discussion on similarities.

In interplay, the researcher moves back and forth between paradigms so that multiple views are held in tension (see Figure 2). Thus, interplay allows for cross-fertilization without demanding integration, which suggests a criterion for selecting between the crossing strategies: If one wants to take advantage of cross-fertilization between the ever-growing number of paradigms, while maintaining diversity, then interplay is the preferred strategy for paradigm crossing. However, there may be situations in which cross-fertilization is not desired, in which case one of the other strategies could be more useful. For instance, when a researcher first develops or explores a new paradigm, the parallel strategy offers the advantage of complete separation, which minimizes the chances of confusion between paradigms by offering a point of differentiation with respect to other paradigms. If maintaining diversity is not an issue, then the sequential strategy may be a less demanding route to crossing paradigms.

We believe that the interplay strategy has not been proposed before because the assumption of impermeable paradigm boundaries reinforces and is reinforced by “either-or” thinking. We believe that paradigm boundaries are permeable and claim that when paradigm contrasts are combined with paradigm connections, interplay becomes possible. The following discussion of connections explores paradigm permeability, whereas the discussion of contrasts is a reminder that paradigm differences are important, too. This joint emphasis on both contrasts and connections
positions the researcher for interplay, which is then accomplished by moving back and forth between paradigms, keeping the paradigms in tension.

**PARADIGM INTERPLAY**

As explained previously, we ground our theoretical development of the interplay strategy in culture studies. In this section, we analyze organizational culture studies in order to present the contrasts and connections between functionalism and interpretivism (Figure 3) and, on this basis, to demonstrate interplay.

**Paradigm Contrasts**

The functionalist paradigm was derived from systems theory in sociology and anthropology, as represented by the works of Durkheim (1949/1893), Radcliffe-Brown (1952), Parsons (1951), and Merton (1957). The interpretive paradigm can be traced to interpretive ethnography, phenomenology, and semiotic and hermeneutic traditions within cultural anthropology, sociology, folklore, and literary criticism (e.g., Barthes, 1972; Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Garfinkel, 1967; Geertz, 1973; Schutz, 1967). Because many distinctions

**FIGURE 3**

Interplays Between Functionalism and Interpretivism in the Domain of Organizational Culture Studies
between functionalist and interpretive paradigms have been elaborated already (e.g., Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Putnam 1983; Schultz, 1995), our discussion of distinctions in this article complements and extends these previous ideas by focusing on applications of the paradigm contrasts to culture studies (see Table 1).

**Analytical framework.** Within organizational culture studies, functionalism and interpretivism differ in the extent to which they define an analytical framework prior to entering the organization to be studied. For instance, Schein (1985, 1992) argued that cultures in all organizations develop in relation to the task areas of internal integration and external adaptation that are essential for organizational survival. Other predefined analytical frameworks include the distinction between strong and weak cultures (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Kilmann, Saxton, Serpa, & Associates, 1985; Saffold, 1988), which was further developed by Kotter and Heskett (1992) into the notion of cultural adaptability as a variable for analyzing organizational cultures. Denison (1990) also focused on adaptability along with mission, involvement, and consistency. Although these contributions emphasize different dimensions or variables of culture, they all advocate using a predefined analytical framework that can be generalized to all specific organizations studied.

In contrast, interpretivism follows an emergent development, in which the constructs most useful to describing culture are suggested by the analysis. In Kunda’s (1992) ethnographic study of Tech, the notions of role distance versus role embracement emerge from descriptions of how the members of Tech coped with management’s attempts at cultural control. Czarniawska-Joerges (1992) presented another example focused on language in its specific use in proverbs, platitudes, and labels (Czarniawska-

**TABLE 1**

**Contrasts Between Functionalist and Interpretive Assumptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Functionalism</th>
<th>Interpretivism</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Framework</td>
<td>Predefined and universal: Similar levels and functions of culture are documented in all organizations</td>
<td>Emergent and specific: Opportunities for creation of meaning are unique to each cultural context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model of Analysis</td>
<td>Categorical: Identification of cultural elements and discovering the causal relations between them</td>
<td>Associative: Reading meanings and exploring the associations between them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Processes</td>
<td>Convergent: Condenses and brings elements of cultural analysis together</td>
<td>Divergent: Expands and enriches cultural analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Furthermore, the findings within the interpretive paradigm often are expressed in terms of emergent images and metaphors, such as the organization as fortress (Gagliardi, 1990), monastery (Larsen & Schultz, 1990), and prison (Hatch & Ehrlich, 1993).

**Mode of analysis.** Functionalist analyses operate primarily in a causal mode, whereas interpretive analyses develop more often in an associative mode. Functionalist analysis is conducted by filling in predefined variables and mapping the causal relations between them. In functionalism, culture is often added to the list of explanatory organizational variables such as strategy, technology, and environment. For instance, Schein (1992) claimed culture is constituted by basic assumptions and values that produce the surface level of cultural artifacts. Kotter and Heskett (1992) investigated the causal relationship between culture and economic performance. In his cross-national study, Hofstede (1991) demonstrated how cultural differences explain national variety in organizational configurations. Although these studies are formulated at different levels of analysis, they all depend upon causal arguments.

In contrast to the causal mode of functionalist analysis, interpretive analysis is associative. Interpretivists explore the active creation of meaning and the ways in which meanings are associated in organizations. In this mode of analysis, particular cultural themes, images, and metaphors emerge (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Spradley, 1979). For instance, in Hopfl's (1995) study of British Airways, ruptures in service behavior were metaphorically associated with the dramatistic concept of "corpsing," which describes how actors fall out of role. Similarly, Meyerson (1991) and Feldman (1991) explored how ambiguity in organizations is expressed through numerous symbolic constructions, such as stories, humor, and drawing. Exploring and describing the rich character of cultural themes, images, and metaphors depends upon the researcher's ability to make and use associations.

**Analytical processes.** In both functionalist and interpretive paradigms, convergent and divergent thinking shape basic analytical processes, but in each paradigm these processes are used differently. Users of the convergent process aim at condensing and bringing elements of the cultural analysis together; they move from a relatively unpatterned appreciation of culture to a more ordered and less bulky representation. For instance, Schein (1985) presented the concept of a cultural paradigm where basic assumptions form an interrelated cultural core. Empirical appreciation of this cultural core derives from studies of artifacts and values where multifaceted and confusing observations converge on a more orderly understanding. Hofstede's (1980; Hofstede & Bond, 1988) work similarly converges data from numerous national cultures into the five analytical dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, masculinity, and time horizon.

Interpretivism also can become convergent when rich descriptive analyses are condensed into statements of worldview or ethos as, for
example, when Geertz (1973) claimed the cockfighting ritual expresses what it is to be Balinese. However, interpretive studies are largely founded on divergent analytical processes. Proponents of divergent processes expand and enrich the analysis by constantly seeking more interpretations and making new associations. Divergence occurs as one association provokes others in a series of interpretive acts. Knights and Willmott (1995) presented an example of divergent analytical processes in their study of organizational change within a British insurance company where they moved from studying a management ritual to interpreting the context of cultural control in which the ritual was embedded. Kreiner and Schultz (1995) also moved from a specific cross-national, European, high-technology project to examination of the larger symbolic and collaborative context of the project. Functionalists, too, become divergent when they generalize their findings beyond their case examples. Hofstede (1980), for instance, generalized his findings from one multinational company to the rest of the organizational world. Thus, the divergence within functionalism is based on arguments of generalization, whereas divergence within interpretivism relies on the emergence of associative relations. However, we argue that the functionalist paradigm is dominated by convergent thinking, which contrasts with interpretivist tendencies toward divergent thinking.

Paradigm Connections

Statements made by people who are associated with postmodernism help researchers recognize the connections between functionalism and interpretivism. Seen from a postmodern point of view, both of these paradigms are modernist as opposed to postmodernist. Thus, functionalism and interpretivism may have a number of modernist characteristics in common, which so far have been neglected within both paradigms. Drawing on a number of distinct contributions from postmodern thinking, we describe several modernist connections between functionalist and interpretive paradigms that will serve in developing our paradigm-crossing, interplay strategy.

Postmodernism represents a recent development within organizational theory (e.g., Cooper & Burrell, 1988; Hassard & Parker, 1993; Linstead, 1993b) via architecture, philosophy, linguistics, semiotics, and literary criticism. Among the key contributors to postmodern thinking are Jean Baudrillard, Pierre Bourdieau, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Frederick Jameson, Charles Jencks, and Jean-Francois Lyotard. We consider postmodernism a critical movement rather than a consistent theoretical framework or paradigm in its own right. Within organization theory, postmodernism challenges and questions theoretical and methodological assumptions and points to the connections between prior paradigms that postmodernists label modern (Hassard & Parker, 1993; Linstead, 1993a; Linstead & Grafton-Small, 1990). In counterposition to the above contrasts between functionalism and symbolism, we argue that postmodernism
points to significant connections between these two paradigms as it highlights their shared modernist characteristics (see Table 2).

**Culture as pattern.** Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard assumed that human experience is fragmented and discontinuous. Thus, they searched out discontinuity and difference rather than order and similarity. Because there is no pattern of sense to be found, general theories, which Lyotard and others labeled grand narratives, are sentimental illusions. Lyotard (1984) described the attack on the grand narrative as an argument against the modernist drive toward determinacy and consensus, whereas modernist notions of order and patterning neglect discontinuity, passion, and rupture. Similarly, in his work on deconstruction, Derrida’s (1978) key concepts are difference and deconstruction, where voice is given to the silences and absences of organizational life, such as suppressed disorder in the orchestration of order or suppressed idiosyncrasy in the construction of meaning (Derrida, 1978, 1980).

In opposition to postmodern views, proponents of both functionalist and interpretive paradigms assert that studying culture depends upon recognizing patterns and order. Both assume that culture involves an "ordering of social relations" (Cooper & Burrell, 1988: 96), where stable and repetitive patterns of values or meanings are displayed. Thus, both functionalist and interpretive paradigms frame culture as underlying patterns of assumptions or meanings in the organization that form cultural configurations. These configurations are, for example, perceived either as the cultural core or as the root metaphor (or inherent theme) of the culture. Thus, users of both paradigms assume that culture binds the organization together by offering a cultural pattern that guides organizational action.

Within the functionalist paradigm, Schein (1991, 1992) defined organizational culture as "a pattern of basic assumptions" and stated that "culture implies patterning" (Schein, 1991: 246). However, cultural patterns do

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Connecting Assumptions</th>
<th>Functionalism</th>
<th>Interpretivism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture as Pattern</td>
<td>A pattern of values or basic assumptions</td>
<td>A worldview or webs of significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture as Essence</td>
<td>Discovering the deep level of culture makes it possible to decipher visible and espoused levels of culture</td>
<td>Interpreting the symbolic expressions and representations of deep layers of meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture as Static</td>
<td>Predictable, linear, deterministic stages of development</td>
<td>Interrelated, circular relations between interpretations and meaning</td>
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</table>
not necessarily imply consistent and harmonious relations; inconsistent or conflictual patterns also may occur, as Schultz (1995) demonstrated in her study of a Danish ministry. Whether consistent, harmonious, inconsistent, or conflictual, the pattern of cultural assumptions and/or values constitutes the cultural core according to the functionalist paradigm. This core must be discovered in order to explain relationships between culture and organizational task performance or economic efficiency (Denison, 1990; Kotter & Heskett, 1992).

Within the interpretivist paradigm, culture often has been referred to as a worldview or as webs of significance (Geertz, 1973; Smircich, 1985). The idea of a worldview is that patterns of meaning weave human experience together into a coherent whole. This coherence can be illustrated with the idea of a root metaphor for the organization. A root metaphor offers a distinctive and fundamental way of seeing, thinking, and talking. It captures the pattern of a well-established type of experience that organizes all other experiences of the world with a singular, overpowering symbol, even though the symbol may be interpreted multiplicitously with great divergence of meaning.

**Culture as essence.** The ongoing modernist search for essence and deeper meaning in superficial arrangements was opposed by Foucault (1977) and other postmodern theorists (e.g., Baudrillard, 1988). They claimed that what lies at the surface of our culture or our awareness is the only possible phenomenon of interest. In his description of Foucault’s contribution, Burrell (1988: 225) stated that postmodernism “is interested in the superficial and the unexpected. Reality does not cover up some hidden underlying essence. It is as it appears.” This is given special elaboration by Foucault in the distinction between archeology and genealogy. Genealogy, Burrell explained, “record[s] the singularity of surface events [by] looking at the meaning of small details, minor shifts and subtle contours. There are no fixed essences or underlying laws” (1988: 229).

In opposition to the postmodern celebration of surface, proponents of both functionalist and interpretive paradigms conduct a search for the underlying assumptions or meanings believed to order human experience. According to both functionalist and interpretive paradigms, culture is an essence upon which surface or outer manifestations or forms are based; that is, discovering the pattern of basic assumptions or worldview makes it possible to decipher the content of values and artifacts (functionalism) or to understand which cultural meanings are ascribed to cultural expressions (interpretivism). Hence, similar to the stability of the cultural pattern itself, users of both paradigms conceive of culture as a set of ordered and continuous relations between the visible and audible cultural representations and underlying patterns of assumptions or meanings. According to both paradigms, the organizational surface is never what it seems to be but is always hiding a cultural essence, located at the invisible depths of the organization.
Schein explicitly described the pattern of basic assumptions as "the deeper levels" of culture (1991: 252) and further emphasized the distinction between cultural surface and essence in his hierarchical three-level model of assumptions, values, and artifacts. Here, the cultural surface is explained by the cultural paradigm and cannot be decoded before the underlying essence is revealed. Schein (1992: 27) put it this way: "the culture will manifest itself at the levels of observable artifacts and shared espoused values, norms, and rules of behavior . . . [but] to understand a group's culture, one must attempt to get at its shared basic assumptions."

Similarly, proponents of the interpretive paradigm study "webs of meaning, organized in terms of symbols and representations" (Smircich, 1985: 63). According to this paradigm, webs of meaning lie behind the immediate expressions of culture, turning the study of culture into a search for expressions of such cultural essence. For instance, Gagliardi (1990: 27) claimed that interpretivist researchers "seek to interpret the cultural order on the basis of a dominant drive (Benedict, 1934) or an integrating theme (Barley, 1983; Opler, 1945) which can be stored in synthesizing symbols (Geertz, 1973)."

Culture as static. Cooper and Burrell (1988: 100) claimed that postmodernism is "focused on the processual, as opposed to structural character of human institutions." Instead of searching for the origin of things, one must realize that there is "disparity, difference and indeterminacy" (Cooper & Burrell, 1988: 101). The temporary and fragile character of organizational life in consumer society also has been stressed by Baudrillard, who claimed that any fixed meaning is now replaced by a "network of floating signifiers" that offer momentary seduction rather than the ability to store and transmit meaning (Poster, 1988: 3).

In opposition to these postmodern views, proponents of both functionalist and interpretive paradigms offer more or less static representations that ignore the flux and discontinuity that Baudrillard and Derrida (among many others) suggested constitute ordinary life in organizations. Although both functionalists and interpretivists acknowledge historical origins, both paradigms represent organizational culture by static formulations such as patterns, maps, programs, metaphors, images, and themes.

Seen from the postmodernist view, functionalist analysis results in a static model linking elements of organizational culture together. The static characteristics of functionalist analysis make it possible to compare various cultures and to show differences and similarities between them. Consider, for instance, Schein's (1992) empirical analyses in which he compared and contrasted the basic assumptions of two different organizations and Hofstede's (1980) comparison among 50 national cultures in three regions. Denison (1990) made a similar comparison among a number of cases that demonstrates the relationship between culture and effectiveness. In order to make such comparisons, the researcher needs to "freeze" the culture by representing its characteristics in a static way. Some functionalist researchers acknowledge group development and learning
stages; however, we argue that this development follows predictable and deterministic phases, as, for example, the three-stage cultural life cycle (birth, midlife, maturity) described by Schein (1992). Thus, functionalist analysis results in a static model linking elements of organizational culture together, even when the focus is on transformation through cultural stages of development.

Interpretivists express a strong interest in the ongoing processes of sense making and meaning creation. However, interpretive researchers rarely explore the ruptures, discontinuity, and fragmentation of sense making (cf. Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Rosaldo, 1989, within anthropology). Instead, they focus on the interrelated cyclic processes of interpretation, sense making, understanding, and action, seeking to understand the construction of culture (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992; Hatch, 1993; Smircich & Morgan, 1982; Weick, 1979). The results of most interpretive analyses are case studies or organizational ethnographies that are at best static representations of dynamic processes (Clifford, 1986).

The Move to Interplay

We claimed that postmodernism clarifies connections between functionalism and interpretivism by imagining them to be in opposition to the views that postmodernism offers. When postmodernism is taken up, culture becomes fluid, and no fixed pattern can be identified once and for all; there may be an infinite number of ways that culture works, depending on time, place, and the persons involved. From the postmodern perspective, functionalism and interpretivism appear to be alike in terms of their mutual acknowledgement of culture as pattern and essence, and their static formulation of cultural processes. On this basis, we have established connections between them, arguing that when both contrasts and connections are considered simultaneously, paradigm interplay is realized.

**IMPLICATIONS OF PARADIGM INTERPLAY**

Recognizing both contrasts and connections between functionalism and interpretivism demands that the researcher first shift between and then withdraw an equal distance from both paradigms. We proposed adopting postmodernism as a means to this withdrawal, and we argue that the accomplishment of our project (to keep both contrasts and connections in mind) produces a new state of awareness. In other words, simultaneously acknowledging both contrasts and connections between paradigms creates intellectual tension that many researchers will equate with paradox but that we argue has its own unique features.

As Quinn and Cameron stated (1988: 2): "The key characteristic in paradox is the simultaneous presence of contradictory, even mutually exclusive elements." Thus, the literature on paradox employs both-and rather than either-or thinking (Quinn, 1988; Quinn & Cameron, 1988; Westenholz, 1993). Dualistic thinking has been present in the social sciences
throughout their histories, as Maybury-Lewis (1989) demonstrated. Whereas Maybury-Lewis sought harmony between dualistic oppositions, Barley and Kunda (1992) employed either-or thinking in their study of historical swings between normative versus rational ideologies of control in organization studies. Whereas Barley and Kunda focused on how one element of the normative-rational dualism dominates the rhetoric of management ideology at a given point in its history, the paradox literature focuses on dualism itself by invoking both-and thinking.

We argue that interplay, like paradox, involves both-and thinking. However, in the paradox literature the emphasis has been on contrasts defined as simultaneous oppositions (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989; Quinn & Cameron, 1988), whereas the interplay strategy also points to connections as a noncontradictory foundation of interdependence between oppositions. Authors of the paradox literature also have focused on accepting, clarifying, or resolving paradoxes (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989; Van de Ven & Poole, 1988), whereas users of the interplay strategy insist on the preservation of tension. The ability to recognize interdependence, while maintaining tension, is therefore the distinguishing feature of interplay in relation to paradox as it has been treated within organization theory.

Instead of having to choose between paradigms on the basis of their commonly accepted contrasts, proponents of the interplay strategy follow the postmodern claim that “in order to see the ordinary with a fresh vision, we have to make it extraordinary; that is, we must break the habits of routine thought and see the world as though for the first time” (Cooper & Burrell, 1988: 101). We claim that recognition of paradigm interdependence breaks routine and polarized ways of considering paradigm differences by pointing to paradigm connections.

Interplay 1: Generality-Contextuality

Both functionalists and interpretivists argue that culture can be conceived as an ordered pattern, whether this pattern is predefined or emergent. Because of this connection, we argue that it is possible to study the simultaneous occurrence of (a) culture as generality, inherent in a

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predefined and universal framework and (b) culture as contextuality, suggested by the emergent construction of meaning. Within the interplay strategy, culture is neither defined in terms of generality nor contextuality; instead, we argue that culture researchers must understand and describe culture in both of these ways.

Researchers often have used generality and contextuality as opposing tensions in the cultural analysis of organizations in that each has been considered separately to offer guidelines to culture studies (e.g., Smircich, 1983). For instance, within functionalist culture studies, the pursuit of generality has led to descriptions of values or cultural assumptions that are shared among organizational members (e.g., Schein, 1985, 1992) or to measures such as cultural strength that allow for comparisons across organizations (e.g., Kilmann et al., 1985). In the search for shared characteristics, researchers frequently discover subcultures as they grapple with localized meanings. Rather than switching to a contextual orientation, however, their preference for generality has led to conceptions of culture at different levels of analysis (e.g., overall culture versus subcultures such as hierarchy or functional subunits). Thus, functionalist subculture researchers frequently question the possibility of shared meaning at the organization level, but usually they adapt generality to the subunit level rather than considering contextuality.

Meanwhile, interpretive researchers have emphasized how issues like time, place, situation, participants, and agenda combine to constitute different cultural contexts within the organization. Researchers who are sensitive to contextuality stress the lack of a general frame of reference as a means for defining and comparing various contexts. Instead of searching for an overall, shared culture, interpretivists focus on the ongoing sense making that takes place within specific local contexts. For example, Kunda (1992) described how the same group of people uses different constructions of meaning within formal training sessions and time-out situations. A contextual approach is also suggested in the study of occupational communities (e.g., Trice, 1993; Trice & Beyer, 1993; Van Maanen, 1991; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984), in which meaning that originates outside the organization contextualizes meaning within the organization.

The interplay strategy simultaneously emphasizes both generality and contextuality. The interdependence assumed to exist between them implies that researchers need to conceive generality and contextuality in terms of one another in order to analyze organizational culture. In her study of a public ministry, Schultz (1991) provided an example of the simultaneous use of generality and contextuality in the study of an organizational culture. Schultz's study described the use of different cultural contexts defined by the interpretation and enactment of the relationship between managers and their Minister. These contexts differed in time, place, and situation. Schultz labeled these contexts symbolic domains and said that they "consist of a distinct set of social definitions and meanings, which characterize particular work settings" (1991: 489). The contexts be-
came apparent when the managers made a transition between one context and another, for example, when they moved from hallway discussions to ritualized meetings. Changes in demeanor, behavior, and speech practices indicated differences in the symbolic domains that Schultz described in metaphorical terms, such as "the mundane monastery," "the fire station," and "the sage and the servants." The metaphors served to summarize the variety of contexts that the managers perceived themselves to move between. Schultz concluded that "the managers work within different . . . symbolic domains . . . [and they] must be able to keep all symbolic domains in mind and switch back and forth between them" (1991: 503).

In her study, Schultz focused on contextuality and the ways in which managers switched from one context to another, but the data also point to generality. That is, the ability to recognize different contexts depended upon acknowledging the special relationship that occurred between Ministers (roughly similar to U.S. Cabinet members, such as the Secretary of State) and their managers as the defining characteristic of the overall organizational culture. This special relationship was illustrated by the number of times tasks, events, situations, and opportunities were defined in relation to the wishes of the Minister. Once this general relationship was found, it became possible to understand each context in terms of distance, spontaneous interaction, and ritualized interaction between the Minister and the managers. According to interplay strategy, this ongoing tension between generality and contextuality implies that they are defined in terms of one another. This interdependence can be explained in two ways.

First, contextuality can be recognized only from a position of generality. Recognizing that the special relationship between the managers and the Minister was at the heart of the culture enabled Schultz to distinguish between the multiple contexts of the culture. Instead of looking for contexts constituted by different groups of employees (i.e., economists versus lawyers) or different types of relationships between managers and employees (i.e., paternalistic versus collegial), Schultz's awareness of the general focus on the Minister enabled her to recognize variations in this relationship based in different situations confronted by the managers (e.g., ritualized joint meetings versus spontaneous face-to-face talks). When she worked from a position of contextuality, Schultz began to appreciate generality. Her ability to clearly describe the three symbolic domains (monastery, fire station, and sage/servant) depended upon Schultz's recognition of the special relationship between Minister and managers. In this way, the researcher discovered how cultural generality was established and maintained without sacrificing appreciation for local contexts of meaning.

Interplay 2: Clarity-Ambiguity

Both functionalists and interpretivists argue that surface manifestations express or represent deeper cultural essence, regardless of whether this essence is discovered by a categorical route or an associative route.
Because of this connection, we argue that it is possible to study the simultaneous existence of clarity, as emphasized by categorical analysis, and ambiguity, which is inherent in associative thinking (Cohen, 1985; Meyerson, 1991). Because the categorical mode forces researchers to locate cultural phenomena in one category or another, this mode depends upon clear distinctions. The associative mode, in contrast, provides a mechanism to elude distinctions, thus pushing researchers to recognize the multiple ways in which symbols may be used, which constitutes ambiguity. In our view, neither clarity nor ambiguity can be defined as the essence of culture; rather, culture researchers need to understand and describe culture in both of these terms. Interplay between the two paradigms encourages both categorical and associative thinking and, thus, places the researcher in the position of accepting both clarity and ambiguity.

In culture studies, the difference between clarity and ambiguity has been addressed as a key distinction among the integration, differentiation, and fragmentation perspectives (Martin 1992; Martin & Meyerson, 1988; Meyerson & Martin, 1987). According to Martin and Meyerson (1988), the integration perspective denies ambiguity, the differentiation perspective channels ambiguity, and only the fragmentation perspective acknowledges ambiguity. Similarly, functionalist researchers have focused on clarifying consistent patterns of culture, whereas interpretive researchers have emphasized the multiplicity of meanings that are associated with worldviews. This is illustrated by functionalist definitions of culture, such as Schein's (1991: 248) claim that "if things are ambiguous, then, by definition, that group does not have a culture." Meanwhile, interpretive researchers have made a strong case for including ambiguity in the concept of culture. For instance, Frost and his colleagues acknowledged that the consistent patterns of culture emphasized by the functionalists leave "no room for ambiguity" (Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg, & Martin, 1991: 8), whereas Meyerson (1991: 255) accused functionalists’ studies of ignoring "that which is unclear, unstable, and ‘disorderly’ (that which is more fragmented, intractable, and difficult to control)." Eisenberg (1984) argued that although clarity is a preferred objective among researchers and practitioners of organizational communication, ambiguity can be an effective communication strategy.

Hatch and Ehrlich (1993), in a study of managerial discourse conducted over an 18-month period, used both clarity and ambiguity in their study of an organizational culture. Their focus on ambiguity revealed that at one point in time the managers categorized items as solutions to the problem of securing their facility against theft (e.g., posted guards at entrances, implemented a card-access system), whereas at a later time they categorized the same items as problems (e.g., the guards were surly, the card-access system “made employees resentful and punished them for working late,” Hatch & Ehrlich, 1993: 515). These researchers observed: "It seems that there are no final solutions to security problems. Rather, the way the security issue was discussed is more suggestive of a stream
of solutions that become problems demanding other solutions, which then create other problems.” They concluded that the “instability between the categories of problem and solution is . . . an expression of ambiguity.”

In their study, Hatch and Ehrlich (1993) pointed to the ambiguity of problem/solutions thinking, but the concept of clarity is also needed to analyze the data. That is, at each particular moment, the managers knew with clarity whether to categorize something as a problem or a solution, but when a longitudinal perspective was taken, much of what the managers categorized with confidence as solutions later seemed to them, with equal clarity, to be problems. The characteristics of these elements of the security issue thus appear to be in flux. We believe that this example illustrates the ongoing tension between clarity and ambiguity that lies at the heart of the interplay strategy.

When researchers use the interplay strategy, this tension takes the form of interdependence between clarity and ambiguity. This interdependence can be described in two ways. First, ambiguity can be recognized only from a position of clarity. When Hatch and Ehrlich noticed, for example, that security guards shifted their status from solutions to problems (and finally back to solutions again), they finally recognized the ambiguity of problem/solutions thinking. That is, because the guards were categorized by the managers in an unambiguous way at specific times as either solutions or problems, and because of the association between guards in both instances (i.e., they were the same guards), ambiguity about the status of the guards was inferred from parallel experiences of clarity about them.

Second, clarity can be recognized only from a position of ambiguity. Rather than perceiving the shift between problems and solutions as confusion and disorder (Meyerson, 1991), the study by Hatch and Ehrlich shows that clarity is achieved in moments; it is not a permanent condition (i.e., each solution and problem is clearly defined in the moment). Finding the ambiguity in redefinitions of solutions as problems permitted the researchers to discover how long clarity lasted; it also raises questions about how ambiguity is created, maintained, and changed.

Interplay 3: Stability-Instability

Both functionalism and interpretivism produce static views of organizational culture, regardless of whether the analytical processes that produce these views are convergent or divergent. Although both paradigms produce static representations of organizational culture, we claim that the interplay between them makes it possible for researchers to study culture as both stability and instability. Convergent processes focus the researcher on finding singular points of view that result in stable representations of organizational culture. Divergent processes, in contrast, encourage the researcher to keep generating additional points of view, a process that undermines the stability of earlier representations. As a result, convergent processes render a stable appreciation of culture, whereas divergent pro-
cesses reveal instability (which is then described in a static way). We believe that neither stability nor instability alone adequately describes culture; both terms are needed.

Stability has been widely emphasized in functionalist culture studies and is often claimed to be intrinsic to the definition of culture itself. Schein (1991: 245), for instance, stated flatly that "culture implies stability." Also, according to Hofstede's (1995) definition of culture as mental programming, culture is conceived of stable patterns that have "established themselves within a person's mind" (Hofstede, 1991: 4). Although early interpretive researchers did not stress instability or fluctuation in culture research, more recent work on organizational culture points in this direction (Gagliardi, 1986; Hatch, 1993; Knights & Willmott, 1995; Kreiner & Schultz, 1995; Martin, 1992; Meyerson & Martin, 1987).

In a longitudinal study of organizational change in a British insurance company, Knights and Willmott (1995) provided an example of the simultaneous use of stability and instability to study an organizational culture. These authors described how senior management sought to "replace a paternalistic, consensus-oriented philosophy of management with a culture that emphasized 'commercial' and professional criteria for . . . corporate performance" (Knights & Willmott, 1995: 30). Within this change process, the researchers, on the one hand, found stability in the way top management imposed planning systems and change rituals onto the organizational members, especially middle managers. Although top management claimed to shift from classic strategic management to professional teams, the researchers emphasized that they communicated and enacted these new times in ways similar to the paternalistic past (e.g., at seminars, in vision statements, in new evaluation procedures, in new products).

On the other hand, the study also showed instability in the ways senior managers interpreted and responded to the group of middle managers during the change process. Senior management's perception of middle management shifted radically from an engineering attitude, where they treated middle management as "neutral, technical units" (Knights & Willmott, 1995: 42); to an attitude of shock and anger, as middle managers resisted their efforts; and further to symbolic manipulation, as the paternalistic tradition was redefined instead of replaced. These researchers concluded that "instead of seeking to understand and work with the culture of the organization as they found it, senior management pursued a 'scorched earth' policy in which every opportunity was taken to expose its failings and, by implication, the inadequacy of those constituted within it" (Knights & Willmott, 1995: 44).

Knights and Willmott's analysis of the organizational processes contained elements of both stability and instability, although they did not address the interdependence between them. However, we argue that the ability to recognize the stable form of the change process depends upon the instability of the interaction between senior and middle management (e.g., the shift from engineering attitude to symbolic manipulation). Once
this instability is acknowledged, it becomes possible for researchers to understand the stability of senior management's control despite proclama-
tions about professional teams and new ways of collaborating. Thus, the interplay strategy reveals interdependent tension between stability and instability, which can be described in two ways.

First, instability can be recognized only from a position of stability. Knights and Willmott's (1995) description of the stability of the company's management practices made it possible for the researchers to see the major shifts toward new times. The instability in the various ways that these times were interpreted and enacted occurred at different moments and among different people (e.g., the conflicts among senior management, middle management, and employees). Second, it was possible to find stability only from a position of instability. The awareness of senior management's fluctuating rhetoric and discontinuous ways of addressing middle management enabled the researchers to recognize that senior management's control was orchestrated and enacted in stable ways inherent in top-down strategic planning. Instead of being shaken by middle management's resistance and obstruction, Knights and Willmott (1995) pointed to how senior management reconstructed and maintained the stability of management control, even when it introduced change within the organi-

Interplay and Paradigm Crossing

We applied the interplay strategy to demonstrate how the simultaneous recognition of contrasts and connections between functionalist and interpretive paradigms implies an understanding of organizational culture in terms of generality/contextuality, clarity/ambiguity, and stability/instability. The application of the interplay strategy to culture studies involved the following two steps: (a) recognition of the contrasts and connections between functionalist and interpretive paradigms (e.g., Figure 3) and (b) generation and application of interdependence and tension between the contrasts and connections through movement between the paradigms. The interplay strategy does not "fix" itself in one or another paradigm; rather it allows the argument to flow between them.

We consider this use of interplay to be a key contribution to researchers who are faced with multiple paradigms and who value the diversity of these paradigms. Of course, if at some point paradigm differences are not relevant, the interplay strategy will no longer be useful. However, we believe that multiparadigm thinking is both likely and desirable, in light of predictions about diversity in postindustrial society. Because the interplay strategy takes advantage of the diversity offered by organizational studies, it matches the diversity experienced (or constructed) by members of its primary audiences.

We believe the paradigm interplay, and the paradigm-crossing position it takes, are superior to both incommensurability and integration for defining the relations between paradigms. If theorists stay within para-
digm incommensurability, this leads to ongoing paradigm wars, and an integrationist position would result in absolute dominance by one paradigm. For example, Martin and Frost (in press) describe paradigm wars as the ongoing struggle for dominance they perceive taking place within the organizational culture field, whereas Smircich and Calás (1987) claimed that dominance by the functionalist paradigm has already taken place in organizational culture studies. The interplay strategy offers an alternative to both paradigm wars and hegemony that celebrates diversity and provides orientation within a complex and often contradictory body of knowledge.

We wish to emphasize that the interplay strategy should not be limited to applications within culture studies. The contrasts and connections between functionalism and interpretivism also can be applied to other domains within organization theory, particularly new institutional theory and studies of organizational identity, learning, and cognition. In new institutional theory, for instance, the interplay strategy might be applied to contrasts and connections between applications of institutional economics (e.g., Williamson, 1975, 1985) and the sociological approach (e.g., Dobbin, 1994; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Selznick, 1949). Similarly, in studies of organizational cognition, the interplay strategy could clarify contrasts and connections between mappers (e.g., Huff, 1990) and interpreters (e.g., Sims & Gioia, 1986). By applying the interplay strategy to contrasts and connections associated with these domains, researchers can develop additional paths to cross between functionalist and interpretive paradigms without forsaking the orienting qualities these paradigms offer.

We also claim that postmodernism poses critical questions that can help to locate connections between other paradigms than functionalism and interpretivism. For instance, Burrell and Morgan (1979) described the boundary between functionalism and radical structuralism in terms of a shared notion of determinism. In framing his critique of grand narrative, Lyotard (1984) argued that the use of determinism in the prediction of history (e.g., Marx’s historical materialism) is a modernist legitimating device rather than a scientific explanation, an argument that could also be applied, for instance, to the use of determinism in behavioralist theories within the functionalist paradigm (e.g., Skinner, 1953). A study of the uses of determinism represents one possibility for conducting interplay with respect to functionalism and radical structuralism.

Some readings of postmodernism suggest that distinctions, such as those between paradigms, should be abandoned. We believe that the history of these distinctions within the organizational field provides necessary orientation for positioning contemporary thought in relation to the ongoing discourse and allows redefinitions and reconstructions of prior arguments. We have applied postmodernism to the paradigm debate by identifying important but often overlooked connections between two paradigms. However, we have stayed within a modernist framework, because interplay serves to question well-established paradigm borders rather
than to question the usefulness of the paradigm construct itself. Rather than focusing on the deconstructive aspects of postmodernism, we have emphasized postmodernism's ability "to break the habits of organized routine and see the world as though for the first time" (Cooper & Burrell, 1988: 101). Thus, there is some irony in our position; the view we develop using postmodernism can itself be laid open to postmodern critique. We accept this irony as another case of productive tension and an illustration of interplay at another level.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we present a new strategy for crossing paradigms that was developed in terms of functionalism and interpretivism within the domain of organizational culture studies. The strategy—called interplay—was built on simultaneous appreciation for both the contrasts and the connections between two paradigms. We argued that connections between functionalist and interpretive paradigms appear when researchers consider postmodern critiques. These critiques show that both paradigms focus on pattern and essence and involve static representations of culture. We claim that the connections are a contribution of this study as is our use of postmodern theory to inspire interplay between these paradigms.

Based on the contrasts and connections we identify in our analysis of functionalism and interpretivism, the following three implications of interplay were identified: generality/contextuality, clarity/ambiguity, and stability/instability. According to the interplay strategy, instead of treating these as paradoxes and attempting to resolve them, recognition of their interdependence enables the researcher to maintain their tensions and thereby reach a more subtle and complex appreciation of organizational culture.

The interplay strategy involved two steps: (a) empirical recognition of contrasts and connections and (b) examination of the implications of recognizing both contrasts and connections by moving between the two paradigms. Interplay helps researchers recognize that oppositions are always defined in terms of one another (a point made in the structuralist semantic context by Saussure, 1959, and Greimas, 1966, among others). More important, interplay maintains the tension between contrasts and connections that permits a more sophisticated approach to the analysis and interpretation of empirical data, as we illustrated with three cases.

Our interplay strategy transforms the paradigm debate from war between a limited number of major players (e.g., the four grand paradigms of Burrell & Morgan, 1979) into a much more fluid or nomadic situation, where a shifting number of positions and researchers interact, depending upon the domain studied. We believe that it is impossible and illusionary to settle the paradigm issue once and for all (a desire that is still expressed in the ongoing debate (e.g., Jackson & Carter, 1993, versus Willmott, 1990,
1993a,b; Pfeffer, 1993, versus Van Maanen, 1995; Weaver & Gioia, 1994, versus De Cock & Rickards, 1995), but it is equally naive to think organization theorists are ready to transcend the need for paradigms completely. Rather, researchers need paradigms (or some other orienting device) in order to maintain and make use of the diversity that characterizes the field of organization studies. If they accept the multiparadigm diversity, the interplay strategy offers a means to take advantage of the tensions between paradigms and thereby generate new forms of understanding.

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