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Revisiting Paradigm(s) in Management Research: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Paradigm Wars

Craig Shepherd and Rose Challenger[1]

Lecturer in Organization Studies, Nottingham University Business School, Jubilee Campus, Nottingham NG8 1BB, UK, and [1]Lecturer in Organizational Psychology, Socio-Technical Centre, Leeds University Business School, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT, UK
Corresponding author email: craig.shepherd@nottingham.ac.uk

Kuhn's concept of paradigm and Burrell and Morgan's paradigms continue to exert considerable influence on contemporary thinking in business and management research. Indeed, recent contributions to the 'paradigm wars' have provoked scholars to remark upon the longevity of this debate. Consequently, this paper argues that it is timely to revisit the concepts of paradigm(s) and the controversy surrounding them. It begins by discussing how Kuhn's and Burrell and Morgan's paradigm(s) are underpinned by structural linguistics and how scholars have argued this is problematized by deconstruction. Next, the methodology describes the literature search, offers a brief introduction to rhetoric, and introduces the form of rhetorical analysis employed in this study. Moving on, a rhetorical analysis of key articles from the paradigm wars is presented. This develops understanding of this dispute by illustrating how it is inherently dialogic; arguments for paradigm incommensurability, paradigm integration, paradigm pluralism and paradigm dissolution are constructed to counter each other. The paper identifies three main rhetorical strategies employed by scholars in these arguments: constructing identities for individuals and groups by attributing assumptions, values and interests to them; transferring agency to concepts; and managing accountability for their claims. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of the analysis for understanding of the paradigm wars, the concept of paradigm incommensurability, and the practice of reflecting on one's own metatheoretical assumptions. Finally, potential applications of rhetorical analysis to contemporary debates in management research are identified.

Introduction

Since the publication of *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis* (Burrell and Morgan 1979) the concept of paradigms has become a common site for discussion within management research. Influenced by Kuhn (1962), they argued that communities of researchers hold incompatible metatheoretical assumptions consistent within a single paradigm. In the 20 years that followed, contributors to the paradigm wars debated research practice. Burrell and Morgan's argument for paradigm incommensurability championed diversity and received support from scholars concerned with preventing the restitution of functionalism (e.g. Jackson and Carter 1991, 1993; Parker and McHugh 1991). This was countered by calls for integration within the functionalist paradigm (e.g. Donaldson 1985, 1988; Pfeffer 1993, 1995). Citing the example of economics,

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Pfeffer (1993, 1995) proposed several benefits of integration, including that it would enable organization studies to compete with other disciplines for scarce resources.

In contrast, proponents of pluralism, or multi-paradigm inquiry, rejected arguments for integration and incommensurability, suggesting 'paradigms hold a range of concepts, constructs and practices in common' (Hassard and Kelemen 2002, p. 345). Pluralists propose techniques including 'bridging' (e.g. Weaver and Gioia 1994, 1995; Willmott 1993), 'bracketing' (e.g. Morgan 2006) and 'interplay' (e.g. Schultz and Hatch 1996) can help to build awareness of other paradigms, explore the permeability of paradigm boundaries, or even facilitate more comprehensive theory building. Some of these scholars conducted research within more than one paradigm sequentially (e.g. Gioia *et al*. 1989; Lee 1991) or in parallel (e.g. Hassard 1991).

Around the millennium, calls increased for the dissolution of the paradigm wars. Weick (1999) suggested organizational theorists 'drop their heavy tools of paradigm and monologues' (Weick 1999, p. 804) and converse with one another, while other scholars proposed the replacement of paradigms with discourses (e.g. Deetz 1996; Hassard and Kelemen 2002). These and other important contributions (e.g. Calás and Smircich 1999; Czarniawska 1998) sought to bring discursive closure to two decades of debate surrounding the notion of paradigm(s) and incommensurability.

While the paradigm wars have abated somewhat over the past 10 years, the concept of paradigm(s) remains in widespread use across a range of disciplines, including marketing (Tadajewski 2008), international business (Sullivan and Daniels 2008), strategic management (Geels 2009) and cross-cultural management research (Romani *et al*. 2010). Indeed, a recent special issue of *Management Accounting Research* was devoted to the roles and effects of paradigms (e.g. Lukka 2010; Merchant 2010; Modell 2010; Vaivio and Siren 2010). While definitions of paradigm(s) differ across studies, this is not surprising, since Masterman (1970) established at least 21 different uses of the term by Kuhn himself. Few concepts have been employed as inconsistently, with paradigm 'being substituted freely for terms such as perspective, theory, discipline, school or method' (Hassard 1988, p. 248).

The notion of paradigm(s) also continues to exert significant influence over research methods. The idea that research methods are imbricated with metatheoretical assumptions is argued for explicitly, or remains implicit, in contemporary textbooks on management research methods and practices (e.g. Easterby-Smith *et al*. 2012; Gill and Johnson 2010; Hallebone and Priest 2009; Silverman 2010). Silverman (2010) describes 'models', or overall frameworks for how we look at reality (e.g. positivism, constructionism) that 'roughly correspond to what are more grandly referred to as paradigms' (Silverman 2010, p. 109) and inform the concepts we use to define research problem, theories, hypotheses, methodology and methods. Gill and Johnson (2010) identify positivist, neo-empiricist, critical theory, pragmatism and postmodern 'modes of engagement' in management research. They distinguish between these modes according to commitments regarding ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology. They suggest that research methods are embedded with differing assumptions and propose 'contingent criteria' for evaluating different modes of engagement (also see Johnson *et al*. 2006).

Similarly, Johnson and Duberley (2003) argue 'how reflexivity itself is constituted in management research also expresses, and varies according to, the reflexive scholar's own epistemological and ontological commitments' (Johnson and Duberley 2003, p. 1281). They identify three main forms of reflexivity (methodological, epistemic and deconstructive), equating these with positivism, critical theory and postmodernism, respectively. Comparable arguments are implicit in typologies of 'reflexivities' developed by other scholars (e.g. Finlay 2002; Finlay and Gough 2003).

In summary, the concept of paradigm(s) continues to exert considerable influence in management research. Furthermore, recent contributions to the paradigm wars have provoked contemplation of whether this is 'the debate that won't die?' (Tadajewski 2009, p. 467). Consequently, it is worthwhile revisiting the concepts of paradigm(s) and the debate surrounding them.

It is important to note that there have been several excellent reviews of the paradigm wars (e.g. Burrell 1996; Deetz 1996, 2009; Hassard and Kelemen 2002). Deetz (1996) and Hassard and Kelemen (2002) argue for the replacement of paradigms with discourses. Deetz identifies four discourses; normative studies, critical studies, interpretive studies and dialogical studies. Hassard and Kelemen (2002) draw on Deetz's work,

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Wittgenstein's linguistic philosophy and postmodern contributors, including Lyotard, explaining how 'petit recits', or mini narratives, are always likely to subvert grand narratives. They argue that, for knowledge to become meaningful, it has to 'exteriorise itself' through acts of consumption, including 'expressing one's identity, marking attachments to social groups, exhibiting social distinction or ensuring social participation in various activities' (Hassard and Kelemen 2002, p. 337). Their account identifies five tactics of knowledge production and consumption: non-consumers, protectionists, integrationists, pluralists and postmodernists.

As Potter observes, 'one thing that is striking about a range of constructionist research, good or bad, is how little it has taken the processes of construction *per se* as a research topic' (Potter 1996, p. 205). A limitation of both Hassard and Kelemen's and Deetz's accounts is that, by operating at the level of Mega-Discourse (Alvesson and Karreman 2000), they offer limited insights into the process through which these discourses are constructed. Although scholars have reflected upon the rhetorical character of the paradigm wars and organizational theorizing more generally (e.g. Calás and Smircich 1999; Hartelius and Browning 2008; Van Maanen 1995a,b) to date, no one has analysed the micro-discursive strategies employed during this controversy. This is important to 'establish how the truthfulness behind those theories gets constituted by the different "contenders" ' (Calás and Smircich 1999, p. 651).

This paper begins by comparing Kuhn's (1962) and Burrell and Morgan's (1979) concepts of paradigm(s) and incommensurability. Having established that their concepts of paradigm(s) are underpinned by a similar form of structural linguistics, we explain how deconstruction (e.g. Derrida 1976) destabilizes the argument that meta-theoretical assumptions are foundational to paradigm specific languages. Next, we describe the literature search, before introducing rhetoric and the form of rhetorical analysis employed in this study. Thereafter, we present a rhetorical analysis of key papers from the paradigm wars.

Several contributions are made by this paper. First, the findings of the literature search confirm the continuing popularity of paradigm(s) in business and management research. Furthermore, it highlights how contributions to the paradigm wars have originated from a diverse range of disciplines.

Second, the rhetorical analysis of papers from the paradigm wars develops our understanding of this debate by illustrating the importance of rhetoric in the construction of knowledge claims and justification of research practices. By showing how arguments for paradigm incommensurability, integration, pluralism and dissolution explicitly counter each other, it highlights the dialogic nature of this controversy. The analysis identifies three main rhetorical strategies employed by scholars in support of their arguments: (i) constructing identities for individuals and groups by attributing interests, values and so forth to them which build or undermine their credibility; (ii) transferring agency to concepts (e.g. paradigm incommensurability, paradigm development) and constructing them as bringing about their own effects; and (iii) managing 'footing' (Goffman 1981) or accountability by producing claims 'as quotations, positions, ideas or their own personal views' (Potter 1996, p. 205). It also demonstrates how protagonists employ a variety of micro-discursive resources in support of their arguments.

Third, this paper rejects the notion of paradigm incommensurability. Specifically, the analysis problematizes the a priori existence of groups of researchers carrying around differing metatheoretical assumptions, values, goals, interests and so on in their heads, which produce paradigm specific language (e.g. Jackson and Carter 1991) or discourses (e.g. Deetz 1996) that limit communication between them. This has direct implications for our understanding of the practice of 'epistemic reflexivity' (Johnson and Duberley 2003), where researchers are encouraged to reflect on how their metatheoretical assumptions have influenced the research process. Following Potter (1996), we argue for an ethnomethodological understanding of reflexivity that treats descriptions as constitutive, rather than reflective, of an external reality. From this perspective, attributing metatheoretical assumptions to an individual or group is a rhetorical accomplishment that situates them within a particular paradigm and is constructive of their identity. In effect, this also reinforces the argument that researchers cannot operate outside their own paradigmatic assumptions.

Finally, the paper identifies potential applications of rhetorical analysis for exploring contemporary debates in the field. In the following section, we compare Kuhn's and Burrell and Morgan's concepts of paradigm(s) and incommensurability.

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Paradigm(s) and management research

The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Kuhn 1962) represented a watershed in how scientists viewed the progression of science. Previously, knowledge production remained widely understood as a rational, apolitical and accumulative process that built on foundations laid by previous scientists. Kuhn's concept of paradigm rejected the idea that scientists' observations were theory neutral. He emphasized that communities of scientists arbitrate what constitutes scientific knowledge. By introducing the concept of paradigmatic change it became apparent 'a more adequate account of science must proceed from an understanding of the theoretical frameworks in which scientific activity takes place' (Chalmers 1999, p. 104).

Acknowledging that key difficulties in his original text 'cluster about the concept of paradigm' Kuhn (1996, p. 174) differentiated between two uses of the term, the disciplinary matrix and exemplar. His broader notion of paradigm, the disciplinary matrix, incorporates his narrower sense of paradigm as exemplar. He defines the former as a constellation of symbolic generalizations, metaphysical beliefs, scientific values, heuristic models and exemplary concrete puzzle solutions (exemplars) shared by members of a scientific community. Scientific progression is achieved through five stages; pre-science, normal science, crisis, revolution and new normal science. Normal science is conceptualized as a period of puzzle-solving, during which scientists work within a dominant paradigm. The identification of scientific puzzles and the standards by which scientists judge the quality of solutions to them are provided by exemplars. Over time, anomalies arise, which become difficult to reconcile within the confines of the exemplar. Under these conditions paradigms succumb to crisis and revolution, after which a new period of normal science is established.

Arguably the most contentious aspect of Kuhn's account is the concept of incommensurability. As Bird (2000) observes, scientific revolutions result in two forms of incommensurability: epistemic and semantic. Epistemic incommensurability arises as a result of the lack of a common empirical benchmark (exemplar) for measuring the adequacy of theories developed within different paradigms. Semantic incommensurability is the inability to compare theories developed in different paradigms, owing to the changes in meaning of both observation statements and theoretical concepts. Kuhn proposed that knowledge of concepts is gained by exposure to expressions used in exemplary situations. During scientific revolutions, scientists undergo a perceptual shift, akin to a Gestalt switch brought about by experiential learning. Consequently, the meaning of words used to express observation statements changes, resulting in the development of discrete lexical taxonomies. As Jackson and Carter (1991, p. 116) observe, 'Kuhn, adopting, effectively, the perspective of structural linguistics, argues that the protagonist of each paradigm in effect speak different languages'.

Structural linguistics is most commonly associated with the work of Ferdinand de Saussure (1966). Saussure differentiated between synchronic and diachronic linguistics. He privileged the former, which views language as a 'system of related terms without reference to time; whereas the latter dimension refers to the evolutionary development of language over time' (Howarth 2000, p. 18). This synchronic view of language understands it as closed systems of signs, effectively frozen in time, with each sign comprising an arbitrary relationship between a signifier (the sound image) and a signified (the concept, or idea). Saussure understood language as relational and differential, arguing the meaning of signs is derived from their differences from other signs within the system. Thus, he proposed that individual signs are significant only when considered in relation to the entire *structure* of language.

Like Saussure, Kuhn (1962) treated language within a paradigm as a closed system, where meaning is derived from the taxonomy as a whole. This strong version of semantic incommensurability precludes the creation of a taxonomy for translation between paradigms as a translation manual inevitably embodies a theory. However, although Kuhn argued that incommensurability prevents theories from successive paradigms being compared for verisimilitude, in his later work he stressed it did not prevent communication between them. As Tadajewski (2009) observes, Kuhn (1983, 1990) retreated from his strong version of semantic incommensurability, arguing that although translation between paradigms was likely to be difficult and incomplete, scientists can attempt to learn different paradigm-specific languages. Invoking Wittgenstein's language games, Kuhn proposed that the majority of scientific language is shared and that scientists 'should be able to find out a great deal about how they differ' (Kuhn 1996, p. 201).

Kuhn's work has proved highly influential in management research. In the following section, we

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compare Kuhn's notion of paradigm with Burrell and Morgan's paradigms, concluding that a similar form of structural linguistics underpins them. Then, we briefly outline the ramifications of Derrida's deconstruction for Saussure's linguistics and Kuhn's and Burrell and Morgan's paradigm(s).

Comparing Kuhn's and Burrell and Morgan's paradigm(s)

Over the past 33 years, *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis* (Burrell and Morgan 1979) has stimulated debates which continue to excite and divide management researchers. As the popularity of alternatives to functionalism began to grow during the 1970s, a requirement emerged for researchers to be able to comprehend the multitudinous theoretical possibilities open to them. Burrell and Morgan's text offered just that, a framework which delineates the organizational terrain into four distinct paradigms: radical humanism; radical structuralism; interpretivism; and functionalism. They claimed that these paradigms were founded upon mutually exclusive meta-theoretical assumptions held by communities of researchers about the nature of science and society, which they represented in a 2×2 matrix; subjective–objective and regulation–radical change. The subjective–objective dimension represents assumptions about the nature of science, including ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology. The regulation–radical change dimension represents theories of the nature of society.

As Burrell (1996) observes, Burrell and Morgan's (1979) paradigms performed a political function in legitimating the voices of those who did not share the functionalist orientation. They achieved this by implying a strong notion of incommensurability, arguing 'each paradigm generates theories and perspectives which are in fundamental opposition to those generated in other paradigms' (Burrell and Morgan 1979, p. X). Like Kuhn, they suggested that inter-paradigm debate is possible, although they stressed that 'one cannot operate in more than one paradigm at any one given point in time, since in accepting the assumptions of one, we defy the assumptions of the other' (Burrell and Morgan 1979, p. 25).

There has been considerable debate about the differences and similarities between Kuhn's concept of paradigm and Burrell and Morgan's paradigms (e.g. Jackson and Carter 1991; Tadajewski 2009). Jackson and Carter (1991) argue Kuhn's and Burrell and Morgan's contributions represent different meta-theories. They suggest Kuhn offers an isomorphic and convergent view of the progression of science, while Burrell and Morgan offer a divergent and synchronic perspective, where paradigms exist simultaneously. They conclude Kuhn's perspective can be accommodated within Burrell and Morgan's functionalist paradigm, arguing that since both normal science and revolutionary science are functional 'the extra-paradigmatic disagreement of Kuhn becomes an intra-paradigmatic disagreement in Burrell and Morgan' (Jackson and Carter 1991, p. 115). This raises an interesting point, since Kuhn argued 'it remains an open question what parts of social science have yet acquired such paradigms at all' (Kuhn 1996, p. 15). A similar interpretation of the discipline of organization studies has been advanced by opponents of Burrell and Morgan's paradigms who suggest they can be conceptualized as an example of pre-scientific metaphysical disagreement (e.g. Donaldson 1985; Pfeffer 1993).

Despite these controversies, Kuhn's and Burrell and Morgan's accounts share crucial similarities. Both privilege the meta-theoretical assumptions of communities of researchers as foundational for paradigm-specific languages. Moreover, both adopt a form of semantic incommensurability that characterizes the language used within a paradigm as a closed system. In this sense, 'Kuhnian incommensurability is in effect, wholly consistent with (Burrell and Morgan's definition of) paradigm incommensurability' (Jackson and Carter 1991, p. 112). In summary, their common denominator is that they are founded upon a form of structural linguistics (Saussure 1966).

Derrida's (1976) anti-structuralist critique of Saussure demonstrates how meaning is indeterminate and constantly shifting with the play of signification. In doing so, it questions the plausibility of Saussure's structural understanding of language. Calás and Smircich (1999) explain how deconstruction problematizes the structural linguistics underpinning the paradigm incommensurability thesis, arguing a post-representational understanding of language 'subverts all possibility of constituting legitimate knowledge in the modern, paradigmatic sense' (Calás and Smircich 1999, p. 653). Specifically, deconstruction undermines the claim that scholars' rational meta-physical assumptions can be treated as a transcendental signified, existing independently of, and foundational to, paradigm specific languages.

The methodology section which follows describes how the literature search was undertaken and some of its key findings. Thereafter, we introduce rhetoric

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and the form of rhetorical analysis used in this study, systematic constructionism (Potter 1996). Finally, we explain how purposive sampling was used to select key articles from the paradigm wars for analysis.

Methodology

Literature search

The aim of the literature search was twofold: to explore the prevalence of peer reviewed journal articles in business and management that have referred to paradigm(s) since the publication of *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis* (Burrell and Morgan 1979); and to identify contributions to the paradigm wars which have argued for incommensurability, integration, pluralism or dissolution of the concept of paradigm(s). Consequently, the literature search was split into two phases.

In the first phase, the 2011 *Journal Citation Report* in ISI Web of Knowledge was used to identify all business and management journals in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) with an impact factor equal to or more than 1. This identified 129 journals that were interrogated for English language articles published between 1979 and 2012 with the term paradigm in their title, abstract or keywords. As Tatli and Ozbilgin (2012) observe, using an impact factor threshold to search the SSCI for peer reviewed journal articles is helpful in drawing authoritative conclusions about the status of the business and management literature on a particular topic. The results confirmed the enduring popularity of the notion of paradigms within the field. 1157 peer reviewed articles were identified, distributed across 93% (120 out of 129) of the journals. Interestingly, the results showed that 461 (39.8%) of the papers had been published in the past five years (since the beginning of 2007) with 52 papers (4.5%) published from January to September 2012 alone.

During the second phase, the title, abstract and keywords of the 1157 articles were searched for any of the following keywords associated with the paradigms debate; commensurable, incommensurable, incommensurability, integration, integrationism, pluralism, pluralist, multiparadigm, multi-paradigm, metaparadigm, interplay, bridging, bracketing, triangulation, discourse, rhetoric. This inclusive list of keywords identified a total of 131 journal articles. To establish whether these papers contributed directly to the paradigm wars, we first read the abstracts and, where the contribution of the paper was unclear, the full paper. The reference lists within the papers were checked to ensure relevant articles were not missed by the database search. This also enabled us to identify scholarly books and book chapters that were cited consistently and have made an important contribution to this debate (e.g. Burrell 1996; Donaldson 1985, 1996; Reed 1985).

In total, the literature search identified 83 contributions to the paradigm wars. These contributions originate within a diverse range of disciplines including organization studies (e.g. Schwarz *et al*. 2007; Wicks and Freeman 1998), management accounting (Merchant 2010; Modell 2010; Vaivio and Siren 2010), marketing (e.g. Hunt 1991, 1993; Tadajewski 2008), small business research (e.g. Watkins-Mathys and Lowe 2005), international business (e.g. Brannen and Doz 2010), operations management (e.g. Singhal and Singhal 2012) and strategic management (e.g. Geels 2009).

In the section that follows, we introduce the concept of rhetoric and some of its applications, before describing 'systematic constructionism' (Potter 1996), the form of rhetorical analysis used in this study.

Introducing rhetoric

Suddaby and Greenwood (2005, p. 39) describe rhetoric as 'the art of persuasion' observing how a new rhetoric has emerged (e.g. Billig 1996; Gill and Whedbee 1997; Hartelius and Browning 2008; Locke and Golden-Biddle 1997). This resurgence of interest is exemplified by a special issue in *Management Communication Quarterly* in 2008 and rhetorical perspectives on a variety of topics including organizational change (e.g. Heracleous and Barrett 2001; Mueller *et al*. 2004; Shepherd 2006; Suddaby and Greenwood 2005; Symon 2005, 2008), competitive advantage (Sillince 2006), diversity (Zanoni and Maddy 2004) and managerial work (Watson 1995).

Rhetoric has been conceptualized differently by management researchers and used in combination with theoretical frameworks, including structuration theory (e.g. Ball and Wilson 2000; Heracleous and Barrett 2001) and neo-institutionalism (e.g. Suddaby and Greenwood 2005). Nevertheless, there is agreement that rhetoric is a form of discourse that aims to persuade an audience of a particular construction of reality. However, the process of conducting a rhetorical analysis differs markedly. For example, Suddaby and Greenwood (2005) use a modified version of content analysis to identify 'institutional

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vocabularies' or structures of words, expressions and meanings, which they use to articulate underlying institutional logics. Similarly, Jones and Livne-Tarandach (2008) combine content analysis and multidimensional scaling to examine how rhetorical strategies of architectural texts were mobilized by architecture firms. These papers have made significant contributions in highlighting how rhetoric is instrumental in legitimizing and resisting institutional change. However, by appealing to criteria such as reliability, validity and generalizability they risk reinforcing what Watson (1995) refers to as the naïve distinction between rhetoric and reality. In contrast, this paper follows researchers who understand rhetorical analysis as a form of discourse analysis (Shepherd 2006; Symon 2005, 2008).

Introducing systematic constructionism

The form of discourse analysis used here is systematic constructionism (Potter 1996). Inspired by traditions including the sociology of scientific knowledge, ethnomethodology and post-structuralism, it has several advantages for analysing the paradigm wars. First, Potter argues for a symmetrical stance towards the truth or falsity of knowledge claims on the basis that 'to judge whether a description was mirroring or constructing reality requires the description to be compared to that reality' (Potter 1996, p. 98). This reflects his ethnomethodological understanding of reflexivity. As Bryman and Bell (2011) observe, 'the term (reflexivity) is employed by ethnomethodologists (e.g. Garfinkel 1967) to refer to the way in which everyday speech and action are constitutive of the social world in which they are located [. . .] the other meaning of the term carries the connotation that business researchers should reflect on the implications of their methods, values, biases and decisions for the knowledge of the social world they generate' (Bryman and Bell 2011, p. 700).

Second, systematic constructionism emphasizes the importance of rhetoric, proposing that arguments are always oriented to counter-arguments. Accordingly, it treats *all* discourse as concerned with either fact construction (reification) or fact destruction (ironization). Reifying discourse seeks to convince us that accounts are factual by turning concepts (e.g. paradigms) into something that is treated as a literal representation of reality, independent of the speaker or writer. Conversely, ironizing discourse seeks to undermine such 'facts', as being motivated, distorted or erroneous in some way' (Potter 1996, p. 107). This double analytic focus on reifying and ironizing discourse makes it suitable for exploring how protagonists in the paradigm wars construct arguments and counter-arguments.

Third, previous discursive analyses of the paradigm wars (e.g. Deetz 1996; Hassard and Kelemen 2002) operate at the level of Mega-Discourse (see Alvesson and Karreman 2000) offering limited insights into how these discourses are worked up. In contrast, systematic constructionism focuses at the level of micro-discourse, making it suitable for analysing rhetorical strategies and micro-discursive resources used to construct knowledge claims. Potter (1996) identifies three main rhetorical strategies typically employed in arguments: constructing identities for individuals and groups by attributing interests to them that build or undermine their credibility; transferring agency to concepts and constructing them as bringing about their own effects; and managing what Goffman (1981) refers to as 'footing' or accountability for claims. For example, the analysis presented below shows how authors often build their neutrality by distancing themselves from claims, implying they are relaying other researchers' views or reporting a general phenomenon witnessed by others. Furthermore, Potter (1996) identifies a plethora of micro-discursive resources drawn upon in fact construction, some of which will be introduced during the analysis.

Purposive sampling was used to select key articles from the paradigm wars for discourse analysis (Deetz 1996, 2009; Donaldson 1988; Hassard and Kelemen 2002; Jackson and Carter 1991; Lewis and Grimes 1999; Pfeffer 1993, 1995; Schultz and Hatch 1996; Van Maanen 1995a; Weaver and Gioia 1994; Willmott 1993). This sampling strategy is appropriate, since qualitative research concerns itself with generalization to theoretical propositions, rather than generalization to populations (Bryman 1988). Selecting articles which advanced competing arguments and employed different representational styles (cf. Jackson and Carter 1991; Van Maanen 1995a, Van Maanen 1995b) provided a platform for scrutinizing whether the rhetorical strategies identified by Potter (1996) were used in these papers. The following section presents the findings of the analysis.

A rhetorical analysis of the paradigm wars

This analysis delineates reactions to Burrell and Morgan's work into arguments for paradigm

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incommensurability, paradigm integration, paradigm pluralism and paradigm dissolution. Each section provides an overview of these arguments and their main promogulators. Extracts from the articles identified above are analysed to illustrate the rhetorical strategies and micro-discursive resources drawn upon in support of these arguments. We begin by discussing how Jackson and Carter (1991) defend Burrell and Morgan's thesis and undermine the arguments of its detractors. First, we introduce some of the micro-discursive resources they use to transfer agency to the concept of paradigm incommensurability and manage their footing. Next, we analyse how they formulate an identity for themselves as 'liberators' concerned with protecting plurality in organization studies, contrasting this with an 'authoritarian' identity for proponents of integration and pluralism.

Arguments for paradigm incommensurability

Burrell and Morgan's argument for diversity in organization studies has been reprised by what Hassard and Kelemen (2002) refer to as 'protectionists' (e.g. Burrell 1997; Jackson and Carter 1991, 1993; Marsden 1993; Parker and McHugh 1991; Tadajewski 2008, 2009). Jackson and Carter (1991, p. 109) present what they describe as 'a rigorous defence of paradigm incommensurability'. Consequently, the persuasiveness of their account rests, at least partially, on working up descriptions of paradigms and incommensurability, so that they appear independent of them as producers of the text. This is achieved through the use of what Woolgar (1998) refers to as 'externalising devices', which transfer expectations about agency from the producer of an account to the 'entity that is being constituted' (Potter 1996, p. 150). As Potter observes, a good example of this is scientists transferring agency to concepts or data, using grammatically impersonal constructions, such as 'the hypothesis proposes' or 'the data shows'. He argues grammatical impersonality is not unique to scientific discourse. For example, in the extract below, Jackson and Carter (1991) transfer agency to the concept of paradigm incommensurability, formulating it as 'establishing the integrity of each paradigm':

> The effect of paradigm incommensurability, is to establish the integrity of each paradigm [. . .] What it implies is that each paradigm must, logically, develop separately, pursuing its own problematic and ignoring those of other paradigms as paradigmatically invalid, and that different claims about organizations would, in an ideal world, be resolved in the light of their implications for social praxis. In our world which is less ideal, however, what has been witnessed is a more or less generalized attempt to synthesize paradigms. (Jackson and Carter 1991, p. 110)

As Potter (1996) observes, authors need to manage their footing or accountability for the claims they make, to avoid the criticism that their arguments are no more than their own opinion. Consequently, they often employ what he refers to as 'vague formulations' (Potter 1996, p. 168). In the extract above, Jackson and Carter (1991) claim '*what has been witnessed* is a *more or less* generalized attempt to synthesize paradigms'. These vague formulations (in italics) help them to manage footing. The former corroborates their claim by building the impression that they are reporting the experiences of other witnesses. The latter avoids specifying the number of attempts to synthesize paradigms, while conveying the impression that this is a pervasive problem.

Similarly, in the extract below, Jackson and Carter use a range of discursive resources to support their argument for incommensurability and undermine arguments for integration:

> Our defence of paradigm incommensurability does not rest simply on a desire to retain the model in its pristine condition, or on the practical benefits bestowed by it on the non-Functionalist organization theorist, but it has a more positive purpose. Paradigm incommensurability is a concept which has a practical historical (emancipatory) value. For, far from being impedance to the development of genuine human understanding, it serves to protect actual plurality of modes of scientific enquiry from the imperialistic aspirations of an orthodoxy whose interests are rooted in performance and control, rather than liberation and emancipation of the individual in society. Whilst the ultimate possibility of a genuinely unified body of knowledge remains the ideal goal, under the present conditions of an authoritative science acting in defence of a specific set of ideological values, the necessary conditions for such a body of knowledge cannot be said to exist. (Jackson and Carter 1991, p. 110)

Potter (1996, p. 10) argues that we tend to treat descriptions 'as if they come from groups and individuals with interests, desires, ambitions and stake in some version of what the world is like'. Therefore, a key challenge in formulating a persuasive account is managing the *dilemma of stake*, that is 'anything a

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person (or group) says or does may be discounted as a product of stake or interests' (Potter 1996, p. 110). Consequently, Potter (1996) argues that 'stake invocation' (where interests are attributed to others), 'stake inoculation' (where a description is produced to 'head off' the attribution of interests) and stake confession (where a description is produced to 'confess' interests) are important rhetorical strategies.

The opening sentence of the above extract provides an example of stake inoculation. Jackson and Carter claim they have no desire to retain Burrell and Morgan's model in '*pristine* condition' and signal their awareness of benefits they could derive as non-Functionalists. This inoculates them against critiques that they are emotionally attached to the model or are protecting it because it benefits them. The use of the term '*pristine*' is an example of an 'extreme case formulation' (Pomerantz 1986). Potter (1996, p. 171) argues that extremitization is 'a central feature of rhetoric' that gives force to an argument. Thereafter, there is an example of stake confession. Specifically, Jackson and Carter explain that they have a vested interest in protecting the concept of incommensurability because of its emancipatory value. Stake confession is often undertaken to demonstrate awareness of the relevance of one's interests and display honesty. However, in this example, it is also instrumental in constructing their identity as 'liberators' interested in emancipating organization studies.

Later in the above extract, Carter and Jackson claim the principal barrier to achieving a 'genuinely unified body of knowledge' is not incommensurability (later in their paper they argue semantic commensurability can be achieved synchronically through the elimination of different paradigms), but the 'imperialistic aspirations of an orthodoxy whose interests are rooted in performance and control'. This is an example of 'stake invocation', a process of attributing interests to an individual or group to ironize their argument. Describing scholars who have argued for paradigmatic synthesis (e.g. Donaldson 1985) and pluralism (e.g. Reed 1985) as 'authoritative' and motivated by 'performance and control' constructs an 'authoritarian' identity for them, which undermines their credibility.

In the following section, we begin by showing how Pfeffer (1993, 1995) transfers agency to the concept of 'paradigm development'. Next, we discuss how he manages footing by describing how 'researchers', including Zammuto and Connolly (1984), are concerned that fragmentation presents an obstacle to the growth of the field. In doing so, Pfeffer constructs a 'benevolent' identity for promogulators of integration. The analysis also shows how Pfeffer undermines arguments for incommensurability, pluralism and the importance of argumentative style in organizational theorizing by constructing an identity for their proponents as 'anarchists'.

Arguments for paradigm integration

Burrell and Morgan's call for diversity has been countered by scholars who argue against incommensurability (e.g. Donaldson 1985, 1988, 1995, 1996, 1998; Elsbach *et al*. 1999; Fabian 2000; Glick *et al*. 2007, 2008; McKelvey 1997, 2003; McKinley 1995; McKinley and Mone 1998; McKinley *et al*. 1999; Miner 1984; Pfeffer 1993, 1995, 1997; Swanson 1999; Warner 1994; Zammuto and Connolly 1984). Their position is similar to Kuhn's assessment of the social sciences; they consider organization studies as mired in a period of pre-paradigmatic stasis, in some cases constructing dystopian visions if integration is not realized in practice.

For example, in support of his argument against paradigm incommensurability, Donaldson (1985) presents a nuanced explanation of how functionalism can be transformed into conflict theory. He uses the metaphor of 'apartheid for paradigms' (Donaldson 1988, p. 31) arguing that it is destructive, divisive and wrong and will result in 'the disintegration of coherent theory into *ad hocery*, muddle and mere description' (Donaldson 1988, p. 32, original italics). More recently, Donaldson has collaborated in the development of an interesting argument for paradigm continuity and elaboration, which shows how structural contingency theory has been extended into statistico-organizational theory (Qiu *et al*. 2012).

Building on contributions by Donaldson (1985, 1988) and other scholars including Miner (1984) and Zammuto and Connolly (1984), Pfeffer (1993) offers a strident criticism of paradigm incommensurability. His account relies, to a large extent, on reifying the concept of paradigm development, which he defines as technical certainty and consensus. This is constructed as a widely accepted, measurable, dependent variable that differs across scientific fields. He transfers agency to paradigm development, arguing that it has numerous consequences for the 'social organization and operation' (Pfeffer 1993, p. 599) of organization science. He proposes that it affects outcomes including resource allocation and dispersion between academic departments, connection between productivity and pay and journal rejection rates.

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In the extract below, Pfeffer manages footing by using a 'non-specific plural' (Potter 1996, p. 162), arguing that 'researchers' are concerned with the development and growth of organization science. This builds Pfeffer's neutrality by encouraging the inference that he is simply relaying concerns that are shared by other scholars. Moreover, it also helps to construct a 'benevolent' identity for proponents of paradigm integration. He also uses extremitization (in italics) to add force to his argument. He suggests he is 'far from the first' to make this point before highlighting Zammuto and Connolly's (1984) claim that organization science is '*severely* fragmented':

> Thus, because researchers are concerned with the development and growth of organizational science, they can benefit from understanding something about the factors associated with more or less paradigmatically developed fields. This article is far from the first to make this point. Zammuto and Connolly (1984, p. 30), for instance, argued that 'the organizational sciences are severely fragmented and . . . this fragmentation presents a serious obstacle to scientific growth of the field'. (Pfeffer 1993, p. 600)

In Pfeffer's estimation, organization studies is 'paradigmatically not well developed, in part because of values that emphasize representativeness, inclusiveness, and theoretical and methodological diversity' (Pfeffer 1993, p. 585). While he avoids directly attributing these values to an individual or group, he does refer to proponents of incommensurability (Burrell and Morgan 1979) and pluralism (Reed 1985) in his article. He suggests that this lack of consensus is likely to negatively affect the ability of organization studies to compete with other social science for resources.

In a later article, Pfeffer (1995) defends his work in response to a vociferous critique by Van Maanen (1995a). Pfeffer reiterates the perils of diversity for organization studies:

> Although we may value the laissez-faire, let-a-thousand-flowers-bloom-spirit that currently pervades organization studies, we should not delude ourselves that our freedom comes without some costs, or that our ability to indulge whatever, particular intellectual tastes or styles we hold dear is guaranteed to last forever. (Pfeffer 1995, p. 685)

In the extract above, Pfeffer constructs Van Maanen and other proponents of diversity in organization studies as 'anarchists', with a 'laissez fair, let a-thousand-flowers-bloom-spirit'. He also reinforces the benevolent identity of proponents of integration by arguing that organizational researchers should consider relinquishing their freedom for the benefit of the field.

The following section begins by explaining how scholars arguing for pluralism transfer agency to abstract concepts such as 'interplay' (Schultz and Hatch 1996) and 'second-order concepts' (Gioia and Pitre 1990) in support of their positions. Next, it shows how they undermine arguments for incommensurability, integration and calls for the replacement of paradigms with discourses by constructing identities for their promogulators as 'isolationalists', 'authoritarians' and 'destructive relativists', respectively. In contrast, scholars arguing for pluralism are formulated as progressive 'moderates' concerned with fostering understanding of paradigm differences and/or building more comprehensive theory. Finally, we offer an example of how Lewis and Grimes (1999) manage footing by presenting themselves as relaying other researchers' arguments.

Arguments for paradigm pluralism

Lewis and Grimes (1999) distinguish between three types of pluralist inquiry: multi-paradigm reviews; multi-paradigm research; and meta-paradigm theory-building. Multi-paradigm reviews argue that the concepts of 'bridging' (e.g. Weaver and Gioia 1994, 1995; Willmott 1993) and 'bracketing' (e.g. Morgan 2006) can help build awareness of other paradigms and explore the permeability of paradigm boundaries. Willmott (1993) and Weaver and Gioia (1994) apply structuration theory (Giddens 1984) to reframe the boundaries between paradigms as dualities rather than dualisms. As Weaver and Gioia observe, 'in a dualism we confront a dichotomy – two distinct and opposed positions [. . .] by contrast, *dualities* involve single positions, processes or entities whose various aspects may be temporally bracketed' (Weaver and Gioia 1994, p. 578). For example, Gidden's duality of structure and agency understands structures as dynamic and provisional, existing only through social practice, or as memory traces in the minds of human agents. Structuration is the process by which the duality of structure is reproduced over time.

In multi-paradigm research (e.g. Daymon 2000; Gioia *et al*. 1989; Hassard 1988, 1993; Lee 1991) techniques such as bracketing legitimize conducting

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empirical work within more than one paradigm sequentially or concurrently. For example, in his study of the fire service Hassard claims that familiarization with a paradigm is achieved by bracketing 'phenomenologically the assumptions of other paradigms' (Hassard 1991, p. 278). Hassard claimed this enabled him to work within all four of Burrell and Morgan's paradigms.

Meta-paradigm perspectives (e.g. Bouchikhi 1998; Brannen and Doz 2010; Cox and Hassard 2005; De Cock and Rickards 1995; Geels 2009; Grimes and Rood 1995; Kavanagh 2004; Kupers and Weibler 2008; Lewis and Grimes 1999; Lewis and Kelemen 2002; Modell 2010; Romani *et al*. 2010; Vaivio and Siren 2010) argue that concepts including bracketing, bridging, interplay and metaphor facilitate comprehensive theory building by highlighting the commonalities and/or differences between paradigms. Gioia and Pitre (1990) employ bracketing and structuration theory (as a bridging technique) arguing that paradigms have transition zones between them. They claim that combining these techniques can develop meta-languages, which build theory through tests of meta-conjectures or 'meta-triangulation'. They argue that all paradigms 'tend to be concerned with a related concept' (Gioia and Pitre 1990, p. 597). By way of example, they discuss the notion of organizational 'structure'. They propose that 'all paradigms employ central formulations using a "structur-" root (structuring in interpretivism, deep structure in radical humanism, class structure in radical structuralism, organizational structure in functionalism, and structuration in the objective–subjective transition zones)' (Gioia and Pitre 1990, p. 596). They suggest that second-order concepts such as 'structur-' form the basis for their meta-language. More recently, an alternative meta-theoretical strategy, paradigm 'interplay' has emerged (e.g. Lewis and Grimes 1999; Schultz and Hatch 1996). Schulz and Hatch (1996, p. 552) claim that interplay can help develop more comprehensive theory, arguing that it enables 'one to reach a more subtle and complex appreciation of organizational culture'.

The pluralist perspectives introduced above all employ rhetorical devices in support of their arguments. For example, some meta-paradigm perspectives transfer agency to abstract concepts (e.g. Gioia and Pitre 1990; Schultz and Hatch 1996). Gioia and Pitre (1990) transfer agency to 'second order concepts' imbuing them with the capacity to 'clarify possibilities for communication across paradigm transition zones' (Gioia and Pitre 1990, p. 591). Similarly, the persuasiveness of Schultz and Hatch's argument is built by transferring agency to interplay. They claim interplay 'affects multi-paradigm relations' (Schultz and Hatch 1996, p. 529) overcoming incommensurability by enabling the researcher to move 'back and forth between paradigms so that multiple views are held in tension' (Schultz and Hatch 1996, p. 535). Interplay is treated as both specifying paradigms and constructing a relationship between them and researchers: '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' (Schultz and Hatch 1996, p. 535).

Advocates of pluralism also construct identities for themselves and scholars who have argued for incommensurability, integration and the replacement of paradigms with discourses. Willmott (1993) and Weaver and Gioia (1994) ironize arguments for incommensurability by constructing their proponents as dogmatic 'isolationists'. Willmott (1993, p. 681) describes the 'mutual exclusivity of paradigms' as a 'new dogma'. He argues that Burrell and Morgan's objective–subjective dimension promotes a 'dualistic mentality' (p. 682) and that there is 'a logically necessary degree of commensurability' (p. 688) between paradigms. Similarly, Weaver and Gioia (1994, 1995) argue that proponents of incommensurability fail to accommodate both Kuhn's and Burrell and Morgan's more recent conceptualizations of communication across paradigm(s). They use stake invocation to imply that their failure to engage with recent arguments against incommensurability is due to their interest in countering positivist calls for integration: 'closing off the commensurability debate in such a fashion amounts to pulling the covers over one's head to avoid the positivist bogeyman' (Weaver and Gioia 1994, p. 585)

In the extract above, 'pulling the covers over one's head' is an example of an idiomatic or clichéd expression. As Potter observes, idiomatic expressions tend to appear when 'someone is complaining about something' (1996, p. 168) and are difficult to counter as they routinely appear in everyday talk. It is important to note that other proponents of pluralism have similarly described arguments for incommensurability as isolationism (e.g. Reed 1985; Scherer 1998; Scherer and Dowling 1995; Scherer and Steinmann 1999) or theoretical hermeticism (Hassard 1988).

In common with proponents of incommensurability (e.g. Jackson and Carter 1991), scholars arguing for pluralism construct an 'authoritarian' identity for

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integrationists, describing this as 'unification by hegemony' (Weaver and Gioia 1994, p. 567). In the extract below, Lewis and Grimes (1999) formulate proponents of integrationism as clinging to a hegemonic modernist ideology. However, they also construct an identity for postmodernists who have argued for the replacement of paradigms with discourses as 'destructive relativists':

> Many postmodernists critique the hegemony of paradigms, calling for 'anything-goes' strategies more in tune with eclectic organizational discourses (e.g. Deetz 1996; Feyerabend, 1975). In contrast, multiparadigm inquiry contributes a midpoint between dogmatism and relativism (Scherer 1998), which we believe offers tremendous yet unrealized theory building potential. (Lewis and Grimes 1999, p. 673)

In the above extract, Lewis and Grimes (1999) manage their footing by using a non-specific plural, describing how 'many' postmodernists critique the hegemony of paradigms, calling for 'anything goes' strategies. This constructs an identity for Feyerabend and Deetz as 'destructive relativists'. However, they also construct an identity for themselves as progressive 'moderates', describing multiparadigm inquiry as a '*midpoint* between dogmatism and relativism'. By suggesting '*we believe* it offers tremendous yet unrealized theory building potential' they manage footing by highlighting unambiguously that this is their claim. Similarly, Schultz and Hatch (1996) have argued against the replacement of paradigms with discourses, suggesting that their concept of interplay represents a way to apply postmodernism 'constructively, as opposed to destructively' (Schultz and Hatch 1996, p. 530).

In the following section, we show how Van Maanen (1995a,b) constructs proponents of integrationism such as Pfeffer (1993) as 'authoritarian'. In contrast, he constructs an identity for himself (and others who oppose Pfeffer) as 'voluntary firefighters' working to extinguish the blaze ignited by Pfeffer's call for integration. Moving on, we discuss how Deetz (1996) employs a range of rhetorical devices in support of his argument for the replacement of paradigms with discourses, including transferring agency to discourses themselves.

Arguments for paradigm dissolution

Arguments for paradigm dissolution ask: 'Who is afraid of incommensurability?' (Czarniawska (1998, p. 273). They promote conversation between researchers to facilitate 'learning from one another' (Van Maanen 1995a, p. 140) through recognition of 'differences and similarities in research programmes' (Deetz 1996, p. 192). A feature shared by these accounts is recognition of the implications of the linguistic turn for the difficulty of constituting knowledge in a paradigmatic sense (e.g. Calás and Smircich 1999; Cannella and Paetzold 1994; Czarniawska 2000; De Cock 2000, De Cock and Jeanes 2006, Deetz 1996, 2000, 2009; Hassard and Kelemen 2002; Newton 2010; Rhodes 2000; Wozniak 2010). Van Maanen (1995a) questions the 'logocentric tradition of empirical science' (Van Maanen 1995a, p. 134) in organization studies. He argues that this perpetuates the view of organizational theorizing as a neutral truth seeking operation, obscuring how 'staking out a theoretical position is unavoidably a rhetorical act' (Van Maanen 1995a, p. 134). His paper explicitly counters Pfeffer's (1993) integrationist vision for organization studies: 'a small, but significant portion of writing in the still expanding domain of organizational research and theory is devoted to debunking the essentialist and (allegedly) scientifically grounded ideas and programs of our peers' (Van Maanen 1995a, p. 133)

In the extract above, Van Maanen manages footing by using a vague formulation. Specifically, he locates his account within 'a significant portion of writing' concerned with debunking '(allegedly) scientifically grounded ideas'. Furthermore, he ironizes Pfeffer's argument for integration by describing organization studies as 'still expanding'. In common with researchers who have argued for incommensurability (e.g. Jackson and Carter 1991) and pluralism (e.g. Weaver and Gioia 1994) Van Maanen constructs an authoritarian identity for proponents of integration. In the extract below, he achieves this through stake invocation. He uses the metaphor 'towers of power' to depict Pfeffer as having an interest in exerting control over organization studies:

> Debunking the would-be towers of power in our field bears a loose similarity to the work performed by voluntary firefighters. The fire of interest here is a call to draw in our topical and theoretical borders, and the intellectual incendiary is none other than Jeffrey Pfeffer. (Van Maanen 1995a, p. 133)

In the extract above, Van Maanen constructs an identity for himself and others arguing against integration as 'voluntary firefighters', extinguishing what he

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describes as a 'modest little blaze' (Van Maanen 1995a, p. 133). Later in his paper, Van Maanen attacks Pfeffer's (1993) argument by undermining the metaphor of 'the field' that he uses to describe organization studies. He suggests that Pfeffer treats approaches outside functionalism as 'weeds in a dream-time garden, candidates for pruning, paring and discarding' (Van Maanen 1995a, p. 133). Van Maanen uses a neologism, 'the Pfefferdigm' to question Pfeffer's high consensus vision for organization studies by describing it, among other things, as autocratic and ignoring the importance of rhetoric by depicting objects in the world as logically prior to language.

As alluded to earlier, both Deetz (1996, 2009) and Hassard and Kelemen (2002) argue for the replacement of paradigms with discourses. Deetz (1996) replaces paradigms with four discourses: normative studies; critical studies, interpretive studies and dialogical studies, situated along two dimensions; local-emergent/elite-a priori (the degree to which concepts and problems are brought into the research context and held static, or emerge through the research process); and consensus/dissensus (the degree to which research programmes seek order or consider struggle, conflict and tension as natural). He claims that these discourses should be regarded as ideal types, which 'provide an orientation to organizations' and are 'provisionally held apart for viewing' (Deetz 1996, p. 199). He explicitly rejects integrationism and pluralism, suggesting that resolving arguments across research programmes is 'not well conceived in neither synthetic (integrative) nor additive (pluralistic, supplementary) terms' (Deetz 1996, p. 204).

Deetz uses a range of rhetorical strategies to support his argument. For example, he transfers agency to these discourses, arguing they provide 'a way of constituting people and events' (Deetz 1996, p. 198) and 'pose problems for each other and steal insights across the lines' between research programmes (Deetz 1996, p. 199). He undermines pluralism by arguing 'different research programmes have different goals and assumptions' (p. 204) and 'the world can be constituted in many ways depending on alternate systems of valuing' (p. 192). In doing so, he also transfers agency to these goals, assumptions and values, depicting them as producing discourses, which place limits on communication between researchers.

Overall, Deetz's view is that researchers should reflect on their unexamined assumptions and work primarily within a single discourse. He has since revisited his characterization of research programme differences, stating he sees 'little need to revise' it (Deetz 2009, p. 21). In this respect, Deetz appears to be arguing for a form of provincialism similar to that of Burrell and Morgan:

> I, like many others, sometimes wish we were all multilingual, that we could move across orientations with grace and ease, but this type of Teflon-coated multiperspectival cosmopolitan envisioned by Morgan (1986) or Hassard (1991) is often both illusionary and weak. (Deetz 2009, p. 36)

The opening sentence in the above extract is an example of stake inoculation. Using a non-specific plural, 'I like *many* others', implies he is part of a wider collective that wishes everyone was multilingual (this heads off the counter-argument that he does not value diversity). Thereafter, the metaphor of 'Teflon-coated multiperspectival cosmopolitan' is introduced to undermine arguments for pluralism as '*often* both illusory and weak'. This use of vagueness undermines Morgan's and Hassard's arguments without unequivocally implying that they share these undesirable characteristics.

In a similar fashion to pluralists such as Weaver and Gioia (1994), Deetz depicts proponents of incommensurability as 'isolationists' who are out of date with recent theoretical insights, most notably the implications of the linguistic turn. For example, he considers the perpetuation of their subjective/objective distinction as 'boring and misleading' (Deetz 1996, p. 193), socially contrived and regards discussing it like 'flogging a dead horse' (1996, p. 193). This idiomatic expression constructs the debate as resolved in favour of a post-representational understanding of language. Like proponents of incommensurability and pluralism, Deetz constructs an 'authoritarian' identity for functionalists, citing 'the control orientation of much "objective" research' (Deetz 1996, p. 194). Similarly, Hassard and Kelemen (2002) propose that 'Pfeffer's argument for integration, while perhaps well intended in its pragmatism, can thus be viewed as hegemonic or even elitist' (Hassard and Kelemen 2002, p. 343).

In summary, this analysis illustrates how arguments for incommensurability, integration, pluralism and dissolution in the context of the paradigm wars are organized to counter each other. Table 1 summarizes examples of three main rhetorical strategies employed in these arguments. In the following section, we discuss the implications of the analysis for our

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Table 1. Examples of rhetorical strategies used in arguments for paradigm incommensurability, integration, pluralism and dissolution

Rhetorical strategy	Arguments for incommensurability	Arguments for integration	Arguments for pluralism	Arguments for dissolution
■ Constructing identities for individuals or groups by attributing values, interests and assumptions to them, which builds or undermines their credibility	■ Proponents of integration and pluralism constructed as 'authoritarians' by attributing an interest in performance and control to them (Jackson and Carter 1991) ■ Proponents of incommensurability constructed as 'liberators', interested in protecting diversity and emancipating organization studies from 'authoritarians' (Jackson and Carter 1991)	■ Proponents of integration constructed as 'benevolent', harbouring a concern with the development of organization studies, which is depicted as facing negative consequences if theoretical and methodological consensus is not achieved (Pfeffer 1993) ■ Proponents of incommensurability, pluralism and dissolution constructed as 'anarchists' by attributing values of representativeness, inclusiveness and theoretical and methodological diversity to them (Pfeffer 1993, 1995)	■ Proponents of integration constructed as 'authoritarians' with an interest in unification by hegemony (Weaver and Gioia 1994) ■ Proponents of incommensurability constructed as dogmatic 'isolationists' who ignore theoretical developments which undermine incommensurability owing to an overriding interest in resisting integration (Weaver and Gioia 1994; Willmott 1993) ■ Proponents of paradigm dissolution and their replacement with discourses (e.g. Deetz 1996) constructed as 'destructive relativists' with an interest in using postmodernism destructively as opposed to building more comprehensive theory (e.g. Lewis and Grimes 1999, Schultz and Hatch 1996) ■ Proponents of pluralism constructed as progressive 'moderates' with an interest in understanding the similarities and differences between paradigms and/or building more comprehensive theory (Lewis and Grimes 1999; Schultz and Hatch 1996; Weaver and Gioia 1994)	■ Proponents of integration constructed as 'authoritarians' with an interest in establishing 'towers of power' (Van Maanen 1995a, p133) ■ Proponents of incommensurability constructed as 'isolationists', out of touch with the implications of the linguistic turn (Deetz 1996) ■ Opponents of integration constructed as 'voluntary fire fighters' with an interest in extinguishing a blaze ignited by Pfeffer's (1993) call for integration
■ Transferring agency to concepts and constructing them as bringing about their own effects	■ 'Paradigm incommensurability' is described as having the effect of 'establishing the integrity of each paradigm' such that it 'develops separately, pursuing its own problematic' and 'serves to protect actual plurality of modes of scientific enquiry' (Jackson and Carter 1991, p. 110)	■ 'Paradigm development' (technical certainty and consensus) is constructed as a widely accepted, measurable, dependent variable, that differs across scientific fields and has an effect on a range of outcomes including resource allocation and dispersion between academic departments, connection between productivity and pay and journal rejection rates (Pfeffer 1993)	■ 'Second-order concepts' are imbued with the capacity to clarify 'possibilities for communicating across paradigm transition zones' (Gioia and Pitre 1990, p. 591) while 'interplay' constructs a relationship between the researcher and 'paradigms that it specifies' (Schultz and Hatch 1996, p. 535)	■ 'Discourses' are treated as bringing about their own effects. Deetz argues that they provide 'a way of constituting people and events' (Deetz 1996, p. 198) and 'pose problems for each other and steal insights across the lines' between research programmes (1996, p. 199)
■ Authors managing 'footing' (Goffman 1981) or accountability for claims by producing them as quotations, positions, ideas or their own personal views	■ Jackson and Carter use 'vague formulations' '*what has been witnessed* is a *more or less* generalized attempt to synthesize paradigms' to construct themselves as neutrally reporting the experiences of other witnesses. It avoids specifying the number of attempts to synthesize paradigms while suggesting that this is a general phenomenon (Jackson and Carter 1991, p. 110)	■ Pfeffer uses a 'non-specific plural' describing how 'researchers' are concerned with the development and growth of organization science before highlighting how Zammuto and Connolly (1984) have argued that fragmentation presents an obstacle to the growth of organization studies (Pfeffer 1993, p. 600)	■ Lewis and Grimes use a 'non-specific plural' describing how '*many* postmodernists critique the hegemony of paradigms', thus building the impression that this is a criticism regularly advanced by this group. Conversely, by suggesting that '*we believe*' multiparadigm inquiry offers 'tremendous yet unrealized theory building potential', they unambiguously highlight that this is their claim (Lewis and Grimes 1999, p. 673)	■ Van Maanen (1995a, p. 133) uses a 'vague formulation' to locate his argument against integration within '*a significant* portion of writing' concerned with debunking '(allegedly scientifically grounded ideas'. This provides corroboration for his argument and builds his neutrality by constructing him as articulating a similar view to other researchers

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understanding of this controversy, paradigm incommensurability, and the practice of epistemic reflexivity in management research (Johnson and Duberley 2003). Finally, we identify potential applications of rhetorical analysis for exploring other important debates in management research.

Discussion and implications

This paper began by introducing the ongoing paradigm wars and highlighting the continuing popularity of Kuhn's (1962) and Burrell and Morgan's (1979) concept of paradigm(s) within management research. We then discussed how the claim that researchers hold different meta-theoretical assumptions, and that research methods are imbricated with these assumptions, is argued for explicitly, or implicitly, in contemporary textbooks on management research methods (e.g. Easterby-Smith *et al*. 2012; Gill and Johnson 2010; Silverman 2010). Next, we described how this has implications for criteriology, with scholars arguing for contingent criteria to evaluate different modes of engagement in management research (e.g. Gill and Johnson 2010; Johnson *et al*. 2006). Moving on, we explained how the idea that different forms of reflexivity are appropriate, depending on a researcher's theoretical standpoint, has arguably become normalized (e.g. Finlay 2002; Finlay and Gough 2003; Johnson and Duberley 2003). As a consequence of these observations, we proposed it was timely to revisit the concepts of paradigm(s) and the debate surrounding them.

The examination of Kuhn's (1962) and Burrell and Morgan's (1979) concepts of paradigm(s) that followed concluded that they are underpinned by a similar form of structural linguistics, which scholars have argued is problematized by deconstruction (e.g. Calás and Smircich 1999). Following a description of the literature search and a brief introduction to rhetoric and some of its applications, the rhetorical character of the paradigm wars was illustrated through a micro-discursive analysis of arguments within papers from this controversy.

This paper makes a number of contributions. First, the literature search confirms the continuing popularity of paradigm(s) in business and management research. Since the publication of *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis* (Burrell and Morgan 1979) 1157 peer reviewed articles have been published in 120 business and management journals with an impact factor of equal to or greater than 1. Moreover, 461 (39.8%) of these papers have been published in the past five years (since the beginning of 2007) with 52 papers (4.5%) published from January to September 2012 alone. Furthermore, the analysis showed how contributions to the paradigm wars have originated from a diverse range of disciplines.

Second, while this paper acknowledges how the notion of incommensurable paradigms has legitimized diversity in the field, it builds on previous studies that have critiqued the continuing relevance of these concepts in understanding the production and consumption of knowledge and justification of management research practices (e.g. Calás and Smircich 1999; Deetz 1996; Hassard and Kelemen 2002). This paper develops understanding of the paradigm wars by illustrating the importance of rhetoric in these processes. Previous analyses of this controversy have emphasized *difference*, replacing paradigms with discourses that limit communication between researchers (e.g. Deetz 1996, 2009; Hassard and Kelemen 2002). These studies offer limited insights into the process through which these discourses are constructed. While acknowledging the existence of different styles of theorizing (e.g. Kelemen and Bansal 2002; Van Maanen 1995a,b) the micro-discursive analysis presented here emphasizes human agency and illustrates how this dispute is dialogic; arguments for paradigm incommensurability, integration, pluralism and dissolution are explicitly, or implicitly, constructed by researchers to counter each other. The analysis shows how scholars, situated within what Burrell and Morgan (1979) conceive as incommensurable paradigms, employ *similar* rhetorical strategies and micro-discursive resources (e.g. stake inoculation, stake invocation, stake confession, grammatically impersonal constructions, extremitization, metaphors, vague formulations, non-specific plurals and idiomatic expressions) in support of their arguments. Three key rhetorical strategies are identified in these papers: (i) authors managing their 'footing' or accountability for claims in their papers; (ii) transferring agency to concepts, constructing them as bringing about their own effects; and (iii) constructing identities for individuals and groups by attributing assumptions, values and interests to them. This third strategy undermines arguments for paradigm incommensurability by showing the limitations of accepting the a priori existence of groups of researchers harbouring different metatheoretical assumptions, values, goals or interests that produce incommensurable paradigmatic languages or discourses that hinder communication between researchers.

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Third, this final strategy also has potential implications for understanding of the practice of epistemic reflexivity (Johnson and Duberley 2003). Drawing on the work of scholars including Bourdieu (1990) Johnson and Duberley (2003, p. 1289) argue that researchers' social location or habitat produces 'a corresponding habitus, or set of embodied dispositions', which influences their research. Consequently, they argue for epistemic reflexivity that incorporates 'metatheoretical examination of the presuppositions which management researchers have internalized' (Johnson and Duberley 2003, p. 1289). However, if one accepts the argument advanced here that all discourse is reifying or ironizing, reflecting on one's own metatheoretical assumptions is a rhetorical act, akin to 'stake confession'. Specifically, this constructs an identity for the researcher by situating them within a paradigm. In turn, this builds their epistemological entitlement and orientates readers to evaluative criteria against which their research should be measured. Significantly, in the context of this analysis of the paradigm wars, epistemic reflexivity also reifies the argument that 'we cannot operate without adopting some epistemological and ontological position' (Gill and Johnson 2010, p. 210).

To be clear, we are not arguing against reflexivity. Rather, in common with scholars such as Lynch (2000) we favour an ethnomethodological understanding of this concept that treats all descriptions as inherently reflexive. As Potter (1996, p. 47) observes, descriptions are 'not just about something, they are also doing something; that is, they are not merely representing some facet of the world, they are also involved in the world in some practical way'. Of course, a potential counter-argument is that the definition of reflexivity for which we have argued (and other claims in this paper) reflects our own tacit metatheoretical assumptions. One could argue that this paper originates somewhere within Burrell and Morgan's (1979) radical humanist paradigm. To attempt to refute this unequivocally would suggest that it is possible to step outside rhetoric. However, we feel an ethnomethodological understanding of reflexivity is potentially useful in focusing attention on the rhetorical nature of reflexive practice.

Fourth, as we mentioned in the introduction, important debates over whether there is a definitive connection between metatheoretical assumptions and research methods (e.g. Bryman and Bell 2011; Dachler 1997; Easterby-Smith *et al*. 2012; Gill and Johnson 2010; Hammersley 1996, Morgan and Smirich, 1980) and appropriate criteria for evaluating research (e.g. Johnson *et al*. 2006; Lecompte and Goetz 1982; Schwandt 1996; Seale 1999) are intimately related to the concepts of paradigm(s). Consequently, we propose that future applications of rhetorical analysis could explore whether similar strategies to those identified here are employed in these arguments.

Finally, over the past 25 years, special issues of *Organization Science* in 1995, *Academy of Management Review* in 1989, 1999, 2007 and 2009, and *Administrative Science Quarterly* in 1995 and 1996 indicate the effort invested in exploring what constitutes theory and the relationship between theory and method. We believe rhetorical analysis could be used to explore these and other important controversies in management research.

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