

Preface

The purpose of this edited volume is to expand on an early classification of paradigms, theories, and models from a variety of contributors dedicated to each paradigm (L'Abate, 2009). Each contributor, in expanding on his/her favorite paradigm, implies or emphasizes her or his theoretical allegiance to the hegemonic importance of that paradigm over others. However, the wide range of paradigm available raises serious questions of whether one single paradigm can achieve such a superior position over others. Consequently, the major issue faced by such an embarrassment of paradigms raises the question on how one can choose one paradigm over others.

In a previous publication (L'Abate, 2009) I discussed the role of paradigms, theories, and models trying to make sense of a confusing, uncritical matching of paradigms with theories, paradigms with models, and theories with models. From this publication came forth a classification of paradigms that to my knowledge has not been attempted before, at least in psychology but, as we shall see, attempted frequently in other social science disciplines.

Paradigms include theories. Theories include models. Models include dimensions, according to a hierarchical framework. However, what is a paradigm? Many definitions equate a paradigm with a model, making it very difficult to differentiate among the different components of the proposed classification. Eventually, the best way I could define a paradigm was as “one way to look at reality.” Or “a systematic system of values.” This way of looking consists of different components chosen to perceive reality according to individual criteria. Different value systems for different individuals. Whether there is a unique, supra-ordinate paradigm, besides evolution, is a question that remains to be answered by most contributors. Is there a supra-ordinate paradigm, and if there is one, how would that supra-ordinate paradigm be chosen?

This classification, therefore, begs the question: Which rules, if any, control, govern, or link one paradigm with a theory? Thus far, as far as I know, the only rule relating to the link between a paradigm and a theory, has been by proclamation: a theorist would swear allegiance to a particular paradigm. However, how a particular paradigm was chosen seems by personal preferences of the theorist. Could any other paradigm be chosen instead? Why one particular paradigm instead of another? One

cannot help wondering whether any other paradigm could have been chosen or proclaimed, reducing links among paradigms, theories, models, and dimensions. These choices seem arbitrary, questionable, and certainly tenuous.

Confusion about what is a paradigm, theory, or model continues to proliferate unabated in the psychological literature. For instance, in a recent chapter on legitimacy and social identity etc., the authors of that chapter (Spears, Greenwood, de Lemus, & Sweetman, 2010), introduced as “theories” what amounts to models. According to L’Abate’s (2009) original definitions and differentiations among paradigms, theories, and models, these models, even though called theories, are: social identity, system justification, and social dominance. The reason for calling these models lies in their being defined by dimensions rather than by other models.

Therefore, the purpose of this edited work aims at exploring such relationships, whether these relationships follow any rational connection, whether there are hidden rules behind personal preferences, and whether paradigms are chosen at random or chosen according to general or specific criteria that have not been spelled out as yet. Can we find such criteria and, given such criteria, will they be qualified and/or perhaps quantified?

As far as I know, except for other social science disciplines, there is no competition in any equivalent publication I know of in psychology. Collaborators who signed up to write a chapter in this volume expressed their enthusiasm in doing something that was apparently never attempted heretofore, including a completely novel classification of paradigms, theories, models, and dimensions. If it were not for the enthusiasm of these collaborators, this volume would not have seen the light of publication.

To level the field for all contributors, including myself, I limited the absolute length of each chapter to 20 pages typed-single spaced. Some contributors tried to widen the lines horizontally to 6 and one-half inches. Sometimes I caught them, but sometimes I did not. I am not a good detective. Furthermore, as much as I tried to be inclusive, some paradigms were left out, such as ecology because at the last minute its contributor was not able to finish it, due to family illness. Even evolution was left out, in spite of its being an already well established theory in psychology and in many other branches of biology. It will be interesting to see what claims will be made for the importance of paradigms not included here.

Sequence of Chapters

Concentration on the role of paradigms only in psychology would produce and reproduce a very parochial outlook limiting the whole enterprise. Consequently, in Part I introductory background, after Hillix and I in Chap. 1 discussed the role of paradigms in science and theory construction, I asked chemists/philosophers of science Corinna Guerra, Mario Capitelli, and Salvino Longo in Chap. 2 to give an historical perspective on the overall function of paradigms in science. Bill Willis volunteered to review evolving paradigms in Chap. 3 and I am grateful for his contribution.

Part II is dedicated to the arts and social sciences. For the sake of completeness, unfortunately I had to write Chap. 4 on Anthropology, while Laura G. Sweeny unexpectedly volunteered to write Chap. 5 on the role paradigms in artistic, verbal, and visual paradigms, an offer that delighted me and that I could not refuse. I had to write Chap. 6 on Economics because I could not find anyone in both Anthropology and Economic to collaborate on those chapters. Laura G. Sweeney in Chap. 7 reviewed the role of paradigms in educational theories and practices, while the same function in sociology was fulfilled by my brother, Alberto L'Abate in Chap. 8.

Part III is dedicated to General-Integrative Paradigms that include the biopsychosocial paradigm by Beatrice L. Wood in Chap. 9. In Chap. 10, Mitch Fryling and Linda J. Hayes cover Kantor's Inter-behavioral paradigm while in Chap. 11, Jeffrey Magnavita covers Systems from the viewpoint of personality theory and in Chap. 12, Vittorio Cigoli and Eugenia Scabini cover the intersubjective-narrative approach versus the relational-generational one. In Chap. 13, Alexander Riegler reviews the importance of Constructivism while in Chap. 14, Luciano L'Abate covers Materialism.

Part IV contains Particular-Specific Paradigms moving from the initial framework in the degree of abstraction and generality that permeated this whole volume. For instance, in Chap. 15, Sandra M. Loughlin and Patricia A. Alexander cover two coexisting cognitive and empirical paradigms in human learning. By the same token in Chap. 16, David Ryback covers Humanism and Behaviorism, while in Chap. 17, Mario Cusinato reviews Existentialism.

Going down the ladder of abstraction and generality, Part V includes even more specific and concrete Operational Paradigms such as Chap. 18 on Information Processing by Piero De Giacomo, Luisa Mich, Carlos Santamaria, Laura Sweeney, and Andrea De Giacomo, where I was forced to expand on the limits of only three authors per chapter, due to the complexity of the subject matter. Both specificity and concreteness are found in Chap. 19 about Reductionism as covered by Gary Berntson and John Cacioppo. The downward influence of reductionism is coupled by Walter Colesso in Chap. 20, Produced and Spontaneous Emergent Interactionism, while in Chap. 21, William A. Hillix, Duane M. Rumbaugh, and Sue Savage-Rumbaugh argue for the emergence of reason, intelligence, and language in humans and animals. Even though no longer a paradigm, in Chap. 22 on Essentialism, Luciano L'Abate had to show why this is a bona-fide theory with models and dimensions rather than a philosophical paradigm.

In Part VI, Chap. 23 about the Role of criteria and processes in paradigm selection to conclude the volume, Luciano L'Abate and Laura G. Sweeney declare that the only paradigm worthy of the link between paradigm, theory, models, and dimensions is the information processing one.

Readership

This topic would or should be of interest to graduate students and their teachers in at least six different disciplines where there is still an interest in theory-construction, as shown by courses and seminars on this topic. In addition to academic disciplines in

the social sciences and philosophy of science, this volume might be of interest to the following academic disciplines: anthropology, communication science, economics, education, relationship science, sociology, family studies, and applied mental health professions, such as clinical psychology, psychiatry, and social work.

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