

REFLECTIONS ON THE 2021 AMR DECADE AWARD: NAVIGATING PARADOX IS PARADOXICAL

MARIANNE W. LEWIS
University of Cincinnati

WENDY K. SMITH
University of Delaware

Over the past decade, paradox theory has developed impressively. Such advances have been fueled by a rising collective experience of paradox—as change, scarcity and plurality intensify awareness of conflicting, interdependent and persistent forces—and by a global community of paradox scholars—notably creative, dedicated and mutually supportive. We are honored by the 2021 Decade Award. Our 2011 publication helped shape rigorous research while informing vexing challenges. In this manuscript, we reflect on factors contributing to this scholarly expansion, offering insights into how advances of paradox theory could generalize to the rise of fields more broadly. We then explore the accumulation of paradox scholarship, noting the convergence of key ideas and definitions, while recognizing the divergence of ontologies, methodologies, theories, and phenomena. Building upon expanding insights into how to navigate paradox, we categorize varied approaches into four sets of tools—assumptions (cognition), boundaries (structures), comfort (emotions), and dynamics (change)—presented within an integrative framework that we label the Paradox System. By doing so, we highlight the breadth of underlying research, depict interwoven and paradoxical relationships across categories, and surface a core insight that navigating paradox is paradoxical. Finally, we offer suggestions and provocations for future research.

When we set out to write “Toward a Theory of Paradox: A Dynamic Equilibrium Model of Organizing,” we saw paradoxes everywhere in organizational life. Leaders faced ongoing tug-of-wars such as those between today and tomorrow, emergence and planning, and social mission and financial demands. Individuals grappled with tensions between authenticity

and growth, extroversion and introversion, and self and other. In our own work, scholars confronted competing demands between rigor and relevance, idea generation and idea replication, and scholarship and service. Personally, we navigated pressures between our careers and families, our research and our leadership, between focusing on others and focusing on ourselves. These tensions—for leaders and for ourselves—still exist, and in many cases, have intensified. Thankfully, we found deep wisdom among scholars that depicted the paradoxical nature of such persistent tensions, with early influences from Smith and Berg (1987), Quinn and Cameron (1988), Poole and Van de Ven (1989), Clegg, Cunha, and Cunha (2002), Putnam (1986), and many others.

We are grateful to the creative, thoughtful, and engaging community of scholars, colleagues, coauthors, mentors, and friends joining us to grapple with paradoxes and paradox theory. We are thankful for comments on an early draft of this paper from Marco Berti, Gail Fairhurst, Josh Keller, Ella Miron-Spektor, Miguel Pina e Cunha, and Stephanie Schrage, and for ongoing leadership in this community from Costas Andriopoulos, Jean Bartunek, Rebecca Bednarek, Simone Carmine, Angela Greco, Paula Jarzabkowski, Marc Krautzberger, Voni Pamphile, Camille Pradies, Tobias Hahn, Tim Hargrave, Katrin Heucher, Ann Langley, Rikke Nielsen, Linda Putnam, Jonathan Schad, Garima Sharma, Harald Tuckermann, Mathew Sheep, and Natalie Slawinski, and David Waldman. Paradoxically, identifying colleagues means that we will inadvertently miss someone. For that, we apologize in advance and hope to thank you in person.

Despite what seemed like accumulating and energizing insights to address these pervasive challenges through the lens of paradox, we faced significant resistance in our scholarship. Paradox remained on the periphery of a field that preferred linear, rational binaries to abstracted and seemingly absurd interdependent opposites. Some senior scholars warned us that the idea of paradox lacked legitimacy or novelty in organizational studies. One noted thought leader

told us that exploration–exploitation tensions simply pose a contingent tradeoff that requires more effectively calculating the net present value of future opportunities. Yet another stressed that Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) had already articulated the value of differentiating and integrating in laying the foundation of contingency theory and that there was nothing new to explore. Still others suggested that the concept of paradox was better left to the philosophers and theologians who could unpack the logic of the illogical and explain the unexplainable. Facing such dissuasions, we are exceedingly grateful to advisors and mentors who encouraged us to persist. Michael Tushman offered ongoing support, telling me (Wendy) early on that if people balk at a big idea, it usually means that it is important to pursue. Further, in developing the 2011 article, we held inspiring conversations with early organizational scholars of paradox; luminaries such as Jean Bartunek (1988), Bob Quinn and Kim Cameron (Cameron, 1986; Cameron, 2008; Quinn & Cameron, 1988), Kathy Eisenhardt (2000; Eisenhardt & Westcott, 1988), Jeffrey Ford (Ford & Backoff, 1988; Ford & Ford, 1994), Kenwyn Smith and David Berg (Smith & Berg, 1987), and Andy Van de Ven (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989).

Given its rocky start, we are delighted at the explosion of research advancing paradox theory in the past 10 years and deeply honored by the *Academy of Management Review* Decade Award for the 2011 publication. We are thrilled to see how these ideas have helped shape rigorous scholarship while also informing relevant challenges of our times. In this manuscript, we first consider factors that contributed to this scholarly expansion, offering insights into the advances of paradox theory that could generalize to understand the rise of fields more broadly. We point to contextual factors, shepherded by active community-building practices. We then explore the accumulation of scholarship, noting the convergence of key ideas and definitions, while recognizing the divergence of ontologies, methodologies, theories, and phenomena. Given such expanding insights into how to navigate paradox, we advance scholarship by categorizing the varied approaches into four different buckets that we describe as sets of tools—assumptions (cognition), boundaries (structures), comfort (emotions), and dynamics (change)—and integrate them into a framework we label the Paradox System. By doing so, we highlight the breadth of underlying research, depict the interwoven and paradoxical relationships across categories, and surface a core insight that navigating paradox is

paradoxical. Finally, we offer suggestions and provocations for future research.

REFLECTIONS ON AN EXPANDING FIELD: MOTIVATION, INSPIRATION AND COLLABORATION

Our goal in the 2011 *Academy of Management Review* paper, “Toward a Theory of Paradox,” was to “sharpen the focus of a paradox lens, thereby enabling scholars to more effectively apply this perspective to organizational tensions” (Smith & Lewis, 2011: 382). A decade earlier, I (Marianne) had written a precursor to this paper (Lewis, 2000), inviting scholars to move beyond the label of paradox to engage more deeply with the concept. I provided a framework that involved tensions, reinforcing cycles, and management of paradox while also offering examples of aligned existing scholarship. The paper won that year’s *Academy of Management Review* Best Paper Award. In the 10 years following its publication, we witnessed and sought to nurture engagement with paradox scholarship.

In the 2011 paper, we argued that accumulating research was pushing us forward from applying paradox as a lens that helps inform other theories toward a theory with core assumptions, definitions, boundary conditions, and relationships. We identified 360 articles that integrated paradox insights into organizational studies, yet with varied definitions and underlying assumptions. Drawing on these studies, we proposed a definition of paradox. We expanded a typology of paradoxes from Lewis (2000) and Lüscher and Lewis (2008) to include paradoxes of learning, belonging, organizing, and performing, noting paradoxes within each category that varied in levels of analysis and paradoxes that combined categories. We addressed core debates about the nature of paradox and key ontological assumptions. Integrating a realist ontology (inherent paradoxes) with a constructivist ontology (paradoxes emerging through social construction), we depicted paradoxes as both. That is, paradoxes are inherent in a system, created as boundaries delineate dualities and foster oppositions. Yet paradoxes are also latent and rendered salient through context (activated by change, plurality, and scarcity) and individual sensemaking. Finally, we proposed a dynamic equilibrium model to describe its cyclical and processual oscillations over time.

Over the past 10 years, scholars have engaged with paradox across a wide range of phenomena, levels of

analysis, and methodologies and linked these ideas with other organizational theories and disciplinary domains. Others have captured and contributed to this expansion in special issues (e.g., Hahn, Figge, Pinkse, & Preuss, 2018; Jules & Good, 2014; Smith, Erez, Jarvenpaa, Lewis, & Tracey, 2017; Waldman, Putnam, Miron-Spektor, & Siegel, 2019), comprehensive reviews (e.g., Fairhurst et al., 2016; Putnam, Fairhurst & Banghart, 2016; Schad, Lewis, Raisch & Smith, 2016), robust handbooks (e.g., Berti, Simpson, Cunha & Clegg, 2021; Clegg, 2002; Farjoun, Smith, Langley & Tsoukas, 2018; Smith, Jarzabkowski, Lewis, & Langley, 2017), and a double volume of *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, engaging in interdisciplinary theorizing (see Bednarek, Cunha, Schad, & Smith, 2021a, 2021b). Recently, we published an annotated bibliography with Oxford Bibliographies to catalog this mounting research (see Carmine & Smith, 2021).

Several factors fuel this growing interest in paradox, including relevance, theoretical inclusivity, and communal support. Foremost, paradox theory offers a relevant lens through which to engage the increasing complexity of our world. As requisite variety suggests, complexity of theory should match that of the focal phenomena. Many leaders have noted that we now live in a VUCA world: volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. The dynamic, interwoven opposites of paradox offer an empowering lens that shifts from a more reductionist and linear approach to one that can accommodate more holistic and circular dynamics. As example, scholars have applied paradox theory to understand the multiple, interwoven tensions associated with climate change (Williams, Heucher, & Whiteman, 2021), sustainability (Hahn, Preuss, Pinkse, & Figge, 2014), hybridity and social entrepreneurship (Battilana, Sengul, Pache, & Model, 2015; Smith & Besharov, 2019), and diversity (Putnam & Ashcraft, 2017; Waldman & Sparr, 2022). Likewise, 54 scholars recently came together to explore the challenges of COVID-19 through a paradox lens (see Carmine et al., 2021; Keller et al., 2021; Pradies et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2021).

Second, paradox offers a theoretically inclusive and energizing “big tent” theory. Elsewhere, we have depicted paradox as a meta-theory, enabling insights across theories and tools for broader theorizing (Lewis & Smith, 2014; see also Berti et al., 2021). The big tent experience is double-edged. The divergence of perspectives invites scholars to apply paradox theory across a wide range of phenomena and theories, drawing on diverse methods and ontological

assumptions. The breadth of applications spurs creativity and innovation through integration yet can foster challenges of defensiveness that limit research synergies. Paradox scholars gain opportunities to build more thoughtful theory by remaining open to these varied approaches while maintaining clear boundary conditions around core ideas (see Cunha & Putnam, 2019; Schad, Lewis, & Smith, 2019). These opportunities have been spurred by a trusting, respectful culture among our paradox colleagues who embrace the theoretical both-and—valuing, accommodating, and integrating divergent views, assumptions, and methods.

Finally, intentional community-building efforts further fostered support that has propelled scholarly advances. We have long believed that scholarship is a social process. We have valued coauthors and colleagues to help us develop our own insights, have invested in opportunities to build community that expands conversations and connections, and are grateful to the many colleagues that have taken leadership to do so. In 2010, we joined Paula Jarzabkowski to convene our first European Group for Organization Studies (EGOS) subtrack in Lisbon, Portugal. Since 2012, different colleagues have led an EGOS paradox subtrack every year, with a Standing Working Group for many of these years. This subtrack routinely receives among the most conference submissions. This scholarly community has also held professional development workshops at the Academy of Management Conference, highlighting paradox theory’s connections with other core theories and ideas (institutional theory, innovation and creativity, ambidexterity, East–West cultural divides, cooperation, etc.), organized several one-day conferences, and even institutionalized an annual informal gathering at EGOS and AOM which we call “Drinking Away Tensions.” We have gathered virtually as well for professional development workshops, a PhD reading group, and even a fully online conference this year including over 150 scholars across the globe with over 100 academic abstracts submitted. We have also opened supportive communication channels to share information and insights including a paradox newsletter, website, social media presence, and Facebook group. Numerous colleagues stepped into vital leadership roles to aid this organizing. We are grateful for the resulting efforts in which positive, fun interactions have collectively advanced scholarship, careers, and impact.

We often hear colleagues value the relevant, inclusive, and communal culture among paradox scholars. They feel inspired by the discussions of applied

paradox theory and impact, particularly amid such an easily abstracted theory. They find the supportive, inclusive nature of the paradox community motivating. Many also stress the uniqueness of this culture, compared with other parts of academia that can feel more narrow in theory or defensive and territorial in culture. We know that the experiences of relevance, theoretical inclusivity, and community support are not unique to paradox theory; indeed, we have experienced these conditions in other academic communities. Still, we believe that these facets spurring paradox scholarship can generalize to other scholarly communities and wonder what impact our field could have if more academic communities pushed toward such supportive, inclusive scholarly cultures as the norm.

WHERE WE ARE NOW: CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE

Expanding scholarship on paradox theory has involved both convergent, centripetal forces that have drawn together accumulating insights as well as divergent, centrifugal forces that have invited novel, critical, and expansive ideas (see Schad et al., 2019). Taken together, these broad contributions continue to enrich and complicate paradox theory.

First, the field has seen both integration and expansion around definitions of paradox and its distinctions from tensions, dilemmas, and dialectics. When we wrote the 2011 *Academy of Management Review* article, we defined paradox as “contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time” (Smith & Lewis, 2011: 382). Our definition drew on notable foundations (e.g., Lewis, 2000; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989; Smith & Berg, 1987). Scholars have continued to contribute additional definitions (e.g., Putnam et al., 2016; Schad et al., 2016). Nuanced in their distinctions, varying definitions increasingly converge around three constitutive elements of paradox: contradiction, interdependence, and persistence. Paradoxes involve dualistic forces that are both in opposition to one another yet are also reinforcing and synergistic, such that one element defines the boundaries of the other. Seeking to pull these forces apart remains futile, as they are locked in a dynamic, persistent relationship (see also Berti & Simpson, 2021; Hahn & Knight, 2021; Tsoukas & Cunha, 2017).

Debates continue, however, as to how paradox differs from similar constructs such as tensions, dilemmas, and dialectics (for a deeper and more expansive discussion of varied constructs, see Putnam et al.,

2016). In 2011, we described tensions as the experience of competing demands, the tug-of-war between alternative options. Putnam, Fairhurst, and Banghart (2016: 68) elaborated: “tensions are feeling states, ones that often result from frustration, blockage, uncertainty, and even paralysis that individuals face in dealing with contradictions and paradoxes.” As they articulated, the concept of tensions offers the broadest, overarching term encompassing these varied constructs and experiences of opposition.

Dilemmas involve tensions where explicit advantages and disadvantages can enable a clear resolution. Putnam and colleagues (2016: 73) further specified that dilemmas are “one-shot encounters in which actors weigh pros and cons and make trade-offs.” In 2011, we suggested that conceptual confusion arises as dilemmas morph into paradox. We experience tensions as proximate and pragmatic dilemmas that beg us for a solution. To capture this contextualized experience of tensions, we have recently defined these as *presenting dilemmas* (Smith & Lewis, 2022).¹ Yet, enduring and persistent *underlying paradoxes* lurk within these dilemmas. For example, in my (Wendy’s) (Smith, 2014) work, I found that top management teams seeking to innovate faced ongoing dilemmas (which I defined as *key issues*), such as whether to allocate limited research and development resources or how to structure their senior leadership teams to accommodate both existing products and innovations. The senior leaders felt pressure to decide on each of these presenting dilemmas. Yet informing the presenting dilemma were more abstract and persistent paradoxes, such as exploration and exploitation, stability and change, and today and tomorrow. Similarly, Pradies (2022) found that veterinarians consistently experience presenting dilemmas about what costly veterinary procedures to offer clients and whether or not to discount fees. Vets need to make decisions in each client interaction. Underlying these dilemmas are persistent paradoxes of cost and care and normative and pragmatic professional demands.

¹ Berti and Simpson (2021) drew on Watzlawick, Jackson, and Bavelas (1967) to refer to these contextualized and seemingly impossible tensions as pragmatic paradoxes, noting the need and impossibility to make a decision. Like pragmatic paradoxes, presenting dilemmas are the temporally, spatially, and materially contextualized experiences of tensions that beg us for a solution. We use the language of presenting dilemmas to differentiate them from the enduring paradoxes that underlie and inform them.

Presenting dilemmas are bound within a temporal, spatial, and material context that both makes underlying paradoxes salient and also constrains our responses (Berti & Simpson, 2021; Knight & Paroutis, 2017). Exploring underlying paradoxes offers us a chance to reframe the context and invite alternative responses (Bartunek, 1988; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989). Expanding on this relationship, Hahn and Knight (2021) argued that dilemmas not only point to underlying paradoxes but coconstitute them. Drawing on quantum theory as a sensitizing lens, they proposed that paradoxes remain latent and indeterminate until constructed by challenging dilemmas we experience. As such, the dilemmas leaders face not only point to lurking paradoxes but also inform and define the paradoxes they engage.

Dialectics are similar to paradox in that both constructs describe contradictory yet interdependent elements, and as such, these terms are often used interchangeably (Farjoun, 2019; Putnam et al., 2016). Over the years, a number of colleagues (ourselves included!) sought to articulate distinctions between dialectics and paradox. Such distinctions are nuanced, yet to date, they have lacked convergence across the field.² In part, different theoretical foundations inform their distinctions. Dialectics emerged from Hegelian philosophy and have since been developed robustly in the fields of political philosophy, sociology, and communications, with advances by scholars such as Marx and Engels in political theory and more recently Bakhtin and Bateson in organizational and communication theory. Initial related work in organizational theory emerged through the traditions of dialectical theory (e.g., Benson, 1977). In contrast, paradox arose through writings of early Eastern and Western philosophers, such as Lao Tzu, Heraclitus, and others, and has been developed more broadly through philosophy, psychology, psychoanalysis, and physics. Some scholars have suggested that their differences lie in how they treat transformations and change. Both approaches view tensions as spurring ongoing transformation, such that any resolution is temporary.

² In sharing a draft of this paper with colleagues, the distinctions between paradox and dialectics spurred an animated conversation surfacing varied nuanced distinctions. We share some of these distinctions here as illustrative, not conclusive. We are grateful to this ongoing conversation, which exemplifies to us the value of trusted and trusting colleagues that can engage in rich debates and discourse and the value of scholars applying a paradox lens in action to inform our own theorizing.

Yet paradox stresses that opposing poles persist over time, with changes in our understandings and responses occurring through learning and creativity. In comparison, scholars that draw on Hegel have suggested that dialectics emphasize transformation as an evolutionary and political process of conflict (between thesis and antithesis) and accommodation (new synthesis), which eventually sparks new conflict (as synthesis generates a new antithesis) (Clegg & Cunha, 2017; Farjoun, 2019). Others, however, have argued for the persistence of opposing dialectical poles. For example, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) drew on the dialogical tradition of Bakhtin to depict dialectics as a ceaseless interplay.³ Some scholars have suggested that paradoxes and dialectics operate at different construal levels, with paradox offering insights into persistent, meta-level phenomena and dialectics unpacking underlying processes (see Raisch, Hargrave, & Van de Ven, 2018). For example, Hargrave and Van de Ven (2017) stressed the contextual embeddedness of dialectics, reflecting more mid-range tensions. Bodrožić and Adler (2018) dissected the historical waves of technologies from the 1700s until today, demonstrating the dialectical processes informing their evolution over time. Their focus remained on mid-range tensions as new technological innovations challenged older ones, such as the transition from water power to steam power to electrical power. Informing these historically embedded waves of technologies, however, are the same persistent and underlying paradoxes of exploration and exploitation, stability and change, today and tomorrow. In sum, debates about the distinctions between dialectics and paradoxes continue—a discussion that helps advance and continues to enrich each perspective by expanding our insights while blurring their distinctions and still places the burden on authors to clarify constructs and link such definitions with the broader literature.

Scholars have also engaged in robust exchanges about the ontologies that inform paradox understandings. Paradox theory has foundational roots in both a realist ontology, depicting paradoxes as “out there” and inherent within our material world, and a constructivist ontology, depicting paradoxes as emerging from and constituent of our material world. Early theorizing by Eastern and Western philosophers, such as Lao Tzu and Heraclitus, suggested that dynamic dualities form the building blocks of reality. Alternatively, scholars have questioned

³ We are grateful to Gail Fairhurst for pointing this out to us.

whether a material world exists beyond our social construction. For example, Putnam, Fairhurst, and Banghart (2016) offered a constitutive approach, depicting paradox as emergent through discourse, dialogue, and action. They shifted the frame from paradoxes as a puzzle to navigate and instead focus on paradoxes as performative. In 2011, we offered an approach that sought to integrate these ontologies. Social construction of systems creates boundaries that demarcate opposing demands and pull them apart (Ford & Backoff, 1988). Paradoxes remain latent within systems until made salient through social construction or through contextual conditions such as change, plurality, and scarcity. Putnam and Ashcraft (2017) advanced this argument. Introducing feminist theory and, in particular, the work of Harris (2016), they explored the integration of the material and constructed worlds. These worlds cocreate one another (see also Putnam, 2015) as systems emerge through social construction and become reified over time (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). Hahn and Knight (2021; see also Knight & Hahn, 2021) drew on inspiration from quantum theory to unpack the mechanics of such interplay, proposing that paradoxes remain latent and potential but indeterminate. Paradox becomes salient as constructed within specific socio-material contexts. The saliency in a particular material context remains temporary, yet it can be repeated and constructed over time in various and differing socio-material contexts or become reified in taken-for-granted assumptions within a particular context.

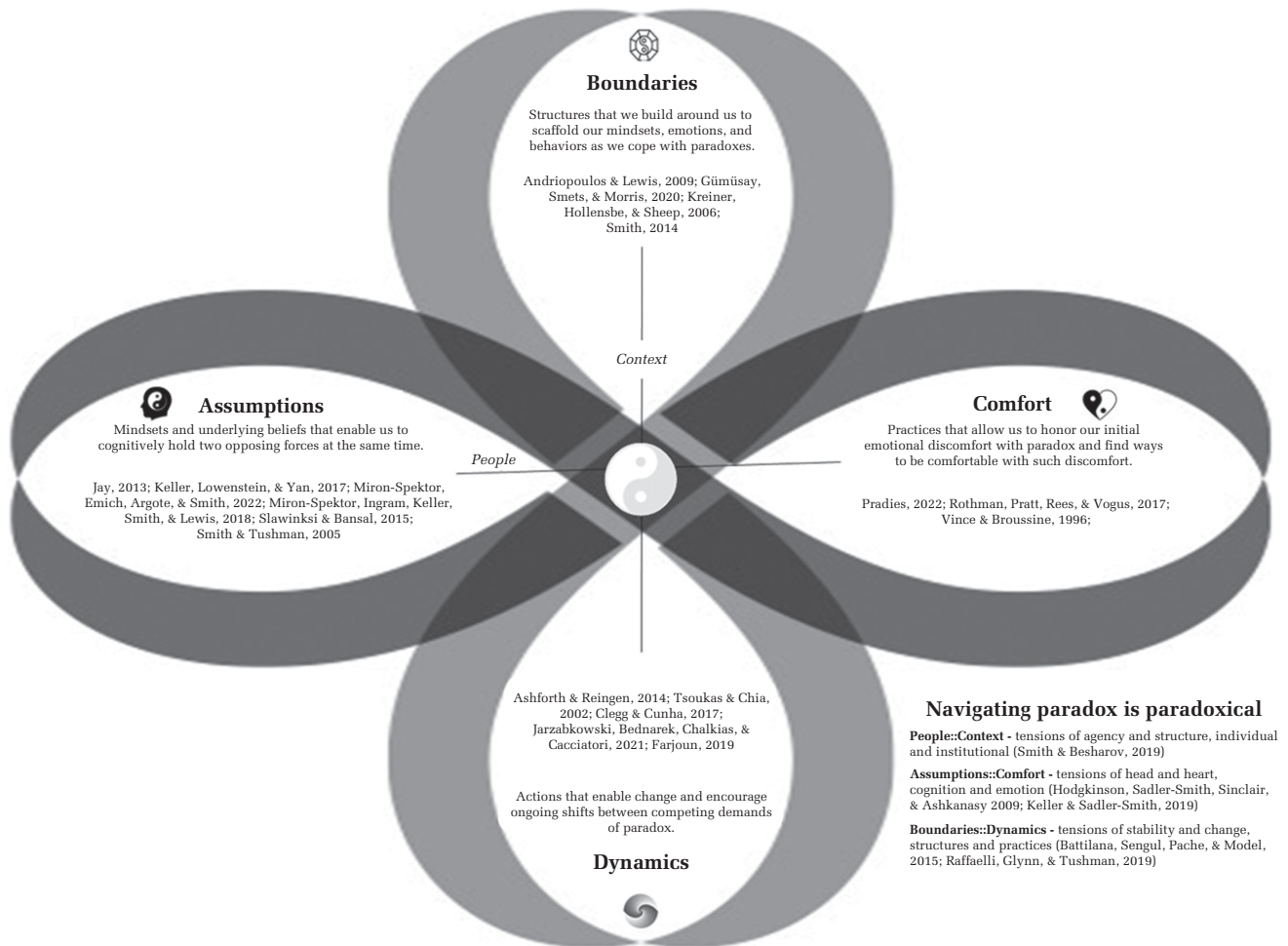
These discussions about core constructs and underlying assumptions have created fertile soil, enabling significant advances in paradox theory. Scholars have further complicated and deepened understandings of the nature of paradoxes, depicting their knottedness (i.e., multiple paradoxes intertwined with one another, see Jarzabkowski, Bednarek, Chalkias, & Cacciatori, 2021; Sheep, Fairhurst, & Khazanchi, 2017; Sheep, Kreiner, & Fairhurst, 2017), nestedness (i.e., similar paradoxes that show up across different levels, see Jarzabkowski, Lê, & Van de Ven, 2013; Schad & Bansal, 2018; Schrage & Rasche, 2022) and embeddedness (i.e., how one pole of a tension constructs, informs, and implicates its opposite, see Berti et al., 2021; Farjoun, 2010). Others have advanced insights into responses to paradox, with scholarship highlighting cognitive frames (Miron-Spektor, Gino, & Argote, 2011; Miron-Spektor, Ingram, Keller, Lewis, & Smith, 2018; Smith & Tushman, 2005), structural features such as the duality of differentiating and integrating (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Besharov, Smith, &

Darabi, 2019; Smith, 2014), individual and collective practices (i.e., Jarzabkowski & Lê, 2017; Lê & Bednarek, 2017; Knight & Paroutis, 2017), and emotional responses (Lewis, 2000; Pradies, 2022; Vince & Brousine, 1996). Some have pushed to move beyond either-or and both-and responses to paradox and included more-than (Putnam et al., 2016) and neither-and responses (Li, 2021). Still others have called for deepening theorizing on processual dynamics, evolution, cocreation, and transformation, encouraging greater exploration into the cyclical dynamics across poles (Tsoukas & Cunha, 2017; Sundaramurthy & Lewis, 2003), on materiality to surface paradox (Aoki, 2020; Knight & Paroutis, 2017), and on contextual and structural features that enable or constrain our responses to paradox, with a particular focus on power dynamics (Berti & Simpson, 2021; Huq, Reay, & Chreim, 2017; Putnam & Ashcraft, 2017). Still others vitally have pointed to the dark side of paradox (Berti & Simpson, 2021) and identified conditions under which navigating paradox feels impossible. For example, navigating paradoxes at one level triggers tensions at a different level (Schad & Bansal, 2018; Schrage & Rasche, 2022), as leaders' normative options become obscured by instrumental expectations (Ferns, Amaeshi, & Lambert, 2019; Gaim, Clegg & Cunha, 2021; Iivonen, 2018; Hahn, Pinkse, Preuss & Figge, 2015), or as our own cognitive limitations prevent us from expanding beyond our own contextual constraints (Berti & Simpson, 2021; Starbuck, 1988).

THE PARADOX SYSTEM: A PARADOXICAL FRAMEWORK FOR NAVIGATING PARADOX

As expanding insights have accumulated, varied research trajectories have continued to pull paradox theory in new and disparate directions. In particular, scholars have proposed numerous approaches to navigating paradox. Seeking to leverage these inspiring developments, we proposed a framework which we call the Paradox System (see Figure 1; Smith & Lewis, 2022). We identified four categories of approaches, describing each as a set of tools to navigate paradox, and labeled the framework a system because the tools reinforce one another. For ease of remembering, we label the tools in an ABCD mnemonic: assumptions, boundaries, comfort, and dynamics. Assumptions focus on mindsets, cognition, sensemaking, and frames. Boundaries include stable structures, roles, goals, and visions. Comfort points to emotions, feelings, and intuitions, while dynamics address adaptation, change, and evolution.

FIGURE 1
The Paradox System, Adapted from Smith and Lewis (2022)



Juxtaposing these sets of tools highlights a core insight: navigating paradox is paradoxical (see Quinn & Cameron, 1988; Stoltzfus, Stohl, & Seibold, 2011). The varied tools involve paradoxical relationships. Considering both axes together highlights embedded tensions between people and context, agency and structure, and individual and institutional. The horizontal axis accentuates tensions between assumptions and comfort, head and heart, and cognition and emotion. Tensions of the vertical axis includes those between boundaries and dynamics, stability and change, and guardrails and experimentation. We explore these paradoxical relationships and their roles in helping us address paradox.

Assumptions

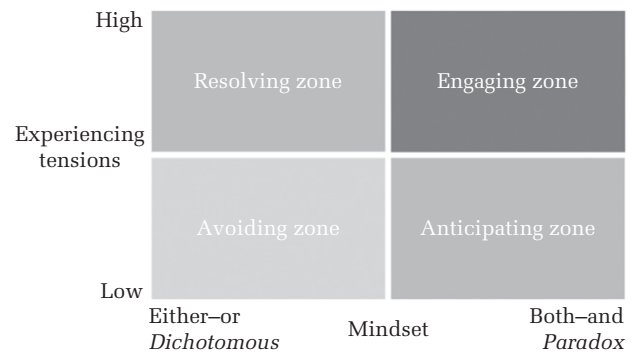
Assumptions to navigate paradox denote “mindsets and underlying beliefs which enable us to cognitively hold two opposing forces at the same time” (Smith & Lewis, 2022: 84–85). In early organizational studies, Bartunek (1988) pointed to the power of cognitive framing in surfacing, understanding, and coping with paradox. Juxtaposing competing demands can create a double-bind. On the one hand, scholars have suggested that paradoxes raise absurdities that create problems that may be a function of our own cognitive limitations and lead individuals toward vexing and unsolvable problems (Berti & Simpson, 2021; Putnam, 1986). As Starbuck (1988: 70) once noted:

We people may not be capable of understanding our worlds in full, and rationality may not be able to comprehend the complexities and contradictions of our world ... we may be like chimpanzees swinging about in the rafters of the New York Stock Exchange and trying to articulate its laws. The paradoxes we see may look illogical to creatures with our limited reasoning capabilities and our form of logic, yet they might make sense to creatures with more complex brains or with brains that employ a different form of logic. (p. 70)

Yet juxtaposing competing demands can also foster generative, novel, and creative opportunities. In his foundational work, Rothenberg (1979) studied geniuses such as Mozart, Picasso, Einstein, and Woolf, finding that their greatest insights emerged from engaging tensions and opposition. He described this process as Janusian thinking after the two-faced Roman god Janus. As Bartunek (1988:147) stated, “the more people can allow discrepant pieces of information to exist simultaneously with each other, the more likely the frames they develop should be novel ones, truly different from their original perspective” (see also Clarke, 1998).

More recently, scholars have pointed to paradoxical frames that accommodate competing demands simultaneously (Miron-Spektor et al., 2011; Smith & Tushman, 2005). For example, Jay (2013) found that navigating the tensions between economic and environmental demands for the Cambridge Energy Alliance required ongoing sensemaking about the nature of success and failure. We suggest that shifting our frames invites us to refocus our attention from a presenting dilemma in which the context drives us to more constrained either-or thinking and instead make salient an underlying paradox that invites us toward more expansive both-and thinking. Doing so involves shifting assumptions about knowledge, resources, and problem solving. Scholars have pointed to shifts in ontological assumptions from framing knowledge as a singular truth to accommodating multiple competing truths (Miron-Spektor et al., 2011; Smith & Lewis, 2011), resources as scarce, zero-sum, and limited to abundant and expansive (e.g., Bazerman, 1998; Diamandis & Kotler, 2012; Fisher & Ury, 1981), and problem solving as controlling and resolving to coping with and adapting to tensions (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). Concepts such as integrative complexity (Suedfeld, Tetlock, & Streufert, 1992; Tetlock, Peterson, & Berry, 1993; Zhang, Waldman, Han, & Li, 2015) and naïve dialecticism (Peng & Nisbett, 1999; Spencer-Rodgers, Peng, Wang, & Hou, 2004) offer distinct, yet associated, constructs with a paradox mindset.

FIGURE 2
Paradox Mindset Inventory: Zones of Navigating Paradoxes



In our own work with colleagues, we advanced theory by unpacking the nature and impact of paradox mindsets (see Miron-Spektor et al., 2018). We surveyed thousands of people to identify and develop the Paradox Mindset Inventory, which delineates two distinct yet interwoven scales: experiencing tensions and paradox mindset. People differ in the extent to which they experience tensions in a situation, either because of the conflictual nature of the context or because of their social construction of the context. They also differ in their mindset, approaching tensions through assumptions that form dichotomous either-or thinking or paradoxical both-and thinking. We have described these interwoven factors as zones of navigating paradox (see Figure 2). Actors reside in the *avoiding zone* when they do not experience tension and adopt an either-or thinking. They might be in a context with limited tensions, such that either-or responses are the most effective to address the situation. Alternatively, they might be close to tensions but avoiding them. However, as context or cognition shifts to make tensions salient, these people move into the *resolving zone*—experiencing tensions and adopting an either-or mindset. Doing so may be most effective in the moment but challenging when long-term tensions pose ongoing conflicts. Alternatively, people might be poised to apply a both-and mindset yet experience few tensions. We describe this as the *anticipating zone*, such that with an increased experience of tensions they move into the *engaging zone*. More recently, scholars have identified the benefits of a paradox mindset for enhancing job satisfaction and performance (Miron-Spektor et al., 2018), individual creativity (Miron-Spektor et al., 2011), team

creativity (Miron-Spektor, Emich, Gino, Argote, & Smith, 2022), leadership advances (Besharov, 2014), decision-making (Keller & Sadler-Smith, 2019) and organizational performance (Hahn et al., 2014; Smith & Besharov, 2019). Scholars have also pointed to important boundary conditions. Several scholars have stressed the role of cultural norms and national myths, in particular finding different approaches to paradox in Eastern versus Western cultures (Chen, 2008; Keller, Loewenstein, & Yan, 2017; Leung et al., 2018; Li, 2012) and proposing alternative approaches in African cultures, particularly emerging from ubuntu philosophy (Gaim & Clegg, 2021; Koli & Lê, 2022). Still others have raised concerns about the complexity of a paradox mindset, wondering if a paradox mindset is necessary for addressing underlying paradoxes (Child, 2020) and questioning the cognitive load and extensive resources for such frames and wondering about the oppressive or exclusive potential if such frames become selection criteria (Berti et al., 2021).

Boundaries

Boundaries describe the “structures that we build around us to scaffold our mindsets, emotions and behaviors as we cope with paradoxes” (see Smith & Lewis, 2022: 85). We highlight three key structures surfaced in the literature: overarching vision, differentiating and integrating structures, and guardrails. An overarching vision or identity offers a statement of purpose that integrates opposing poles. Overarching visions shift the focus from competitive pressures to create opportunities for integrative problem solving (see Sherif, 1958) and from short-term demands to longer-term visions that diminish the proximate challenges for the more abstracted synergies (Slawinski & Bansal, 2015). Moreover, overarching visions can spark emotional connections, fostering increased inspiration and motivation to engage with paradox (Raffaelli, Glynn, & Tushman, 2019). Johnson (2020) described the overarching vision as a GPS—global purpose statement—that helps provide a guide for engaging the upsides of competing demands, contrasting this with deeper fears that lead toward seeing the downsides. For example, Lifshitz-Assaf (2018) found that the United States National Aeronautic and Space Administration’s vision to “help America return to the Moon, and eventually travel to Mars and beyond” created an inspirational, long-term vision that spurred collaboration among often rivaling scientists and scientific bodies. Similarly, Child (2020) found that social entrepreneurs cope with tensions

between their social mission and financial demands by looking at the big picture—focusing on an ultimate goal and shifting to a longer-term horizon (see also Slawinski & Bansal, 2015).

Scholars have also pointed to structural patterns for differentiating and integrating to navigate paradoxes. Differentiating involves “recognizing and articulating distinctions,” while integration involves “identifying linkages” (see Smith & Tushman, 2005: 527). In organizations, differentiating can be accomplished through separate subgroups (Ashforth & Reingen, 2014), senior leadership roles (Smith, 2014), temporally iterating between alternative demands (Smith, 2014), distinct physical space or language (Gümüşay, Smets, & Morris, 2020), and diverse portfolios (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009). Integration can occur through integrative roles or allocated time for integration (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Smith, 2014), shared meanings of material artifacts (Gümüşay et al., 2020), or shared spaces for negotiation (Battilana et al., 2015). At the individual level, differentiating and integrating occur through navigating identities (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2006), managing time and space (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989), navigating social ties (Keller, Wong, & Liou, 2020; Mafico, Krzeminska, Härtel, & Keller, 2021), or considering dress and other socio-material cues (Aoki, 2020). Importantly, research has pointed to the critical role of both differentiating structures and integrating structures for navigating paradoxes (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Besharov et al., 2019). Differentiating without integrating may spur false dichotomies and conflict, whereas integrating without differentiating may foster false synergies, such that power dynamics control decision making (Smith, 2014).

Finally, guardrails offer structures to ensure that power dynamics do not overwhelm and foster either—or choices. In my (Wendy’s) work with Marya Besharov (Smith & Besharov, 2019: 9), we defined guardrails as “guardians of each mission, monitoring whether practices emphasized one mission at the expense of the other.” Guardrails create a container bounding opposing poles. When practices, practitioners, and praxis go too far toward one pole, they bump up against the guardrails and create cautions and triggers that bring them back into relationships with one another. Organizations can create guardrails through various structures. In the case of social enterprise Digital Divide Data (Smith & Besharov, 2019), guardrails ensured that senior leaders maintained ongoing dual commitments by creating formal organizational structures, leadership expertise, and stakeholder relations associated with both the

social mission and the business purpose. Similarly, Huq, Reay, and Chreim (2017) found that for health care professionals to honor and integrate a medical approach and a psycho-social behavioral approach, they required that the medical care professionals create guardrails that limited their own structural power in order to create opportunity for the psycho-social behavioral professionals.

Comfort

Comfort involves “practices that allow us to honor our initial emotional discomfort with paradox and to find ways to be comfortable with such discomfort” (Smith & Lewis, 2022: 86). As with mindsets, emotions also offer a double-edged sword for navigating paradox. Experiencing the absurd juxtaposition of opposites is disconcerting and can trigger negative emotions of anxiety and defensiveness (Jarrett & Vince, 2017). Making either—or choices can reduce this emotional discomfort in the short term but lead to intensifying defenses over time (Lewis, 2000). Vince and Broussine (1996) studied health care workers in the United Kingdom facing paradoxical tensions amid change in the National Health System, identifying defensive responses of repression, regression, projection, reaction formation, and denial. On the flip side, scholars have found that positive emotions can enable more open mindedness to seek out and engage alternative perspectives (see Fredrickson, 2001). Doing so can enable the juxtaposition of opposing forces and lead to more creative, generative possibilities. A number of practices aid emotional regulation, including physiological practices such as breathing, cognitive practices such as accepting and embracing negative emotions to ironically diminish their impact (i.e., Brach, 2004), or relational practices such as humor to diffuse the emotionality of the situation (Jarzabkowski & Lê, 2017). Such works have noted that the more that we adopt positive emotions, the more we will choose to broaden our perspectives, which can facilitate ongoing positive emotions.

Emotions can also offer support for navigating paradox as we become more comfortable with the discomfort of paradox. Emotions can help render latent paradoxes salient and provide ongoing triggers to engage competing demands over time. For example, Pradies (2022) found emotions remained at the core of how veterinarians managed tensions between care and cost. Emotions surfaced underlying paradoxes as vets faced ongoing dilemmas between whether to require clients to pay full price

for pet care or tell the clients that they cannot provide the care. Emotions also guided their decisions and impacted future decision making by “leaving emotional traces” behind.

More recently, studies have suggested that complex efforts, such as navigating paradoxes, benefit from emotional ambivalence—the simultaneous experience of positive and negative emotions—which pulls people in opposite directions (Fong, 2006; Rees, Rothman, Lehavy, & Sanchez-Burks, 2013; Rothman, Pratt, Rees, & Vogus, 2017). Negative emotions create conditions that encourage the search for more alternative options in the first place, while positive emotions enable more engagement with alternative perspectives to generate more creativity. As Cameron (2017: 229) cited, “all sunshine makes a desert.” For example, Huy (2002) found that middle managers more effectively enabled a change effort when they managed conflicting emotions because they were energized by the change while navigating the defensive emotions of subordinates. Rees and colleagues (2013) found that emotional ambivalence led to more accurate judgment.

Dynamics

Dynamics involve “actions that enable change and encourage ongoing shifts between competing demands of paradox” (Smith & Lewis, 2022: 86). Drawing on a relational processual ontology, dynamics foreground the emergence, change, and evolution of paradox (Langley & Tsoukas, 2018; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Our 2011 *Academy of Management Review* manuscript presented a dynamic equilibrium model of how these cycles unfold over time. Scholars have unpacked these dynamics in more depth, a good deal of which has been developed through the lens of dialectics (see Benson, 1977; Clegg & Cunha, 2017; Farjoun, 2019; Hargrave & Van de Ven, 2017).

Tensions serve as a motor for ongoing change (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Opposing poles trigger one another to foster vicious or virtuous cycles. Vicious cycles emerge when one pole pulls toward an extreme, eventually fostering its downsides and sparking its opposite forces. In contrast, engaging competing demands can simultaneously fuel virtuous cycles as opposing forces lead to novel, creative possibilities (Tsoukas & Cunha, 2017). For example, Sundaramurthy and Lewis (2003) considered the ongoing tension in corporate governance between control and collaboration. An overemphasis on control mechanisms leads to disenfranchisement and disengagement, fosters polarization, and encourages myopic behaviors, which

drive increased control and eventually diminish performance. In the opposing context, an overemphasis on collaborative behaviors stresses consensus at the expense of critique and accountability, fostering complacency and groupthink over time. Virtuous cycles, however, emerge from adopting and adapting control mechanisms that enable collaborative engagement, and collaborative engagement can give rise to appropriate controls and critique. Ashforth and Reingen (2014) depicted the dynamics when opposing forces are split into separate groups, demonstrating the roles and rituals that groups of idealists and pragmatists adopted while navigating persistent tensions in a natural food cooperative. Jarzabkowski and colleagues (2021) added complexity to these interactions, exploring the dynamics that emerge as multiple paradoxes crash up against one another, knotting and reknitting over time, resulting in constant shifting between states of equilibrium and disequilibrium.

Taken to an extreme, a processual approach foregrounds evolution, change, emergence, and transformation to the extent that the paradox poles melt away, leaving a continuous ebb and flow. For example, corporate governance would no longer reify control and collaboration but focus on their ongoing interplay, such that the alternative approaches are constantly in flux. Early work by Mary Parker Follett described these dynamics, suggesting that we live in an ongoing evolving situation, such that:

we are creating each other all the time ... in the very process of meeting, by the very process of meeting, we both become something different ... It is I plus the-interweaving-between-you-and-me, meeting you plus the interweaving-between-you-and-me, etc., etc.... out to the nth power. (Follett, as quoted by Graham, 1995: 42)

Individuals and organizations can adopt practices to avoid getting stuck in a rut and instead more dynamically navigate the ongoing flow of paradoxes. Accumulating research has pointed to practices such as improvisation and serendipity (e.g., Cunha, Miner, & Antonacopoulou, 2017; Fisher, Demir-Caliskan, Hua, & Cronin, 2021). Improvisation, defined as the convergence between conception and implementation (Moorman & Miner, 1998), involves its own paradoxes. Increased planning allows for more in-the-moment execution (Fisher et al., 2021). Improvising collapses distinct poles, inviting greater ongoing shifts. Similarly, serendipity, or the accidental discovery of something new (Cunha et al., 2017), involves an inherent paradox—purposefully creating the conditions to enable our luck.

NAVIGATING PARADOX IS PARADOXICAL

Juxtaposing varied research highlights the paradoxes embedded in approaches for navigating paradox. As noted in Figure 1, these include tensions between people and context (between the axes), assumptions and comfort (between poles of the horizontal axis), and boundaries and dynamics (between poles of the vertical axis). We unpack the nature of these tensions in general and examine how these paradoxical approaches enable the navigation of paradox.

Scholars have long debated tensions between people and context, depicting them as tensions of agency and structure, or individual actions and institutionalized forces as reflected in the two separate axes in our model. While some scholars have advocated for a one-sided extreme, many have moved beyond an either-or debate to explore the interdependencies of this duality (see Poole & Van de Ven, 1989). Writing in the 1920s, Mary Parker Follett offered a provocative integration of personal behavior and societal structures, depicting social situations as being constituted and reconstituted by individual interactions and relations. Follett argued,

it is the totality of all the interweaving relationships relevant to a given time and place that constitutes the situation [...] We are never dealing merely with the circular response relating between this part and that part, but also with all the other relating that apply to both of them while they are interacting. (as quoted by Fox, 1968: 523)

Giddens's (1984) articulation of structuration theory built on Follett's ideas, pointing to discourse, rules, and roles through which individuals produce and reproduce institutionalized structures and how such structures define and constrain individual action. Applying a structuration lens, Jarzabkowski (2008) analyzed how leadership teams in three universities developed strategy across seven years, finding that strategizing involves both sequential and simultaneous integration of senior leaders' actions and organizational contexts. Similarly, Hallett and Ventresca (2006) described the idea of embedded agency to highlight the role of individual action to inform institutionalized forces. My (Wendy's) work with Marya Besharov (Smith & Besharov, 2019) has explored the integration of structure and agency to navigate strategic paradoxes for social enterprises. We have found that effectively engaging tensions between social mission and business practices involved building structural guardrails to separate and uphold each strategic demand and individual

paradoxical frames to advance connections and synergies. Paradoxical frames inform leaders' actions to craft guardrails, while structural guardrails reinforce leaders' paradoxical frames.

Another long-standing academic debate swirls around applying a static or dynamic lens to understand organizations and their leadership as reflected between boundaries and dynamics in our model's vertical axis. Static approaches stress boundaries, stabilities, entities, structure, durability, and scaffolding, while dynamic approaches invite change, process, evolution, experimentation, improvisation, and novelty. Structures and change can work at cross purposes. Structures can limit and constrain action just as change can upend the fixed order (see Berti & Simpson, 2021). Yet these opposing forces can also reinforce and enable one another such that structure creates boundaries that unleash creativity, experimentation, and change, while changes enable microshifting that reinforces stability. Farjoun (2010: 203) unpacked the paradoxical nature of stability and change, highlighting their interwoven nature and noting that "attaining stable, low-variance outcomes such as reliability often requires variation inducing mechanisms, and attaining high variance outcomes such as innovation often requires stable mechanisms." Paradox scholars have started to explore how stability and change work together to navigate paradoxes. In our 2011 manuscript, using a dynamic equilibrium model, we explored the dynamic, evolving nature of paradoxes as informed by stable, persistent poles. For example, while organizations will continually grapple with tensions between exploration and exploitation, the nature of exploring and exploiting—and the relationship between them—will continually change over time. Fairhurst and Sheep (2019) further explored how disequilibrium and disorder inform stability in the knottedness of multiple paradoxes over time. Raffaelli and colleagues (2019) found that an organization's strategic focus, or frame, helps to guide action, yet it can constrain innovation and new opportunities. They suggested that firms that effectively engage both the past and the present are ones with frame flexibility—stable strategies with enough flexibility to morph, adapt, and change. Similarly, Battilana and colleagues (2015) pointed to the value of static physical spaces to create opportunities for processes to dynamically navigate conflicts and tensions in hybrid organizations over time.

Finally, at the more micro level, scholars have debated the tension between cognition, rationality, mindsets, and assumptions versus affect, emotion, feelings, intuition, and comfort as reflected between

assumptions and comfort tensions in our model's horizontal axis. Do we locate the center of motivation and action in the head or in the heart? Early philosophers took strong stands. For example, Rene Descartes's famous line, "I think, therefore I am," advocated for the primacy of cognition to inform action. In contrast, Freud's psychoanalytic philosophy placed action at the mercy of ego, emotions, urges, and impulses outside of conscious awareness, such that emotion took primacy to inform action. In the context of decision making, dual process theory explores the duality of analytical, rational, and controlled thinking with more intuitive, emotional, and automatic approaches (for a review, see Hodgkinson, Sadler-Smith, Sinclair, & Ashkanasy, 2009). In our own work, we have found that a paradox mindset includes both cognitive processes alongside emotional experiences of accepting tensions (Miron-Spektor et al., 2018). Keller and Sadler-Smith (2019) examined how this duality of rationality and intuition informs our approaches to navigating paradoxes, suggesting that the dual processes both allow for differentiating and integrating focal paradoxes and inform decisions.

TOWARD A PARADOX PARADIGM IN ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY

A colleague recently suggested to us that the paradox "fad" is starting to fade in organizational theory. Some theories recede at the same speed that they emerge. As a theory responding to today's complexity pressures, paradox may indeed follow this trajectory—an intriguing, provocative, and timely ideological whim with limited long-term implications. However, various indicators suggest instead that paradox theory faces a longer and more impactful horizon. While paradox studies have grown extensively over the last 10 years in organizational theory, its roots run far deeper. Unlike fads, insights about paradox have withstood the test of time. Recent ideas about organizational paradox build on insights initially articulated by philosophers over 2,500 years ago. Intriguingly, philosophers such as Heraclitus in Greece and Lao Tzu in China, among others, started generating ideas about interdependent and fluid dualities around the same time, with limited connection with one another. Organizational scholars started to introduce notions of paradox, dialectics, and dualities beginning in the late 1970s (e.g., Benson, 1977; Cameron, 1986; Quinn & Cameron, 1988; Smith & Berg, 1987), with related research accumulating since. Resulting insights have been complemented by the rise of aligned intellectual

pursuits, such as process theory (e.g., Langley & Tsoukas, 2010; 2018) and practice theory (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Lê & Bednarek, 2017; Whittington, 2006), both of which advance dynamic and dualistic models. The endurance of such ideas and rise of supporting insights portend the continuity and ongoing advances of paradox theory.

Boldly and provocatively, we propose paradox as a new paradigm (see also Sparr, Miron-Spektor, Lewis, & Smith, forthcoming). Previously, we depicted paradox as a meta-theory (see Ritzer, 1975) in which the overarching perspective and underlying assumptions traversed phenomena and theories (Lewis & Smith, 2014; see also Berti et al., 2021). As Kuhn noted, paradigm shifts involve a more broad-based scientific revolution. The noted shifting of organizational perspectives and assumptions from more linear, rational approaches toward holistic, processual interdependencies reflects such a movement, one that is akin to and informed by such shifts in other scientific fields. For example, starting as early as the late 1800s, physics began moving away from linear, rational Newtonian physics toward quantum physics. This move signaled a shift toward understandings of matter as embedding interdependent dualities—wave and particle, existence and non-existence, stability and dynamism (for a summary, see Capra, 1975). Similarly, around the same time, the field of psychoanalysis started to articulate the interdependent opposites that constitute the human psyche and intrapersonal experience such as pressures for constriction and expansion, id and ego, impulses and discipline (for a summary, see Schneider, 1990). Insights about paradox and interdependent opposites have endured and transformed these fields, offering an exemplar for organizational theory. We propose that this paradigm shift may advance foundational organizational theory assumptions to inform how we (a) understand phenomena, (b) align methods to question and explore insights, (c) deepen our theorizing, and (d) inform practice.

Using Paradox to Understand Complex Phenomena

Increasingly, organizational scholars have surfaced, explored, and elaborated paradoxes. At the micro level, for instance, scholars have pointed to the paradoxical nature of identity (e.g., Kreiner et al., 2006), creativity (e.g., Miron-Spektor et al., 2011), and team dynamics (e.g., Miron-Spektor et al., 2022). At a more macro level, others have note the paradoxical nature

of organizational strategy (e.g., Smith, 2014), innovation (e.g., Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009), organizational hybridity (Battilana, Besharov, & Mitzinneck, 2017; Battilana & Lee, 2014), and sustainability (Hahn, Pinkse, Preuss, & Figge, 2015).

We anticipate that paradox will continue to offer a lens to understand organizational phenomena as our world becomes increasingly complex. At the macro level, concerns of inequity, authoritarian leadership, political polarization, and sustainability pose grand challenges or wicked problems (George, Howard-Grenville, Joshi, & Tihanyi, 2016). Organizational leaders feel intense pressure to address competing demands, engage multiple stakeholders, and navigate opposing approaches. Scholars at Oxford teamed up with the executive search firm Hendrick and Struggles to survey more than 150 leaders across the globe. These leaders noted that their greatest challenges involved grappling with paradoxes in their strategy, leadership, and organizational practices. At the micro level, individuals experience greater stresses as they navigate dual demands of work and life, seek to belong and be included while being unique and distinctive, and strive to do good as they do well.

Paradox offers a lens commensurate with the rising phenomenological complexity. This lens invites scholars to deepen our understandings of phenomena by recognizing and valuing opposing perspectives, engaging the intricacies of interwoven tensions, and exploring more holistic and processual approaches. Scholars across organizational theory are shifting the core questions that they are asking. Rather than seeking to understand the dominant forces that inform phenomena, scholars are setting out to understand the interwoven and dynamic nature of dual forces. Whereas innovation scholars once sought to understand the linear shift from one technological era to another, they now seek to understand how one technological era informs, defines, and coexists simultaneously with a new era. Likewise, whereas personality scholars once sought to differentiate individuals by their enduring personality traits, they now explore how opposing traits can define and inform one another, morphing over time. In this way, paradox moves beyond the boundaries of its own theory to begin to shift questions and approaches across other theories. More profoundly, as insights from the Paradox System indicate, these ideas further push us to study how navigating paradox involves the interdependencies between micro-level frames and emotions

inform more macro-level context, inviting integrations across varied theories.

Using Paradox to Inform Our Methods

In our 2011 paper, we depicted paradox theory as an alternative to contingency theory to understand competing demands. This distinction not only informs our understanding of phenomena but also our methodological approaches to study those phenomena—our research questions, epistemological and ontological assumptions, data collection, and analysis. Contingency theory seeks to answer the question “under what conditions would I choose between alternative options?” Underlying this assumption is a linear, reductionist ontology assuming a right and wrong answer for a particular context. Given the noted intricacies of our world, such an approach depends on increasingly detailed data and sophisticated analytical techniques. Our era of “big data” and greater computing power offers the promise of increasingly nuanced understanding of the contingencies under which to choose opposing perspectives, while paradox complements the rising volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of our world.

Paradox theory invites an alternative methodological approach. By reframing the research question, scholars may seek to understand how competing demands exist simultaneously. Drawing on a dynamic, dualistic, and holistic ontology, paradox theory suggests exploration into the interwoven and evolving nature of opposing dualities. While paradox scholars have frequently turned to qualitative methods (see Fairhurst & Putnam, 2019), increasingly scholars have developed core constructs into scales, such as the paradox mindset measure (Miron-Spektor et al., 2018) and paradox leadership behaviors scale (Zhang et al., 2015), enabling quantitative tests. Scholars have also started to explore analytical techniques that move beyond assumptions of central tendencies and means to engage multiple competing demands simultaneously and accommodate complexity and adaptation, including approaches such as cluster analyses or qualitative cluster analyses. The Paradox System further invites us to explore interdependencies across these approaches. For example, Fairhurst and Putnam (2019) explored the potential for integrating two qualitative approaches to studying tensions: grounded theory and discourse analysis. While these methodological approaches have enabled insights that align with a more holistic,

dualistic ontology, new approaches are needed to investigate the complexity of paradox.

Using Paradox to Deepen Our Theorizing

When we first wrote the 2011 *Academy of Management Review* article, we interviewed inspiring organizational scholars of paradox. In these conversations, Jean Bartunek offered a provocative suggestion, one that has stuck with us ever since. “What if,” she asked, “every organizational theory had an equal and opposite theory?” What if we were able to apply opposing perspectives toward furthering novel insights? In their groundbreaking paper, Poole and Van de Ven (1989) proposed paradox as a tool toward advancing theory. For example, structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) emerged as a means to understand interdependencies between theories that focused on agency and micro-level phenomena with those that focused on structure and more macro-level phenomena. Similarly, ambidexterity (Tushman & O’Reilly, 1996) integrates approaches to exploration and exploitation in order to introduce theories of innovation along with theories of strategic growth and efficiency. Emotional ambivalence aims to understand how theories advancing positive emotions align with those depicting the role of negative emotions (Fong, 2006; Rothman et al., 2017). Doing so can challenge underlying orthodoxies, provoke novel approaches, and generate new ideas. Sundaramurthy and Lewis (2003) juxtaposed control and collaboration governance theories in service of offering an approach that both questions and values both options. Positive organizational scholars have strived to understand generative, adaptive, and resilient outcomes. Yet often such outcomes come as a response to difficult or negative experiences. How could positive scholars further integrate negative experiences and emotions in their theorizing? Paradox theory invites us to expand upon our own theorizing, questioning underlying assumptions by appreciating and integrating opposing perspectives.

How Can Paradox Inform Practice?

In the mutually reinforcing feedback loop between academia and practice (see Bartunek & Rynes, 2014), paradox scholars have certainly learned from studying organizations and their leaders. Yet we see further potential for paradox theory to generate insights that can inform practice. Increasingly, we hear leaders reframe challenges from either—or to both—and thinking, valuing the underlying paradoxes. For example,

recently, we noted a Barclay's campaign that was based on both main street banks and online baking, marketing material from Yale University suggesting that the school was built on both large and small, local and global, curricular and cocurricular learning, and Starbucks suggesting that their coffee shops offer spaces for living between personal and professional lives. Leaders also talk more about the AND. For example, 2008 United States presidential opponents Barack Obama and John McCain both talked about how leadership required living in the both-and between conservative and liberal policies (see Smith & Lewis, 2022). PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC, 2020) recently recognized that effective leaders are those that can engage in paradoxical leadership approaches, while Deloitte (Deloitte Insights, 2020) depicted navigating paradoxes as a core feature of organizations.

CONCLUSION

As scholars and leaders increasingly confront tensions, they will seek deeper insights to navigate paradox. We are energized by accumulating work that enriches our understandings of organizational paradoxes, unpacks the means, benefits, and challenges of engaging both-and thinking, and identifies organizational and scholarly cultures and practices that may help further these ideas more broadly. We are inspired by how these ideas move beyond defined boundaries of paradox theory to inform the thinking of other theories. Yet also, paradox can provide greater insights to navigate our own mindsets, while helping to address the deep emotional challenges we face when confronting opposite positions. Indeed, in considering the potential value of a paradox paradigm shift, we tap into the inspiration of Mary Parker Follett (1951), who concluded *Creative Experience* by stressing the value of embracing conflict, diversity, and opposites:

Thinker after thinker is trying to find some way to get rid of conflict. Moralists hope that this will be done by changing human nature. The political scientists who have taken fact-finding for their slogan tell us that facts are the solvent for controversy ... What people often mean by getting rid of conflict is getting rid of diversity, and it is of the utmost importance that these should not be considered the same ... We must face life as it is and understand that diversity is its most essential feature ... It is possible to conceive conflict as not necessarily a wasteful outbreak of incompatibilities, but a normal process by which socially valuable differences register themselves for the enrichment of all concerned ... The core of development, expansion, growth, progress of humanity is the

confronting and gripping of opposites ... a richly diversified experience where every difference strengthens and reinforces the others. (pp. 300–302)

REFERENCES

- Andriopoulos, C., & Lewis, M. W. 2009. Exploitation-exploration tensions and organizational ambidexterity: Managing paradoxes of innovation. *Organization Science*, 20: 696–717.
- Aoki, K. 2020. The roles of material artifacts in managing the learning-performance paradox: The Kaizen case. *Academy of Management Journal*, 63: 1266–1299.
- Ashforth, B. E., & Reingen, P. H. 2014. Functions of dysfunction: Managing the dynamics of an organizational duality in a natural food cooperative. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 59: 474–516.
- Bartunek, J. 1988. The dynamics of personal and organizational reframing. In R. Quinn & K. Cameron (Eds.), *Paradox and transformation: Toward a theory of change in organization and management*: 137–162. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.
- Bartunek, J. M., & Rynes, S. L. 2014. Academics and practitioners are alike and unlike: The paradoxes of academic-practitioner relationships. *Journal of Management*, 40: 1181–1201.
- Battilana, J., Besharov, M., & Mitzineck, B. 2017. On hybrids and hybrid organizing: A review and roadmap for future research. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, T. B. Lawrence, & R. E. Meyer (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of organizational institutionalism*, vol. 2: 133–169. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Battilana, J., & Lee, M. 2014. Advancing research on hybrid organizing—insights from the study of social enterprises. *Academy of Management Annals*, 8: 397–441.
- Battilana, J., Sengul, M., Pache, A.-C., & Model, J. 2015. Harnessing productive tensions in hybrid organizations: The case of work integration social enterprises. *Academy of Management Journal*, 58: 1658–1685.
- Baxter, L. A., & Montgomery, B. M. 1996. *Relating: Dialogues and dialectics*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Bazerman, M. 1998. *Judgment in managerial decision making* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Wiley.
- Bednarek, R., & Cunha, M. P., Schad, J., & Smith, W. K. 2020a. The value of interdisciplinary research to advance paradox in organization theory. In R. Bednarek, M. P. Cunha, J. Schad, & W. K. Smith (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary dialogues on organizational paradox: Learning from belief and science*, vol. A: 3–25. Bingley, U.K.: Emerald Insight.
- Bednarek, R., & Cunha, M. P., Schad, J., & Smith, W. K. 2020b. Implementing interdisciplinary paradox research. In R. Bednarek, M. P. Cunha, J. Schad, & W. K.

- Smith (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary dialogues on organizational paradox: Investigating social structures and human expression*, vol. B: 3–24. Bingley, U.K.: Emerald Insight.
- Benson, J. K. 1977. Organizations: A dialectical view. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 22: 1–21.
- Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. 1967. *The social construction of reality. A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.
- Berti, M., & Simpson, A. V. 2021. On the practicality of resisting pragmatic paradoxes. *Academy of Management Review*, 46: 409–412.
- Berti, M., Simpson, A., Cunha, M. P., & Clegg, S. R. 2021. *Elgar introduction to organizational paradox theory*. Cheltenham, U.K.: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Besharov, M. L. 2014. The relational ecology of identification: How organizational identification emerges when individuals hold divergent values. *Academy of Management Journal*, 57: 1485–1512.
- Besharov, M., Smith, W., & Darabi, T. 2019. A framework for sustaining hybridity in social enterprises: Combining differentiating and integrating. In G. George, T. Baker, P. Tracey, & H. Joshi (Eds.), *Handbook of inclusive innovation*: 394–416. Cheltenham, U.K.: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Bodrožić, Z., & Adler, P. S. 2018. The evolution of management models: A neo-Schumpeterian theory. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 63: 85–129.
- Brach, T. 2004. *Radical acceptance: Embracing your life with the heart of a Buddha*. New York, NY: Bantam.
- Cameron, K. 1986. Effectiveness as paradox: Consensus and conflict in conceptions of organizational effectiveness. *Management Science*, 32: 539–553.
- Cameron, K. 2008. Paradox in positive organizational change. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 44: 7–24.
- Cameron, K. 2017. Paradox in positive organizational scholarship. In W. K. Smith, M. W. Lewis, P. Jarzabkowski, & A. Langley (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of organizational paradox*: 216–238. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.
- Capra, F. 1975. *The Tao of physics: An exploration of the parallels between modern physics and eastern mysticism*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications.
- Carmine, S., & Smith, W. 2021. *Organizational paradox*. New York, NY: Oxford Bibliographies.
- Carmine, S., Andriopoulos, C., Gotsi, M., Härtel, C. E. J., Krzeminska, A., Mafico, N., Pradies, C., Raza, H., Raza-Ullah, T., Schrage, S., Sharma, G., Slawinski, N., Stadler, L., Tunarosa, A., Winther-Hansen, C., & Keller, J. 2021. A paradox approach to organizational tensions during the pandemic crisis. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 30: 138–153.
- Chen, M. J. 2008. Reconceptualizing the competition–cooperation relationship: A transparadox perspective. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 17: 288–304.
- Child, C. 2020. Whence paradox? Framing away the potential challenges of doing well by doing good in social enterprise organizations. *Organization Studies*, 41: 1147–1167.
- Clarke, M. 1998. Can specialists be general managers? Developing paradoxical thinking in middle managers. *Journal of Management Development*, 17: 191–206.
- Clegg, S. R. (Ed.). 2002. *Management and organization paradoxes*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamin Publishing Company.
- Clegg, S. R., Cunha, J. V., & Cunha, M. P. 2002. Management paradoxes: A relational view. *Human Relations*, 55: 483–503.
- Clegg, S. R., & Cunha, M. P. 2017. Organizational dialectics. In W. K. Smith, M. W. Lewis, P. Jarzabkowski, & A. Langley (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of organizational paradox*: 105–124. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.
- Cunha, M. P., Miner, A. S., & Antonacopoulou, E. 2017. Improvisation processes in organizations. In A. Langley & H. Tsoukas (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of process organization studies*: 559–573. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Cunha, M. P., & Putnam, L. L. 2019. Paradox theory and the paradox of success. *Strategic Organization*, 17: 95–106.
- Deloitte Insights, 2020. The social enterprise at work: Paradox as a path forward. 2020 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends. Retrieved from <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/at/Documents/human-capital/at-hc-trends-2020.pdf>
- Diamandis, P. H., & Kotler, S. 2012. *Abundance: The future is better than you think*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. 2000. Paradox, spirals, ambivalence: The new language of change and pluralism. *Academy of Management Review*, 25: 703–705.
- Eisenhardt, K. M., & Westcott, B. 1988. Paradoxical demands and the creation of excellence: The case of just in time manufacturing. In R. Quinn & K. Cameron (Eds.), *Paradox and transformation: Toward a theory of change in organization and management*: 19–54. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.
- Fairhurst, G. T., & Grant, D. 2010. The social construction of leadership: A sailing guide. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 24: 171–210.
- Fairhurst, G. T., & Putnam, L. L. 2019. An integrative methodology for organizational oppositions: Aligning grounded theory and discourse analysis. *Organizational Research Methods*, 22: 917–940.

- Fairhurst, G. T., & Sheep, M. L. 2019. Rethinking order and disorder: Accounting for disequilibrium in knotted systems of paradoxical tensions. In C. Vasquez & T. Kuhn (Eds.), *Dis/organization as communication: Studying tensions, ambiguities and disordering*: 80–98. London, U.K.: Routledge.
- Fairhurst, G., Smith, W. K., Banghart, S. G., Lewis, M. W., Putnam, L. L., Raisch, S., & Schad, J. 2016. Diverging and converging: Integrating insights on a paradox meta-perspective. *Academy of Management Annals*, 10: 173–182.
- Farjoun, M. 2010. Beyond dualism: Stability and change as duality. *Academy of Management Review*, 35: 202–225.
- Farjoun, M. 2019. Strategy and dialectics: Rejuvenating a long-standing relationship. *Strategic Organization*, 17: 133–144.
- Farjoun, M., Smith, W., Langley, A., & Tsoukas, H. 2018. *Dualities, dialectics, and paradoxes in organizational life*. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.
- Fisher, C. M., Demir-Caliskan, O., Hua, M. Y., & Cronin, M. A. 2021. Trying not to try: The paradox of intentionality in jazz improvisation and its implications for organizational scholarship. In R. Bednarek, J. Schad, M. P. E. Cunha, & W. K. Smith (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary dialogues on organizational paradox: Investigating social structures and human expression, part B*: 123–137. Bingley, U.K.: Emerald Publishing.
- Fisher, R., & Ury, W. 1981. *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Follett, M. P. 1951. *Creative experience (1924)*. New York, NY: Peter Smith.
- Fong, C. T. 2006. The effects of emotional ambivalence on creativity. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49: 1016–1030.
- Ford, J., & Backoff, R. 1988. Organizational change in and out of dualities and paradox. In R. Quinn & K. Cameron (Eds.), *Paradox and transformation: Toward a theory of change in organization and management*: 81–121. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.
- Ford, J. D., & Ford, L. W. 1994. Logics of dualities, contradiction and attraction in change. *Academy of Management Review*, 19: 756–795.
- Fox, E. M. 1968. Mary Parker Follett: The enduring contribution. *Public Administration Review*, 28: 520–529.
- Fredrickson, B. L. 2001. The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56: 218–226.
- Gaim, M., & Clegg, S. 2021. *Paradox beyond east/west orthodoxy: The case of ubuntu, interdisciplinary dialogues on organizational paradox: Learning from belief and science, part A*: 29–50. Bingley, U.K.: Emerald Publishing.
- George, G., Howard-Grenville, J., Joshi, A., & Tihanyi, L. 2016. Understanding and tackling societal grand challenges through management research. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59: 1880–1895.
- Giddens, A. 1984. *The constitution of society. Outline of the theory of structuration*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Graham, P. 1995. *Mary Parker Follett: Prophet of management*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Gümüşay, A. A., Smets, M., & Morris, T. 2020. “God at work”: Engaging central and incompatible institutional logics through elastic hybridity. *Academy of Management Journal*, 63: 124–154.
- Hahn, T., Figge, F., Pinkse, J., & Preuss, L. 2018. A paradox perspective on corporate sustainability: Descriptive, instrumental, and normative aspects. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 148: 235–248.
- Hahn, T., & Knight, E. 2021. The ontology of organizational paradox: A quantum approach. *Academy of Management Review*, 46: 362–384.
- Hahn, T., Pinkse, J., Preuss, L., & Figge, F. 2015. Tensions in corporate sustainability: Towards an integrative framework. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 127: 297–316.
- Hahn, T., Preuss, L., Pinkse, J., & Figge, F. 2014. Cognitive frames in corporate sustainability: Managerial sense-making with paradoxical and business case frames. *Academy of Management Review*, 39: 463–487.
- Hallett, T., & Ventresca, M. 2006. Inhabited institutions: Social interactions and organizational forms in Gouldner’s patterns of industrial bureaucracy. *Theory and Society*, 35: 213–236.
- Hargrave, T. J., & Van de Ven, A. H. 2017. Integrating dialectical and paradox perspectives on managing contradictions in organizations. *Organization Studies*, 38: 319–339.
- Harris, K. L. 2016. Feminist dilemmatic theorizing: New materialism in communication studies. *Communication Theory*, 26: 150–170.
- Hodgkinson, G. P., Sadler-Smith, E., Sinclair, M., & Ashkanasy, N. 2009. More than meets the eye? Intuition and analysis revisited. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 47: 342–346.
- Huq, J.-L., Reay, T., & Chreim, S. 2017. Protecting the paradox of interprofessional collaboration. *Organization Studies*, 38: 513–538.
- Huy, Q. N. 2002. The emotional balancing of organizational continuity and radical change: The contribution of middle managers. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 47: 31–69.

- Iivonen, K. 2018. Defensive responses to strategic sustainability paradoxes: Have your Coke and drink it too! *Journal of Business Ethics*, 148: 309–327.
- Jarrett, M., & Vince, R. 2017. Psychoanalytic theory, emotion and organizational paradox. In W. K. Smith, M. W. Lewis, P. Jarzabkowski, & A. Langley (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of organizational paradox*: 48–65. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.
- Jarzabkowski, P. 2004. Strategy as practice: Recursiveness, adaptation and practices-in-use. *Organization Studies*, 25: 529–560.
- Jarzabkowski, P. 2008. Shaping strategy as a structuration process. *Academy of Management Journal*, 51: 621–650.
- Jarzabkowski, P., Bednarek, R., Chalkias, K., & Cacciatori, E. 2021. Enabling rapid financial response to disasters: Knotting and reknitting multiple paradoxes in interorganizational systems. *Academy of Management Journal*. Published online ahead of print. doi: [10.5465/amj.2019.0745](https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2019.0745)
- Jarzabkowski, P. A., & Lê, J. K. 2017. We have to do this and that? You must be joking: Constructing and responding to paradox through humor. *Organization Studies*, 38: 433–462.
- Jarzabkowski, P., Lê, J., & Van de Ven, A. H. 2013. Responding to competing strategic demands: How organizing, belonging and performing paradoxes co-evolve. *Strategic Organization*, 11: 245–280.
- Jay, J. 2013. Navigating paradox as a mechanism of change and innovation in hybrid organizations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 56: 137–159.
- Johnson, B. 2020. *And: Making a difference by leveraging polarity, paradox or dilemma*. Sacramento, CA: Human Resource Development.
- Jules, C., & Good, D. 2014. *Introduction to special issue on paradox in context: Advances in theory and practice*, vol. 50: 123–126. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Keller, J., et al. ... Vince, R. 2021. Our collective tensions: Paradox research community's response to COVID-19. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 30: 168–176.
- Keller, J., Loewenstein, J., & Yan, J. 2017. Culture, conditions and paradoxical frames. *Organization Studies*, 38: 539–560.
- Keller, J., & Sadler-Smith, E. 2019. Paradoxes and dual processes: A review and synthesis. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 21: 162–184.
- Keller, J., Wong, S.-S., & Liou, S. 2020. How social networks facilitate collective responses to organizational paradoxes. *Human Relations*, 73: 401–428.
- Knight, E., & Hahn, T. 2021. Paradox and quantum mechanics: Implications for the management of organizational paradox from a quantum approach. In R. Bednarek, J. Schad, M. P. E. Cunha, & W. K. Smith (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary dialogues on organizational paradox: Learning from belief and science, part A*: 129–150. Bingley, U.K.: Emerald Publishing.
- Knight, E., & Paroutis, S. 2017. Becoming salient: The TMT leader's role in shaping the interpretive context of paradoxical tensions. *Organization Studies*, 38: 403–432.
- Koli, M., & Lê, J. 2022. Seeing paradoxes anew: Contradictory elements in Bantu philosophical traditions and African symbols. EGOS Colloquium 2022: Organizing: The beauty of imperfection for an inclusive society: Meanings, motivations, and mechanisms. Vienna, Austria.
- Kreiner, G. E., Hollensbe, E. C., & Sheep, M. L. 2006. Where is the “me” among the “we”? Identity work and the search for optimal balance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49: 1031–1057.
- Langley, A., & Tsoukas, H. 2010. Perspectives on process organization studies. In T. Hernes & S. Maitlis (Eds.), *Process, sensemaking and organizing*: 1–27. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.
- Langley, A., & Tsoukas, H. 2018. Introduction: Process thinking, process theorizing and process researching. In A. Langley & H. Tsoukas (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of process organizational studies*: 1–25. London, U.K.: SAGE.
- Lawrence, P. R., & Lorsch, J. W. 1967. Differentiation and integration in complex organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 12: 1–47.
- Lê, J., & Bednarek, R. 2017. Paradox in everyday practice: Applying practice theoretical principles to paradox. In W. K. Smith, M. L. Lewis, P. Jarzabkowski, & A. Langley (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational paradox*: 490–512. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.
- Leung, A., Liou, S., Miron-Spektor, E., Koh, B., Chan, D., Eisenberg, R., & Schneider, I. 2018. Middle ground approach to paradox: Within-and between-culture examination of the creative benefits of paradoxical frames. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 114: 443–464.
- Lewis, M. W. 2000. Exploring paradox: Toward a more comprehensive guide. *Academy of Management Review*, 25: 760–776.
- Lewis, M., & Smith, W. K. 2014. Paradox as a metatheoretical perspective: Sharpening the focus and widening the scope. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 50: 127–149.
- Li, P. P. 2012. Toward an integrative framework of indigenous research: The geocentric implications of yin-yang balance. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 29: 849–872.

- Li, X. 2021. Neither-and thinking: Understanding James March's unique solution to paradox. *Management and Organization Review*, 17: 755–776.
- Lifshitz-Assaf, H. 2018. Dismantling knowledge boundaries at NASA: The critical role of professional identity in open innovation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 63: 746–782.
- Lüscher, L., & Lewis, M. W. 2008. Organizational change and managerial sensemaking: Working through paradox. *Academy of Management Journal*, 51: 221–240.
- Mafico, N., Krzeminska, A., Härtel, C., & Keller, J. 2021. The mirroring of intercultural and hybridity experiences: A study of African immigrant social entrepreneurs. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 36: 106093–106120.
- Miron-Spektor, E., Emich, K., Argote, L., & Smith, W. 2022. Conceiving opposites together: Cultivating paradoxical frames and epistemic motivation fosters team creativity. *Organizational Behavior & Human Decision Processes*. Published online ahead of print. doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2022.104153
- Miron-Spektor, E., Gino, F., & Argote, L. 2011. Paradoxical frames and creative sparks: Enhancing individual creativity through conflict and integration. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 116: 229–240.
- Miron-Spektor, E., Ingram, A. S., Keller, J., Smith, W. K., & Lewis, M. W. 2018. Microfoundations of organizational paradox: The problem is how we think about the problem. *Academy of Management Journal*, 61: 26–45.
- Moorman, C., & Miner, A. S. 1998. The convergence of planning and execution: Improvisation in new product development. *Journal of Marketing*, 62: 1–20.
- Peng, K., & Nisbett, R. 1999. Culture, dialectics and reasoning about contradictions. *American Psychologist*, 54: 741–754.
- Poole, M. S., & Van de Ven, A. 1989. Using paradox to build management and organizational theory. *Academy of Management Review*, 14: 562–578.
- Pradies, C. 2022. With head and heart: How emotions shape paradox navigation in veterinary work. *Academy of Management Journal*. Published online ahead of print. doi: [10.5465/amj.2019.0633](https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2019.0633)
- Pradies, C., Aust, I., Bednarek, R., Brandl, J., Carmine, S., Cheal, J., Pina, E., Cunha, M., Gaim, M., Keegan, A., Lê, J. K., Miron-Spektor, M., Kristine, R., Pouthier, V., Sharma, G., Sparr, J., Vince, R., & Keller, J. 2021. The lived experience of paradox: How individuals navigate tensions during the pandemic crisis. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 30: 154–167.
- Putnam, L. 1986. Contradictions and paradoxes in organizations. In L. Thayer (Ed.), *Organization communications: Emerging perspectives*: 151–167. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Putnam, L. L. 2015. Unpacking the dialectic: Alternative views on the discourse–materiality relationship. *Journal of Management Studies*, 52: 706–716.
- Putnam, L. L., & Ashcraft, K. L. 2017. Gender and organizational paradox. In W. K. Smith, M. W. Lewis, P. Jarzabkowski, & A. Langley (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational paradox: Approaches to plurality, tensions and contradictions*: 333–352. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.
- Putnam, L. L., Fairhurst, G. T., & Banghart, S. G. 2016. Contradictions, dialectics, and paradoxes in organizations: A constitutive approach. *Academy of Management Annals*, 10: 65–171.
- PWC, 2020. Six paradoxes of leadership: Addressing the crisis of leadership. Retrieved from <https://www.pwc.com/paradoxes>
- Quinn, R., & Cameron, K. 1988. *Paradox and transformation: Toward a theory of change in organization and management*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.
- Raffaelli, R., Glynn, M. A., & Tushman, M. 2019. Frame flexibility: The role of cognitive and emotional framing in innovation adoption by incumbent firms. *Strategic Management Journal*, 40: 1013–1039.
- Raisch, S., Hargrave, T. J., & van de Ven, A. H. 2018. The learning spiral: A process perspective on paradox. *Journal of Management Studies*, 55: 8.
- Rees, L., Rothman, N. B., Leheavy, R., & Sanchez-Burks, J. 2013. The ambivalent mind can be a wise mind: Emotional ambivalence increases judgment accuracy. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 49: 360–367.
- Ritzer, G. 1975. *Sociology: A multiple paradigm science*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Rothenberg, A. 1979. *The emerging goddess*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Rothman, N. B., Pratt, M. G., Rees, L., & Vogus, T. J. 2017. Understanding the dual nature of ambivalence: Why and when ambivalence leads to good and bad outcomes. *Academy of Management Annals*, 11: 33–72.
- Schad, J., & Bansal, P. 2018. Seeing the forest and the trees: How a systems perspective informs paradox research. *Journal of Management Studies*, 55: 1490–1506.
- Schad, J., Lewis, M., Raisch, S., & Smith, W. 2016. Paradox research in management science: Looking back to move forward. *Academy of Management Annals*, 10: 5–64.
- Schad, J., Lewis, M. W., & Smith, W. K. 2019. Quo vadis, paradox? Centripetal and centrifugal forces in theory development. *Strategic Organization*, 17: 107–119.
- Schneider, K. J. 1990. *The paradoxical self: Toward an understanding of our contradictory nature*. New York, NY: Insight Books.
- Schrage, S., & Rasche, A. 2022. Inter-organizational paradox management: How national business systems

- affect responses to paradox along a global value chain. *Organization Studies*, 43: 547–571.
- Sharma, G., Bartunek, J., Buzanell, P. M., Carmine, S., Endres, C., Etter, M., Fairhurst, G., Hahn, T., Lê, P., Li, X., Pamphile, V., Pradies, C., Putnam, L. L., Rocheville, K., Schad, J., Sheep, M., & Keller, J. 2021. A paradox approach to societal tensions during the pandemic crisis. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 30: 121–137.
- Sheep, M. L., Fairhurst, G. T., & Khazanchi, S. 2017. Knots in the discourse of innovation: Investigating multiple tensions in a reacquired spin-off. *Organization Studies*, 38: 463–488.
- Sheep, M. L., Kreiner, G. E., & Fairhurst, G. T. 2017. I am ... I said. In W. K. Smith, M. W. Lewis, P. Jarzabkowski, & A. Langley (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of organizational paradox*: 452–472. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.
- Sherif, M. 1958. Superordinate goals in the reduction of intergroup conflict. *American Journal of Sociology*, 63: 349–356.
- Slawinski, N., & Bansal, P. 2015. Short on time: Intertemporal tensions in business sustainability. *Organization Science*, 26: 531–549.
- Smith, K., & Berg, D. 1987. *Paradoxes of group life*. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass.
- Smith, W. 2014. Dynamic decision making: A model of senior leaders managing strategic paradoxes. *Academy of Management Journal*, 57: 1592–1623.
- Smith, W. K., & Besharov, M. L. 2019. Bowing before dual gods: How structured flexibility sustains organizational hybridity. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 64: 1–44.
- Smith, W. K., Erez, M., Jarvenpaa, S., Lewis, M. W., & Tracey, P. 2017. Adding complexity to theories of paradox, tensions, and dualities of innovation and change: Introduction to organization studies special issue on paradox, tensions, and dualities of innovation and change. *Organization Studies*, 38: 303–317.
- Smith, W. K., & Lewis, M. W. 2011. Toward a theory of paradox: A dynamic equilibrium model of organizing. *Academy of Management Review*, 36: 381–403.
- Smith, W. K., & Lewis, M. W. 2022. *Both/and thinking: Embracing creative tensions to solve your toughest problems*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Smith, W. K., Lewis, M. W., Jarzabkowski, P., & Langley, A. 2017. *The Oxford handbook of organizational paradox*. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, W. K., & Tushman, M. L. 2005. Managing strategic contradictions: A top management model for managing innovation streams. *Organization Science*, 16: 522–536.
- Sparr, J. L., Miron-Spektor, E., Lewis, M. W., & Smith, W. K. (forthcoming). From a label to a meta-theory of paradox: If we change the way we look at things, the things we look at change. *Academy of Management Collections*.
- Spencer-Rodgers, J., Peng, K., Wang, L., & Hou, Y. 2004. Dialectical self-esteem and east-west differences in psychological well-being. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30: 1416–1432.
- Starbuck, W. 1988. Surmounting our human limitations. In R. Quinn & K. Cameron (Eds.), *Paradox and transformation: Toward a theory of change in organization and management*: 65–80. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.
- Stoltzfus, K., Stohl, C., & Seibold, D. R. 2011. Managing organizational change: Paradoxical problems, solutions, and consequences. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 24: 349–367.
- Suedfeld, P., Tetlock, P., & Streufert, S. 1992. Conceptual/integrative complexity. In C. Smith, J. Atkinson, D. McClelland, & J. Veroff (Eds.), *Motivation and personality: Handbook of thematic content analysis*: 393–400. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Sundaramurthy, C., & Lewis, M. W. 2003. Control and collaboration: Paradoxes of governance. *Academy of Management Review*, 28: 397–415.
- Tetlock, P. E., Peterson, R. S., & Berry, J. M. 1993. Flattering and unflattering personality portraits of integratively simple and complex managers. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64: 500–511.
- Tsoukas, H., & Chia, R. 2002. On organizational becoming: Rethinking organizational change. *Organization Science*, 13: 567–582.
- Tsoukas, H., & Cunha, M. 2017. On organizational circularity: Vicious and virtuous circles in organizing. In W. K. Smith, M. W. Lewis, P. Jarzabkowski, & A. Langley (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of organizational paradox*: 393–412. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.
- Tushman, M. L., & O'Reilly, C. A. I. 1996. Ambidextrous organizations: Managing evolutionary and revolutionary change. *California Management Review*, 38: 8–30.
- Van de Ven, A., & Poole, M. S. 1995. Explaining development and change in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 20: 510–540.
- Vince, R., & Broussine, M. 1996. Paradox, defense and attachment: Accessing and working with emotions and relations underlying organizational change. *Organization Studies*, 17: 1–21.
- Waldman, D. A., Putnam, L. L., Miron-Spektor, E., & Siegel, D. 2019. The role of paradox theory in decision making and management research. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 155: 1–6.
- Waldman, D. A., & Sparr, J. L. 2022. Rethinking diversity strategies: An application of paradox and positive organization behavior theories. *Academy*

of Management Perspectives. doi: [10.5465/amp.2021.0183](https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2021.0183).

- Watzlawick, P., Jackson, D. D., & Bavelas, J. B. 1967. *Pragmatics of human communication: A study of interactional patterns, pathologies, and paradoxes*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Whittington, R. 2006. Completing the practice turn in strategy research. *Organization Studies*, 27: 613–634.
- Williams, A., Heucher, K., & Whiteman, G. 2021. Planetary emergency and paradox. In R. Bednarek, J. Schad, M. P. E. Cunha, & W. K. Smith (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary dialogues on organizational paradox: Learning from belief and science, part A*: 151–170. Bingley, U.K.: Emerald Publishing.
- Zhang, Y., Waldman, D. A., Han, Y., & Li, X. 2015. Paradoxical leader behaviors in people management: Antecedents and consequences. *Academy of Management Journal*, 58: 538–566.



Marianne W. Lewis (Marianne.lewis@uc.edu) is dean of University of Cincinnati's Lindner School of Business and professor of management. A thought leader in organizational paradoxes, her work explores tensions surrounding leadership and innovation. Her research is compiled in her 2022 book *Both/And Thinking: Embracing Competing Demands to Solve Our Toughest Problems*.

Wendy K. Smith (smithw@udel.edu) is Dana J. Johnson professor of management and director of the Women's Leadership Initiative at University of Delaware's Lerner School of Business and Economics. Her research investigates how leaders navigate paradox, integrated in her recent book *Both/And Thinking: Embracing Competing Demands to Solve Our Toughest Problems*.



Copyright of Academy of Management Review is the property of Academy of Management and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.