

Nested Tensions and Smoothing Tactics:

An Ethnographic Examination of Ambidexterity in a Theatre

ABSTRACT

All organizations face contradictory demands, such as exploiting existing revenue sources whilst exploring new opportunities. The tensions of balancing these demands are largely met by employees, yet nearly all studies focus on the managerial perspective. This article uses an ethnographic study of a UK theatre to explore the experience of employees switching between exploitation and exploration in developing a play. Adopting a paradox lens, it identifies the existence of nested tensions. The organizational level is characterised by the well-studied contradiction between exploration and exploitation. Nested within this at the project level a series of tensions are produced around resources, power, and learning. These tensions lead to an identity-based paradox for employees. They must perform well in the project to secure their ties of belonging to the organization, but this simultaneously distances them from established expectations, weakening their ties of belonging. The article contributes to the literature on ambidexterity by illustrating the relational and emotional challenges faced by employees balancing exploitation and exploration; identifying the nested tensions involved in delivering ambidexterity; and through illustrating how employees smooth over these tensions using humour, shared vocabulary, and self-effacing language. On this basis, it argues for a practice-based view of ambidexterity as paradox.

Keywords: Ambidexterity, paradox, innovation, theatre.

INTRODUCTION

Opposing demands are inherent in organizational life, and it is widely acknowledged that organizational success depends on effectively managing the resulting tensions. The metaphor of ambidexterity is a common trope used in management theory to understand how organizations manage competing demands (O'Reilly and Tushman, 2013). Originally meaning the ability to use either hand interchangeably, 'ambidexterity' is used as a metaphor to explain how organizations can do two different types of activities (exploration and exploitation) using the same bundle of resources and people.

The ambidexterity literature argues that the tensions of balancing competing organizational demands are experienced and dealt with by employees (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004), yet empirical studies on the topic have historically focussed on the managerial perspective (Gupta, Smith and Shalley, 2006; Simsek, 2009; Simsek et al, 2009; Turner and Lee-Kelley, 2012). While this has resulted in much fruitful research on how managers enable ambidexterity (Turner et al, 2016), '[w]ith the notable exception of Mom et al. (2007), there is a complete lack of research into ambidexterity at the individual level of analysis' (Raisch and Birkinshaw, 2008: 397). Recent research has re-emphasised the importance of this limitation in the ambidexterity literature, and called for more detailed case studies which focus on the experience of employees (Papachroni, Heracleous, and Paroutis, 2016).

In conceptualising the nature of such contradictory demands facing employees, scholars have turned to metatheory on paradox (Andriopoulos and Lewis, 2009; Papachroni et al, 2016). Paradoxes are defined as 'contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time' (Smith and Lewis, 2011: 382). Such paradoxes, Lewis (2000: 760) argues, are becoming increasingly common in organizational life: "Managers, for example, are asked to increase efficiency and foster creativity, build individualistic teams, and think

globally while acting locally”. However, the literature on paradox also lacks empirical research focussing on the lived experience of employees (Lê and Bendarek, 2017). Thus, this article addresses a limitation common to the literatures on both ambidexterity and paradox, by focussing on the experience of employees as they engage with the paradoxes involved in delivering ambidexterity.

The article draws on a three month ethnographic study of a show at a professional theatre in the UK (UK Theatre). For the managers of UK Theatre, *the show* is an opportunity to explore a new theatrical process and product while the rest of the organisation is focussed on exploiting an existing, profitable format. This organisational tension between exploration and exploitation constitutes a paradox because these demands are seen by employees and managers as being an ongoing balancing act, a persistent contradiction, made salient in this case through *the show* (Smith and Lewis, 2011). Focussing on how the apparent organisation-level ambidexterity paradox is experienced and dealt with at multiple levels (organisation, project, individual), the study explores how paradoxical tensions are experienced at these different levels, and what effects they have on employees.

I begin by presenting a review of relevant literature, outlining the limitations of existing studies which this article addresses. The two research questions which flow from these limitations are presented. The methodology is then outlined, and the case setting is discussed in more detail. The findings of the research are presented, which analyse how the ambidexterity paradox leads to nested tensions at the project and individual level, and discuss how employees dealt with these tensions through the use of smoothing tactics. I conclude by discussing the implications of the findings for research on paradox and ambidexterity, emphasizing the need for a practice-based view.

UNDERSTANDING ORGANIZATIONAL AMBIDEXTERTY

Organizational success depends on balancing needs, such as exploring new opportunities for value creation whilst exploiting existing avenues (March, 1991). However, it is broadly argued that these respectively creativity-driven and efficiency-driven needs are conflicting (Lubatkin, Simsek, Ling and Veiga, 2006). In particular, the variation and experimental thinking needed to promote exploration clashes sharply with the narrow focus and processual uniformity needed for exploitation (Garud, Gehman and Kumaraswamy, 2011).

Ambidexterity, originally referring to the ability of an individual to perform tasks equally well with either the right or left hand, provides an appealing—if rather ambiguously defined (O'Reilly and Tushman, 2013)—trope with which to characterize the ability of an organization to engage in both exploration and exploitation.

Empirical studies have found that the most successful organizational units engage in simultaneous exploration and exploitation (i.e. not splitting exploration and exploitation into different units or time phases). In this *contextual* approach to ambidexterity (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004) the balancing of contradictory drives is achieved at the individual level by organizational members alternating between exploitation and exploration as appropriate (Papachroni et al, 2016). Despite the importance this places on the individual, the literature lacks close empirical examination of how employees enable and experience ambidexterity (Raisch and Birkinshaw, 2008). This is seen as a hidden action problem by authors such as Turner and Lee-Kelley (2012: 1), who argue that ‘there is a gap in our understanding of the underlying mechanisms, architectures and dynamics by which organizations can achieve both exploration and exploitation’.

Recent research has generated important insights regarding the enactment of ambidexterity at the project level (through buffering, gap-filling, integration, role-expansion and tone-setting)

(Turner et al, 2016). Yet, Papachroni et al (2016) show that ambidexterity tensions are experienced differently by different sub-organizational groups, and are dealt with differently as a result. They advance the literature by proposing an integrative model of how broad tensions shape individuals' perceptions and responses based on their position in the organization, but they do not focus on the employees responsible for driving the transition between exploitation and exploration.

This is problematic because there is a consensus that exploration and exploitation invoke paradoxical mindsets (March, 1991; Kaupilla, 2010), yet little is known about whether switching between these causes tensions for employees, and (if so) how they deal with these tensions. In-depth contextualised studies at the individual level are necessary to advance an integrative theory of how organizations deal with paradoxes (Jansen et al, 2005; Gupta et al, 2006; Raisch and Birkinshaw, 2008; Simsek, 2009).

Ambidexterity through the Paradox Lens

The simultaneous and competing organizational needs for exploration and exploitation are sometimes characterised as a paradox (Andriopoulos and Lewis, 2009; Smith and Lewis, 2011), namely the ambidexterity paradox (Simsek et al, 2009). Therefore, in seeking to conceptualise the relationship between exploitation and exploration, scholars have turned to the metatheory on paradox (Poole and Van de Ven, 1989). Many theoretical terms are used in the literature on paradox to classify different types of contradictions. Putnam, Fairhurst and Banghart (2016: 4) propose that 'tensions' ('feeling states' created by 'stress, anxiety, discomfort or tightness in making choices') are the broadest form of contradiction, whereas 'dualisms' refers more specifically to opposite poles which can be separated (such as exploration and exploitation), and a 'duality' signals that the two opposing poles are interdependent (such as exploration and exploitation are in ambidextrous organizations).

Where the opposite poles are mutually exclusive they are labelled 'contradictions' and where this contradiction develops over time into a situation which seems irrational or absurd, this most specific type of tension is termed a 'paradox' (Putnam et al, 2016: 4).

The literature on ambidexterity sometimes portrays the interaction between exploitation and exploration as a balancing act between two contradictory poles, sometimes as a set of interdependent dualistic activities, and sometimes as a paradox. This is because tensions and paradoxes (including ambidexterity) are socially constructed (Schad, 2017; Smith and Lewis, 2011). As Piao and Zajac (2016) argue in their recent empirical study on the topic, a more nuanced view is needed on apparent contradictions, because some types of exploitation might even impel rather than impede exploration.

It is important to consider how tensions and paradoxes manifested at the individual level might relate to apparent dualisms at the organizational level. Following on from Smith and Tushman's (2005) argument that ambidexterity relates to organisational demands which spawn tensions (referred to as 'nested tensions') at sub-organisational levels, studies have called for increasing focus on how paradox (Fairhurst et al, 2016) and tensions (Andriopoulos and Lewis, 2009) may be inter-related and nested at different levels of the organization. Although recent work on ambidexterity has identified the existence of nested paradoxes (Andriopoulos and Lewis, 2009; Papachroni et al, 2016), these studies have focussed on the organization and group level, not exploring how tensions might be nested at the employee level.

Given that paradoxical forces are competing but not exclusive, it has been argued that 'keeping the paradox open' (Beech, Burns, de Caestecker, MacIntosh, and Maclean, 2004: 1313) through acceptance, confrontation and transcendence (Lewis, 2000) may assist organizations in working productively with the tensions around exploration and exploitation

(see also Clegg, da Cunha and e Cunha, 2002). Although this requires managerial co-ordination (e.g. Turner et al, 2016), the day-to-day challenges of keeping paradoxes open must be dealt with by employees themselves. Yet there remains little empirical exploration of the employee experience of working through paradoxes (Lê and Bendarek, 2017), meaning there is little understanding of what employees do and what effects these actions have.

Based on this review, the research questions guiding the study are: (1) *How do employees experience switching between exploitation and exploration activities, and* (2) *What effect does this switching have on them?* These are important questions because the paradox literature contends that paradoxes of learning (such as ambidexterity) are interwoven with identity-related paradoxes experienced at the individual level (Lewis, 2000), yet individual experiences of paradox remain empirically understudied (Lê and Bendarek, 2017). By providing an ethnographic account of the tensions experienced by employees delivering a solution to an organizational contradiction between exploration and exploitation, this article sheds some much needed empirical light on this area of considerable theoretical importance.

METHODOLOGY

This article contributes a ‘view from the coalface’ⁱ by examining the paradoxes and tensions of ambidexterity using participant observation across the life of an explorative project. Examinations of ambidexterity at the individual level (Gupta et al, 2006; Papachroni et al, 2016) and across levels of analysis (Simsek, 2009) are both lacking. Overwhelmingly, the argument made in the literature is that ‘[d]etailed case studies, as well as broader field studies, could help to further substantiate our understanding of contextual ambidexterity’ (Raisch and Birkinshaw, 2008: 397).

Setting

The data used in this article was gleaned from a 3 month ethnographic study of *the show*, a series of three monologues produced and directed by a group of 3 actor/directors based in UK Theatre (pseudonyms Imogen, Erin, and Randall). UK Theatre is a mid-sized funded (i.e. non-profit) theatre which stages two seasons of drama, dance and comedy each year. The study period was embedded within, and informed by, a larger 3 year ethnography of UK theatre. Contextual information is occasionally drawn from the 3 year study, but the focus of this longer ethnography was not on ambidexterity. The data analysed for this paper focusses specifically on the 3 months around the production of *the show* as a project which surfaces and makes salient a persistent organisation-level ambidexterity paradox. Non-profit theatres always balance competing demands: meeting their funders' expectations and developing new, artistically exciting productions on the one hand; and satisfying their board by exploiting historically successful productions to bolster revenue on the other hand. However, these tensions are only made salient through particular projects such as *the show* and as Turner et al (2016: 199) argue, 'projects offer an ideal context to investigate the actions that enable ambidexterity'.

The show was used to explore a new method of producing and touring small-scale productions at the same time as the theatre was engaged in a period of intense exploitation (converting a successful past production into a commercially oriented, nation-wide tour). Typically, a theatrical production will involve a Director selecting a script then casting actors for each of the roles. Although some actors may direct, and some directors may act, these roles are usually stable across the life of a production (e.g. an actor will not simultaneously act as director). In contrast, *the show* was comprised of three monologues, and each of three cast members took the role of actor in one monologue and the role of director in another. This alternating actor/director role structure is very unusual and had never been attempted at UK Theatre. While the broad parameters of the project were established in advance (e.g. format,

length of rehearsal period, venues) all other elements (e.g. how to coordinate the monologues, how to direct a monologue, how to build a production suitable for local touring) were left for employees to determine and enact themselves.

UK Theatre is chosen as an ideal type setting for studying the employee experience of switching between exploitation and exploration (Yin, 2014). In other organizational settings, it may be difficult to isolate the tensions of explorative projects because employees may also encounter tensions from the novelty of working creatively and working in a project format. However, employees of UK theatre are accustomed to creative outputs and project working: They are continually engaged in the creative work of producing drama in the context of a rolling series of individual projects (plays). As such, the study can focus on the particular tensions associated with switching between exploitation and exploration activities.

Data Collection

Data collection began with observation during the pre-season meetings where *the show* was first proposed by the Senior Management Team. The observation extended throughout the 2 month planning and rehearsal process, during which I attended rehearsals, planning meetings and informal discussions related to *the show*. On average, I spent 2 working days each week observing (and occasionally participating in) the rehearsal process. After rehearsals finished, the show began touring venues in the local area. During this period, I acted as participant observer in helping to prepare the venues, build the stage, and clear up for 2 of the 6 community performances. In total therefore, I spent 20 days (occasionally including evenings) over a 3 month period observing and occasionally participating in the production of *the show*.

Data was recorded by means of a system of headnotes—shorthand notes conveying main activities of the day, any particularly important events, and important information such as

people, location, and verbatim quotes—written up later into comprehensive field notes (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011). In addition to this, I collected a range of additional data for analysis, such as the call sheets used for rehearsal, pictures and sketches of the rehearsal spaces, flyers for the show, and critics' reviews of the show. Throughout and beyond the data collection process, I was also involved in informal observation of the wider activities of the theatre, as part of a broader organizational ethnography. While contextual data from the broader study is used to frame the background for the project, only the 3 month period outlined above was focussed on ambidexterity, so only it is used to form the analysis.

Analysis

The value of an in-depth case is to provide new insights through the application of inductive reasoning (Yin, 1994), as noted in previous case-based research into ambidexterity (Andriopolous and Lewis, 2009). As such, my first step in analysing the data was to inductively identify the major dynamics characterizing the development of the project (types of activities and processes at each stage, and barriers to their achievement). To do this, the field notes and associated materials from each monologue in *the show* were written up into chronological accounts which allowed the dynamics from each part of the project to be analysed in depth and in isolation (Langley, 1999). These accounts were then compared using an inductive mode of analysis to identify commonalities and differences in how the plays, and the relationships between the participants, evolved over the course of the 3 month development period. This resulted in a set of initial open codes (following Strauss and Corbin, 1990), such as 'learning to be a director', 'managing expectations', 'developing a shared vocabulary', and 'rehearsal space contentions'.

The second stage of analysis followed Papachroni et al (2016) in isolating the perspectives of each of the three key groups of participants involved in producing *the show*; the Senior

Management Team (hereafter, SMT), the production department, and the three actor/directors. This was important to defining how perceptions of the project (its rationale, its progress, its legitimacy) were perceived by different groups (Papachroni et al, 2016) and at different levels of the organization (Fairhurst et al, 2016; Andriopoulos and Lewis, 2009). The field notes and chronological accounts were used to identify the perspective of each of these groups at three key stages in the process; at conception, during production, and after performance. These perspectives were then written up into three accounts, one from the employee perspective, one from production, and one from the SMT, to understand the broad tensions between these groups. Each account was then coded to identify the tensions, contradictions and paradoxes (Putnam et al, 2016) inherent within the account of each group. This showed that the tensions experienced by each group were different, yet interrelated.

At this point the original aim of the study (to explore how employees experienced the tensions between switching between exploration and exploitation and how this compared to managerial perspectives) had been fulfilled. However, the analysis was not yet saturated as interesting themes had emerged regarding how employees coped with tension. As such, the final stage of the analysis ‘zoomed in’ (Nicolini, 2009) again on the tensions experienced by the actor/directors and selectively coded for participants’ responses (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). In some cases, this involved re-examining initial codes through the lens of the accounts produced in the second stage (e.g. developing a shared vocabulary, use of humour). In other cases, new codes emerged from the third order analysis (self-effacing language). These codes were then refined to ensure distinctiveness and the literature was examined to establish the extent to which these findings were novel (e.g. self-effacing language), or confirmed existing knowledge on how employees manage tensions (e.g. humour – see Jarzabkowski and Lê, 2017).

Below, the nested tensions are described, organised by the level at which they were observed. First, the findings describe how the managers of the theatre saw *the show* as a means of resolving the apparent contradiction at the organizational level between exploration and exploitation. Then they explore the tensions this created at the project level, drawing on field notes to show where tensions arose and what their effects were for participants. Finally, I discuss the paradox of belonging that was made salient for employees, and how they sought to deal with it.

FINDINGS

Organization Level Contradiction: Balancing Exploitation and Exploration

The SMT face demands from their funders to tour more theatre into the community. UK Theatre is based in an area which has a low rate of cultural participation, and the SMT are regularly encouraged by the local city council to develop new initiatives which attract citizens to the theatre. While UK Theatre has a strong historical reputation for community work, it hadn't recently toured plays around local community venues. The main barriers to such touring from the SMT's perspective are that the theatre's plays generally feature large, elaborate sets which are difficult to move and require more infrastructure than is generally available in local venues (Field notes: Pre-rehearsal). As such, special sets would have to be developed for touring, which would impact on the shows. A further barrier is that committing resources to a community tour might compromise the theatre's other successful operations. As such, there is conflict between the need to explore new methods of touring (to satisfy funders) and the need to continue exploiting the theatre's commercially successful operations (to satisfy the board).

As a result, the SMT decided to embark on an explorative project: to trial a community tour with a relatively low risk, low budget production of three short monologues, delivered by three actors, to be toured to six local community venues. *The show*, the associate director argued in early production meetings, was to 'slide into the gaps' created by a larger and more commercially important show being rehearsed simultaneously (Field notes: Pre-rehearsal). Aware of the shortage of internal directors and the expense of hiring externally, she suggested that the actors could direct one another, and this suggestion was accepted by the rest of the SMT; each actor acted in one monologue and directed another (Field notes: Pre-rehearsal). While the actor/directors were selected to take part (it was not their choice) they were all eager to take up the opportunity to improve their directing skills. The associate director was assigned as producer for *the show*, thereby retaining overall control over the budgets, process and performance choices.

The show was seen by the SMT as a solution, if partial and temporary, to the contradictory demands of exploitation and exploration; it allowed them to experiment with a new touring format without pulling excessive resources from the commercially important activities of the theatre. However, *the show* spawned new tensions at the project level as it developed. These related to the resources available for *the show*, the power dynamics between the actor/directors, and to the practices the actor/directors needed to learn.

Project Level Tensions

Resource Constraints

Throughout the rehearsal process, the production manager was responsible for managing *the show's* budget. The SMT had committed to creating a big budget reprisal of a commercial production to be toured across the UK. As such, the production manager and his team were very aware that there would be little resources and extremely limited time with which to

produce the sets, props and costumes for *the show* (Field notes: Pre-rehearsal; Day 1; Day 9). This led to several constraints on key resources for *the show*. For example, the set designer was encouraged to adopt a minimalist and simple approach which would be cheaper to build, and easier to transport and assemble in the various community centres acting as venues (Field notes: Pre-rehearsal). The allocation of production staff was hampered by not knowing who would be called to work on the larger and more important production. As such, the production manager assigned a very small crew on part-time basis to *the show*, and for the stage manager (which is necessarily a full-time position) he recruited a freelancer who had worked with the theatre before.

Resource constraints also created tension because of the limited availability of rehearsal spaces. Rehearsals for *the show* were first scheduled to take place on the main stage, which surprised the actor/directors as they felt it was not an ideal space to rehearse such an intimate performance (especially in the early stages) (Field notes: Day 1). However, loud set building noises from the workshop located behind the stage (which was working on the large touring production) soon resulted in the rehearsals being moved to a small meeting room near the rear of the building, where they were to remain for most of the schedule. Even here, the noise from the production team was disruptive, and the actor/directors found it hard to rehearse in an atmosphere they began to describe as “*infected*” (Field notes: Day 16).

Lack of Directorial Power

A related tension was that the actor/directors lacked the power needed to occupy the role of director effectively. They were only temporarily occupying the role, they were unused to occupying it, and control over key aspects of the production was allocated to other members of the organization. In the theatre industry, roles are stable, clearly defined and demarcated (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2007) with the director at the top of the hierarchy but, for *the show*,

the production manager retained overall control of the project. As the production department had control of the budget, the allocation of crew members, and the seating plans for the community centres, the production manager chaired all the meetings regarding *the show*. Ordinarily, it would have been the role of the directors to chair such meetings. Instead, they were cast as passive recipients of the production team's plans; there to take notes and to adjust the performance accordingly. For example, lighting is very important in monologue productions in conveying mood and scene changes, yet in a production meeting around a month before the tour began the actor/directors were embarrassed to still not know the plan for the lighting of *the show* (Field notes: Day 22).

Their lack of control (or even knowledge) about the production aspects of *the show* was a source of considerable concern to the actor/directors, who were increasingly quiet in the (progressively shorter) production meetings (Field notes: Day 16). Outside of these meetings, the actor/directors were aggravated by their inability to get others to respond to their requests for better rehearsal space, staff, and even just to be quiet during run throughs, as shown below during a conversation about hammering noises from the stage.

Field notes: Day 22

I: "If [the normal director] was in here, [the workmen] would be told to stop"

R: "Well yes, they'd have to... but I don't have that power"

New Practices to Learn

The actor/directors had to deal with these tensions in the context of developing the practice of being a director; which for each unfolded differently. These differences made for difficulties within each monologue, and for the broader project. Although the monologues were meant to blend together into a coherent tone, they became increasingly divergent. This worried the

actors/directors, who felt this was where the production was most likely to fail (Field notes: Day 22). Furthermore, the different pace and style of each rehearsal caused scheduling difficulties for the stage manager (whose job became different for each monologue). Eventually the plot session, where lighting and set direction are established, was delayed because of setbacks with two of the monologues (Field notes: Day 36).

Therefore, although tensions at the project level resulted to some degree from the resource constraints placed on the project (to ensure that the exploitation activities of the theatre were not disturbed) and the lack of directorial power (due to the temporary nature of the role and lack of control allocated to actor/directors), further tensions were created by the need to learn new practices.

Individual Level Paradox

These tensions made salient a paradox of belonging for the actor/directors, because the demands placed on them were persistently contradictory and problematized their ties of belonging to the organization (Smith and Lewis, 2011). They were worried about the project failing (or being seen as a failure) by others in the organization. This was reflected in their becoming increasingly nervous towards the critics night, with Imogen asking the associate director to give notes on her performance (Field notes: Day 46), and Erin and Randall becoming increasingly concerned (occasionally irate) because their monologue remained fragmented (Field notes: Day 53; Day 58).

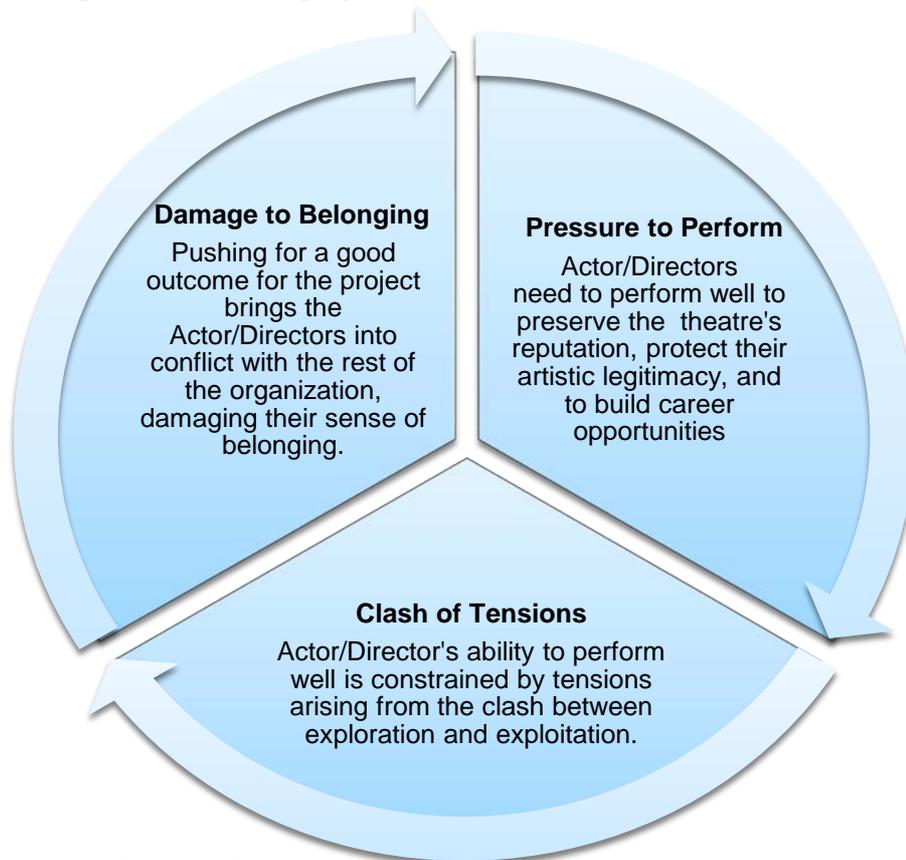
It was important to the actor/directors that the project succeeded for 3 reasons. First, the theatre has a proud history of community engagement, and they saw *the show* as being a revival of this heritage, and therefore important to organizational reputation. Second, despite having a smaller resource base than other productions, *the show* would be evaluated on a like-for-like basis by critics, meaning that a poor review may impact on their legitimacy as

artists. Finally, they all thought that *the show* might create future opportunities to work as directors.

Their ambitions were thwarted to an extent by tensions over resources, power and learning, but the practical effects of these issues were often less important than their symbolism. For example, when commenting on noise disruptions to rehearsals, the freelance stage manager said that what annoyed the directors, more than the disruption itself, was the feeling of not being valued, especially because “*they belong here*” (Field notes: Day 22). As the project progressed, the actor/directors increasingly needed to make trade-offs between prioritising the project and preserving their sense of belonging to the organization (such as not speaking up about poor rehearsal spaces in case this damaged relationships with the SMT).

As addressing the sources of tensions would have brought the actor/directors into conflict with other members of the organization, the contradictions became particularly pernicious. For example, in the final stages of rehearsal, there was some uncertainty over which members of staff would accompany the tour and when the actor/directors would be called in to start rehearsals for the next production. Despite worrying that these decisions would have a material effect on the show (which would reflect poorly on them), the actor/directors did not speak up because it would have caused consternation with other members of the theatre, damaging their ties of belonging. It is the ‘damned if you do, damned if you don’t’ nature of these opposing demands that makes this a paradox—performing well secures belonging, but it also requires individuals to transgress the norms of their existing ties of belonging. Continued belonging demands good performance, but good performance demands that the individuals risk belonging by acting against the wishes of the rest of the organization. This vicious circle is illustrated below in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - The paradox of belonging



Smoothing over the Paradox

The actor/directors (and others) actively sought to smooth over these tensions and the resulting paradox, to avoid issues emanating from *the show* impacting on their ongoing organizational relationships. They did this though using self-effacing language and shared vocabulary to enable coordination and smooth over role tensions, and through using humour to diffuse tensions around resources and power.

Self-Effacing Language

The director is normally at the top of a hierarchy of control, but not in the case of *the show*. As has been discussed, the novice directors lacked training and power. However, the position still holds a certain level of prestige and authority, and the actor/directors were torn between

exercising this authority to gain the resources needed to make the show successful and respecting the constraints of their ongoing roles as actors by quietly complying with the Production Manager. They sought to smooth over the differences between the roles that *the show* prescribed for them (as directors) and the roles they had normally (as actors) through using self-effacing language to temper their directorial demands, as illustrated below by Imogen.

Field notes: Day 3

Imogen uses several words and phrases as precursors to her suggestions. Some of them seem to be excusing her suggestions before she makes them, some seem to be designed to indicate that, while she may be director in this production, she recognises that she doesn't have the full authority or experience of a regular director and she doesn't want the others (in particular Erin, who she must work with on a level field (both as actors) once this production is finished), to think that Imogen is 'above herself'.

"Let's just try something and see what happens"

"This is an experiment for all of us"

"Let's try it, just for laughs"

"This is going to sound really bizarre..."

"Just one thing to think about"

"Just a little, a tiny, thought -again, it might be rubbish"

Where Imogen used self-effacing phrases as pre-cursors, Erin tempered her directions with clauses ("*Only do what feels right*") (Field notes: Day 16). Even Randall, whose style was often more provocative than conciliatory, gave his actor increasing autonomy throughout the

process to disregard his directions if she felt they were wrong (“*I know I talk shit sometimes, I really do*” (Field notes: Day 22)).

Shared Language

The actor/directors also smoothed over tensions and sought to find common ground across the rehearsals through using shared language. Several phrases and words were used, particularly within rehearsals, as coordinating devices (used to convey similar themes between rehearsals) and to smooth over relational tensions between the actor/directors, who were unused to having power over each other. One example was using the phrase ‘plonk it’ to refer to a particular way of delivering dialogue, which originated in one rehearsal and rapidly spread throughout the others as shown below:

Field notes: Day 16

“Plonk it”: A phrase brought into [the show] by director Randall and now being used by all the directors (Imogen got it from Randall, she gave it to Erin, and Erin now uses it in a rehearsal with Randall).

Field notes: Day 22

The shared vocabulary observed in earlier rehearsals is still in circulation:

R: “You don’t have to plonk ‘militants’”

R: “Don’t be afraid to plonk in this scene, it’s very plonky”

The use of ‘plonk’ not only helps build common understanding between the actor/directors, it’s also an ‘in joke’ signalling their common status when the tensions emerge over their roles as directors or over the differences in their directing styles. Occasionally, the actor/directors

also drew upon stories of shared experiences to move the rehearsal process forward when it stalled (e.g. Field Notes: Day 16; Day 17).

Humour

Finally, the novice directors relied on humour to veil claims for power which could have been seen as contentious by their co-directors or others in the theatre. These claims for power arose in ordinary actions, such as giving direction on performance. The field notes from Day 16 describe how uncomfortable the actor/directors seemed with stopping their actors mid-way through a read through of a scene, yet *'they carry on doing it, and use humour to deflect attention'*. In the example below, Randall uses a joking tone ('blah blah blah') to signal his distaste at giving a compliment in the directorial manner ('you're reading it very nicely').

Field notes: Day 9

Imogen finishes reading and looks to Randall for notes

"It's nice, you're reading it very nicely-Blah, blah, blah"

He says it like he's embarrassed saying something that he knows he should obviously be saying so is making a joke out of it. He believes that directors need to be motivational, but he finds it distasteful to behave that way.

Humour was also used to diffuse tension when the actor/directors wanted to critique another's directorial style without transgressing their positional authority. Imogen used joking phrases to disguise her unhappiness with Randall's mode of direction. Masking her complaint with a joke seemed to help avoid inciting arguments over who was in control in the rehearsal. For example, midway through the process Randall changed the set-up of the rehearsal space so that Imogen was sat in a chair in the middle of the room facing the rest of the crew. Imogen obviously disliked this unusual set-up, but disguised this by delivering her

critical comment ('*oh, it's rather like an audition isn't it!*') in a jokey tone (See Figure 2 below).

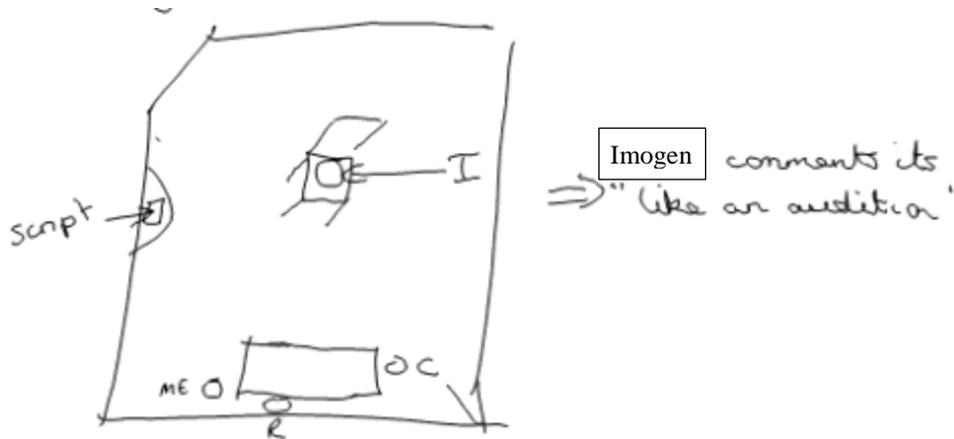


Figure 2 - Field notes: Day 9

In another example, Imogen uses a literary joke to smooth over Randall's style, saying that getting any positive feedback from him is "*like drawing blood from a stone*' [laughs]' (Field notes: Day 23). Erin too used jokes to smooth over the discomfort of being critiqued by someone who was normally at her level:

Field notes: Day 9

Imogen gives direction in the form of praise then suggested improvement (e.g. "that was great, the start, I really liked it. I think as well that if you kept it a bit more cerebral it might bring over the mood even more")

E: "She gives with one hand... she takes away with the other" (jokingly)"

On rare occasions, this tendency of both the actor and director to employ humour as a masking device meant that entire exchanges would be ironic – with apparent compliments on each side being critiques masked with humour.

Humour was also used by other participants such as the associate director, who smoothed over her extensive planning of the rehearsal schedule (which would normally have involved the director, but didn't in this case) as being “*anally retentive*” (Field notes, Day 1).

Note on the outcomes of the show

To their delight, the SMT underestimated the audience levels and the critical reception of *the show*. The community performances all sold out and the week of performances held in the theatre was also very well attended. Furthermore, *the show* received 3 and 4 star reviews from the critics attending the review night, which is a strong performance for a low budget production. The experiment proved so successful, that another tour was scheduled for the following year, with a larger budget and further school engagement activities in support. However, while the actor/directors were pleased with these results, when the local tour was reprised the following year, none were asked to join and the show reverted to a single, internal director.

Key Findings

Two key findings flow from this analysis. First, the attempt to overcome the contradiction at the organizational level between exploration and exploitation (through the explorative project) creates a series of nested tensions, as depicted in Figure 3. At the project level, the contradiction flows into tensions around resources, power and learning; and at the individual level it makes salient a belonging paradox for employees.

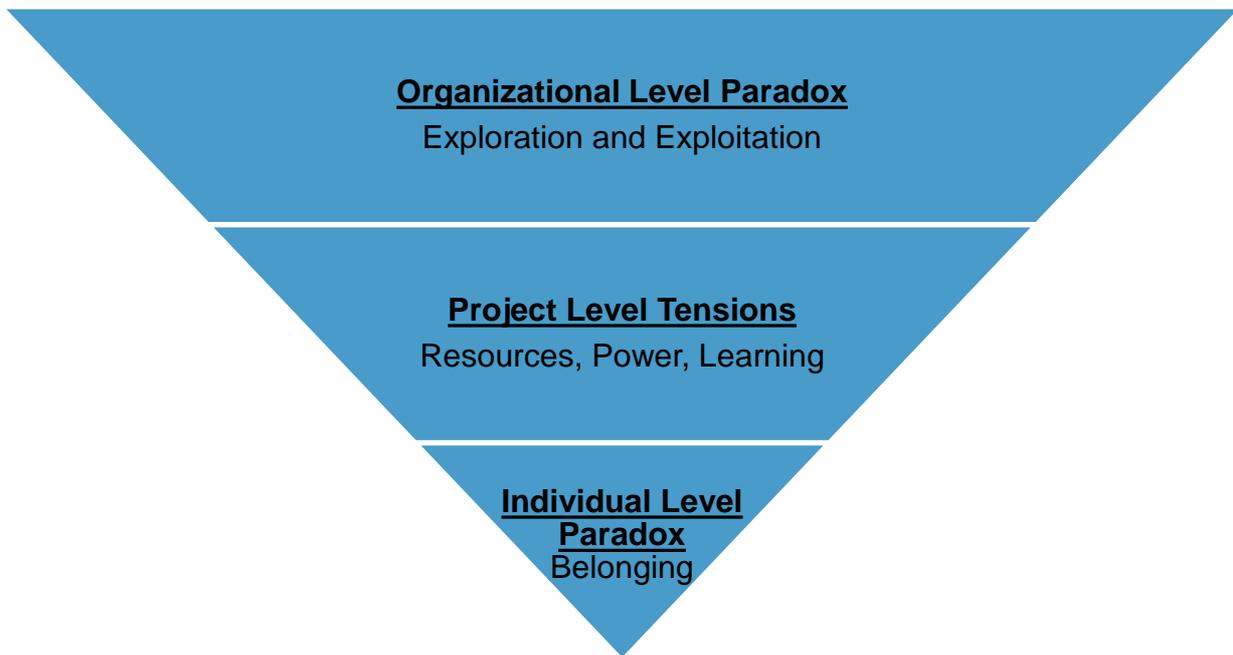


Figure 3 - Nested Tensions

At the organizational level, *the show* is a response to a contradiction between exploiting existing resources and exploring new performance modes. As far as the SMT is concerned, *the show* is successful in this regard, and ambidexterity is (temporarily) achieved. However, dealing with this contradiction creates three types of tension at the project level, relating to resources (production staff, budget, rehearsal space), power (needed by the directors to occupy their role effectively), and to learning (causing relational conflicts when participants adopted different approaches). At the individual level, this made salient a paradox for the actor/directors between performing well in the new role of director and preserving their existing ties of belonging to the organization. In the view of the rest of the organization each ‘belongs’ as an actor but must perform well in another role which prescribes different relationships with their colleagues. Performing and belonging are co-extensive for the employees: Their belonging will be jeopardised if they do not perform well and their performance relies upon their ability to understand and negotiate the organization through their belonging (i.e. by knowing who to approach to gain additional resources or to complain

about disturbances to the rehearsals). Pursuing either damages the other, in a classic case of paradoxical demands.

The existence of this paradox explains why the actors engage extensively in smoothing tactics, this being the second key finding of the study. The field notes detail participants' efforts to smooth over tensions using self-effacing language, shared vocabulary and humour. Self-effacing language softens the relational tensions caused by the temporary hierarchy (e.g. *"Just a little, a tiny, thought -again, it might be rubbish"*); shared vocabulary enables the co-ordination of practices and attitudes and signals commonality between the employees (e.g. *"Plonk it"*); and humour is used to veil the use of power, to dissuade employees from dissenting from the temporary structure (*"Just me being anally retentive! "*), but also by subordinates to veil their critique of the temporary leader (*"like drawing blood from a stone! [laughs]"*).

These smoothing tactics are conceptualised as linguistic techniques which allow employees to work through paradox by mitigating relational tensions, building and signalling common interests between the project participants, co-ordinating practices and attitudes, and enabling the flexibility of roles necessary to balance existing organisational structures with the changing demands of the project. Previous studies have argued that the key to managing paradox is not eliminating it or avoiding it, but rather finding a way of living through it and keeping the paradox open (Beech et al, 2004). The smoothing tactics play this role by enabling employees to minimise the most pernicious interpersonal and emotional tensions flowing from the paradox, without resolving the paradox itself. As such, they are not all used equally over time in each rehearsal, but are selectively drawn upon at different times in order to enable the project to overcome emergent barriers caused by resource, power or learning tensions, and to move onto the next stage of development. For example, at the beginning of

the rehearsal process, self-effacing language is used primarily to compensate for the novice directors' failings. Later, once they are comfortable in their roles, these conciliations seem intended to signal commonality between director and actor—to send a message that although the director is giving the orders in any given situation, they know that the actor is of equal status, allowing them to preserve their ongoing relationships despite the tensions of the project.

DISCUSSION

The ambidexterity literature focusses on how organizations balance the contradictory demands of exploration and exploitation, with empirical studies emphasising the role of employees in achieving this balance (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004). Yet there is a lack of critical study on how balancing contradictory demands impacts on employees (Turner and Lee-Kelley, 2012; Papachroni et al, 2016), as Lê and Bendarek (2017: 503) argue, 'we still know very little about how individual actors experience paradoxical tensions in their everyday life'. This article directly addresses the call in the literature for more studies of how ambidexterity is enacted (Turner et al, 2016) focussing specifically on the employees involved in balancing of exploration with exploitation (Jansen et al, 2005; Gupta et al, 2006; Raisch and Birkinshaw, 2008; Simsek, 2009). In addressing this gap, the article makes three contributions to the literature on ambidexterity: it illustrates the relational and emotional challenges of achieving ambidexterity; it uncovers the influence of a nested identity paradox in coping with ambidexterity; and it identifies a set of linguistic techniques used by employees to keep the paradox open.

As Papachroni et al (2016) found, focussing on different organisational groups leads to different interpretations of how ambidexterity is constructed and handled by organisational members. Focussing on the employees involved in delivering ambidexterity brings the

relational and emotional challenges of balancing contradictory demands into sharp relief.

Placed into the role of director without the resources or autonomy needed to occupy it effectively, employees struggled to keep the production on track. Despite not having control of the project, they feared being held accountable for its failure, leading to anxiety, perceived alienation from the rest of organisation and, at times, anger. The challenges and uncertainties faced by the employees confirm the findings of previous studies which argue that achieving ambidexterity is not merely an issue of managerial strategy (O'Reilly and Tushman, 2008), but produces significant relational and emotional tensions for the employees involved.

This article joins the growing body of literature which argues that the tensions, contradictions and paradoxes of organisational life are often interwoven and nested at different organisational levels (Andriopoulos and Lewis, 2009; Papachroni et al, 2016). While *the show* represents a convenient structural solution to contradictory demands at the organizational level, it invokes tensions at the project level which, in turn, make a belonging paradox salient at the individual level (Smith and Lewis, 2011).

The contradictory demands experienced by employees are conceptualised as a paradox of belonging, where there is a '[c]lash between identification and goals as actors negotiate individual identities with social and occupational demands' (Smith and Lewis, 2011: 383). The ties of belonging between the employees tasked with delivering the explorative project and the organization depend on their performance in the project, yet performing well brings them into conflict with the priorities of the organization, weakening their ties of belonging in a vicious circle par excellence. For the employees this creates fear, anxiety, anger and a sense of alienation from the broader organisation.

In identifying this paradox, the article diverges from previous work on paradoxes in innovation (e.g. Andriopoulos and Lewis, 2009; Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996; Van Der Vegt

and Bunderson, 2005), which have emphasised tensions around learning and performing rather than an identity-relevant paradox of belonging (Smith and Lewis, 2009).

Problematizing employees' ties of belonging may lead to disengagement of the employee and the derailment of the project with which they are involved as different groups invoke opposing identities (Jarzabkowski et al, 2013). As such managers trying to achieve ambidexterity may also need to consider not only more typical managerial actions needed to coordinate ambidextrous projects (e.g. Turner et al's buffering, gap-filling, integration and role expansion (2016)), but also the cultural and relational support that may be needed by employees.

The article also contributes by identifying the smoothing techniques used by employees to manage the nested tensions and paradoxes of ambidexterity (self-effacing language, shared vocabulary, humour). This speaks to the topic of bridging, managing, or 'keeping open' paradoxes which has seen a great deal of theoretical interest in the literature (Lewis, 2000; Beech et al, 2004; Clegg et al, 2002), but lacks empirical examination (Lê and Bendarek, 2017). These smoothing tactics do not resolve or avoid the paradox, but ensure that the tensions which flow from it are managed, and the negative relational and emotional effects on individuals are mitigated, allowing them to balance demands and keep the paradox open. While Turner et al (2016) explore the managerial actions used to enable project based-ambidexterity, these smoothing tactics are developed and primarily employed by the project participants themselves. These findings extend previous research on coping tactics, such as irony (Sillince and Golant, 2017) and humour (Pouthier, 2017; Jarzabkowski and Lê, 2017), illustrating what the effortful process of transcending paradox actually involves (Lê and Bednarek, 2017).

Limitations

The methodology of this study lends itself to close examination for the purposes of theory building in a novel empirical area, and in so doing it sacrifices broad claims for generalizability (Eisenhardt, 1989; Hong & O, 2009). The creative setting of the case allows the analysis to focus directly on the tensions of ambidexterity, however some dynamics observed may be specific to (so called) creative professions (Townley, Beech & McKinlay, 2009). The dynamics of employee engagement with paradoxical tensions may differ in other settings, for example where employees are used to working in more stable routines. The relationship between the type of work undertaken and the employee's responses to ambidextrous tensions would be a fruitful area for future research. In addition, the focus on a play as a project led to a relatively short time period for ethnographic research (3 months). It is probable that conducting ethnographic research over a longer project, or multiple projects, would lead to broader tensions and a wider range of smoothing tactics being identified. Comparative studies, such as that undertaken by Andriopoulos and Lewis (2009), would be of great utility in developing a more complete typology of tensions and tactics.

Future Directions for Research on Paradox

How may these findings help reshape thinking about what paradoxes are and how people in organizations deal with them? Although a paradox can exist between any two 'contradictory yet interrelated elements', most of the literature focusses on the contradiction between **demands or forces or priorities** (Lewis and Smith, 2014: 128). Therefore, the question of how employees deal with paradoxes is one of how they balance conflicting demands, seen as a cognitive process of overcoming the **conflicting mindsets** linked to each demand (March 1991). The tactics prescribed are therefore also cognitive in nature, such as Lewis' (2000) acceptance, confrontation or transcendence.

However, focussing on mindsets is, as Gilbert Ryle (1949) would argue, a ghost in the machine approach to understanding ambidexterity, and the influence of the belonging paradox in this study illustrates the emotional side of managing conflicting demands, while the discovery of smoothing tactics speaks to the importance of managing relationships and emotions when juggling competing priorities. Paradoxes can therefore be seen not just as abstract sets of conflicting demands, but more broadly as being composed of sets of concrete practices which conflict not only in priority, but in material assemblages of activities, in the practitioner identities they suppose, and in the relationships (of power) they posit between practitioners and others (Lê & Bednarek, 2017). In the case of *the show*, for example, the challenges faced by employees could be seen to result from a conflict between two practices: an established practice of ‘being an ensemble member’; and a new practice arrangement for which the understandings, rules of conduct and relationships to other practices are still emerging (‘directing a new play-making process’).

Scholars are beginning to turn to the practice perspective as one way of understanding paradox (Jarzabkowski, Lê & Van de Ven, 2013; Jay, 2013; Lê & Bednarek, 2017) and this study highlights the value of this growing body of literature to the study of ambidexterity. Shifting to a practice-based view of paradox shows how the smoothing tactics of the participants enable conflicting practices to ‘hang together’ (Schatzki, 1996a: 199). Paradox perspectives increasingly hold that paradoxes are socially constructed and interdependent (Schad, 2017). Adopting a practice lens, it is evident that enabling exploitation and exploration to ‘hang together’ is not the result of any innate characteristics of these two practices, but can only be produced through ensuring that the lives of practitioners also hang together. For Schatzki (1996a), it is this interweaving of relationships between people which allows practices to exist alongside one another, which in the case of UK theatre is achieved by employees’ use of humour, shared language and self-effacing language.

In attending to how practices are made to hang together in future studies of ambidexterity, scholar should bear in mind that practice is a diverse theoretical framework (Corradi et al, 2010). While this study highlights the importance of language (self-effacing, shared, humorous) as a means of enabling practices to hang together, Schatzki (1996b) points out the limits of focussing on language, encouraging greater emphasis on the embodied nature of practices. In extending the contributions made in this article, future studies could look to the different modes of personal bodily presentation (dress, gestures) and to the different modes of activity (what is done, how it is done, who does it) specified by each of the two conflicting practices in a paradox situation, and how people mediate between these. Furthermore, scholars have argued in this journal that the defining characteristic of a practice approach is a non-actor centred approach which looks at the distribution of agency between human and non-human elements (Gherardi, 2009). Future studies would do well to pay more attention to the role of non-human elements in enabling (and disrupting) efforts to achieve ambidexterity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Associate Editor Dr. James McDonald and the three anonymous reviewers for their valuable advice on developing this article. Thanks also to participants of the EGOS 2017 Post-Doctoral Workshop and the Research Clinics at Edinburgh Napier and the University of Technology, Sydney for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this manuscript and to Prof Barbara Townley and the Institute for Capitalising on Creativity at the University of St Andrews who supported and guided the project. Any remaining errors are my own. Finally, I extend my thanks to the cast and crew of *the show* for welcoming me onto the production and putting up with my patchy set painting.

REFERENCES

- Andriopoulos, C., and Lewis, M.W. (2009). Exploitation-exploration tensions and organizational ambidexterity. *Organization Science* 20(4), 696-717.
- Beech, N., Burns, H., de Caestecker, L., MacIntosh, R., & MacLean, D. (2004). Paradox as invitation to act in problematic change situations. *Human Relations*, 57(10), 1313-1332.
- Clegg, S. R., da Cunha, J. V., & e Cunha, M. P. (2002). Management paradoxes: A relational view. *Human relations*, 55(5), 483-503.
- Corbin, J. & Strauss, A.L. (2008) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (3rd edn). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Corradi, G., Gherardi, S., & Verzelloni, L. (2010). Through the practice lens: Where is the bandwagon of practice-based studies heading?. *Management learning*, 41(3), 265-283.
- Eikhof, D. R., & Haunschild, A. (2007). For art's sake! Artistic and economic logics in creative production. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 28(5), 523-538.
- Eisenhardt, K.M. (1989). Building Theories from Case Study Research, *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 532-550.
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press.
- Fairhurst, G. T., Smith, W. K., Banghart, S. G., Lewis, M. W., Putnam, L. L., Raisch, S., & Schad, J. (2016). Diverging and converging: Integrative insights on a paradox meta-perspective. *Academy of Management Annals*, 10(1), 173-182.
- Garud, R., Gehman, J., & Kumaraswamy, A. (2011). Complexity arrangements for sustained innovation: lessons from 3M corporation. *Organization Studies*, 32(6), 737-767.
- Gherardi, S. (2009), Introduction: The Critical Power of the 'Practice Lens', *Management Learning*, 40(2), 115-128.
- Gibson, C. B. and Birkinshaw, J. (2004). The antecedents, consequences, and mediating role of organizational ambidexterity. *Academy of Management Journal*, 47, 209–26.

- Gupta, A. K., Smith, K. G., & Shalley, C. E. (2006). The interplay between exploration and exploitation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49(4), 693-706.
- Hong, J.F.L., and O, F.K.H. (2009). Conflicting Identities and Power between Communities of Practice. *Management Learning*, 40(3), 311-326.
- Jansen, J. J., Volberda, H. W., & Van Den Bosch, F. A. (2005). Exploratory innovation, exploitative innovation, and ambidexterity. *Schmalenbach Business Review*, 57, 351-363.
- Jarzabkowski, A., & Lê, J. K. (2017). We have to do this and that? You must be joking. *Organization Studies*, 38(3-4), 433-462.
- Jarzabkowski, A., Lê, J. K., & Van de Ven, A. H. (2013). Responding to competing strategic demands. *Strategic Organization*, 11(3), 245-280.
- Jay, J. (2013). Navigating paradox as a mechanism of change and innovation in hybrid organizations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 56(1), 137-159.
- Kauppila, O. P. (2010). Creating ambidexterity by integrating and balancing structurally separate interorganizational partnerships. *Strategic organization*, 8(4), 283-312.
- Langley, A. (1999) "Strategies for Theorizing from Process Data," *Academy of Management Review* 24(4): 691-710.
- Le, J. K., & Bednarek, R. (2017). Outlining Core Principles of a Practice-Theoretical Approach to Studying Paradox, pp. 490-512 in W. Smith, M. Lewis, Jarzabkowski and A. Langley (Ed.s) *The Oxford Handbook of Organizational Paradox*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lewis, M. W. (2000). Exploring paradox: Toward a more comprehensive guide. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(4), 760-776.
- Lewis, M. W., & Smith, W. K. (2014). Paradox as a metatheoretical perspective. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 50(2), 127-149.
- Lubatkin, M. H., Simsek, Z., Ling, Y., & Veiga, J. F. (2006). Ambidexterity and performance in small-to medium-sized firms. *Journal of Management*, 32(5), 646-672.

- March, J. G. (1991). Exploration and exploitation in organizational learning. *Organization Science*, 2(1), 71-87.
- Mom, T. J. M., van den Bosch, F. A. J., & Volberda, H. W. 2007. Investigating managers' exploration and exploitation activities. *Journal of Management Studies*, 44(6): 910-931.
- Nicolini, D. (2009) Zooming In and Out: Studying Practices by Switching Theoretical Lenses and Trailing Connections. *Organization Studies*, 30 (12): 1391–1418.
- O'Reilly III, C. A., & Tushman, M. L. (2008). Ambidexterity as a dynamic capability. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 28, 185-206.
- Papachroni, A., Heracleous, L., & Paroutis, S. (2016). In pursuit of ambidexterity. *Human Relations*, 69(9), 1791-1822.
- Piao, M., & Zajac, E. J. (2016). How exploitation impedes and impels exploration. *Strategic Management Journal*, 37(7), 1431-1447.
- Poole, M. S., & Van de Ven, A. H. (1989). Using paradox to build management and organization theories. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 562-578.
- Pouthier, V. (2017). Gripping and Joking as Identification Rituals and Tools for Engagement in Cross-Boundary Team Meetings. *Organization Studies*, 38(6): 753-774.
- Putnam, L. L., Fairhurst, G. T., & Banghart, S. (2016). Contradictions, dialectics, and paradoxes in organizations. *Academy of Management Annals*, 10(1), 65-171.
- Raisch, S., & Birkinshaw, J. (2008). Organizational ambidexterity: Antecedents, outcomes, and moderators. *Journal of Management*, 34(3): 375-409.
- Schad, J. (2017), Ad Fontes: Philosophical Foundations of Paradox Research, pp.27-47 in W. Smith et al (Ed.s) *The Oxford Handbook of Organizational Paradox*, Oxford: OUP.
- Schatzki, T. R. (1996a). *Social practices: A Wittgensteinian approach to human activity and the social*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schatzki, T. R. (1996b) Practiced bodies: subjects, genders, and minds, pp. 49-77 in T. R. Schatzki & W. Natter (Eds) *The social and political body*. London: The Guildford Press.

- Sillince, J. & Golant, B. (2017), The Role of Irony and Metaphor in Working Through Paradox during Organizational Change, pp. 260-276 in W. Smith, M. Lewis: Jarzabkowski and A. Langley (Ed.s) *The Oxford Handbook of Organizational Paradox*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Simsek, Z. (2009). Organizational ambidexterity: Towards a multilevel understanding. *Journal of Management Studies*, 46(4), 597-624.
- Simsek, Z., Heavey, C., Veiga, J. F., & Souder, D. (2009). A typology for aligning organizational ambidexterity's conceptualizations, antecedents, and outcomes. *Journal of Management Studies*, 46(5), 864-894.
- Smith, W. K., & Lewis, M. W. (2011). Toward a theory of paradox. *Academy of Management Review*, 36(2), 381-403.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research* (Vol. 15). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Townley, B., Beech, N., & McKinlay, A. (2009). Managing in the creative industries. *Human relations*, 62(7), 939-962.
- Turner, N., & Lee-Kelley, L. (2012). Unpacking the theory on ambidexterity. *Management Learning*, 44(2): 179-196.
- Turner, N., Swart, J., Maylor, H., & Antonacopoulou, E. (2016). Making it happen: How managerial actions enable project-based ambidexterity. *Management Learning*, 47(2), 199-222.
- Tushman, M. L. & O' Reilly, C.A. (1996). Organizations: Managing Evolutionary and Revolutionary Change. *California Management Review*, 38, 1-23.
- Van Der Vegt, G. S., & Bunderson, J. S. (2005). Learning and performance in multidisciplinary teams. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(3), 532-547.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Sage: London, UK

ⁱ A term commonly used in phenomenological and ethnographic research to refer to a methodological approach which privileges the experience of those directly involved in *doing work* (i.e. focusses directly on employees, rather than the managers who plan and direct the work)