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Unleashing the Creative Potential of Research Tensions: Toward A Paradox Approach to Methods

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4 **Toward a Paradox Approach to Methods**
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Unleashing the Creative Potential of Research Tensions: Toward a Paradox Approach to Methods

ABSTRACT

Research is a paradoxical process. Scholars confront conflicting yet interwoven pressures, considering methodologies that engage complexity and simplicity, induction and deduction, novelty and continuity, and more. Paradox theory offers insights that embrace such tensions, providing empirical examples that harness creative friction to foster more novel and useful, rigorous and relevant research. Leveraging this lens, we open a conversation on research tensions, developing the foundations of a Paradox Approach to Methods applicable to organization studies more broadly. To do so, we first identify tensions raised at six methodological decision points: research scope, construct definition, underlying assumptions, data collection, data analysis and interpretation. Second, we build on paradox theory to identify navigating practices: accepting, differentiating, integrating, and knotting. By doing so, we contribute to organizational research broadly by embracing methods tensions to advance scholarly insight.

Keywords: Methodological tensions, paradox theory, empirical research methods

Unleashing the Creative Potential of Research Tensions: Toward a Paradox Approach to Methods

Research is imbued with tensions that empower and vex scholars. According to Turner and colleagues (2017), tensions arise, in part, because methods are naturally limited. Research necessarily abstracts complex reality; methodological decisions determining what phenomena, data and approaches are excluded, as well as included. Quantitative researchers grapple with needs for simplicity vs. complexity and explanatory reach vs. specificity. Qualitative scholars face demands for data collection that aids greater proximity to vs. distance from informants (Hoffman, 2021; Langley & Klag, 2019), and for data analysis that applies more structured vs. holistic heuristics (Köhler et al., 2022; Langley & Abdallah, 2011). Woolley and Fuchs (2011) find that such tensions can fuel knowledge evolution in organization science, spurring innovation within and across studies. Yet conflicting pressures can also compel counterproductive tradeoffs, pitting specificity against creativity, data against theory, accuracy against generality (Sutton & Staw, 1995). Enabling scholarly innovation while building trusted knowledge requires methodological approaches to surface these tug-of-wars and effectively navigate these tensions.

To aid navigation efforts, we turn to paradox theory. This lens examines the nature, challenges and management of tensions (see Putnam et al., 2016; Schad et al., 2016; Sparr et al., 2022). Paradox theory offers a generative, yet structured approach (Lê & Bednarek, 2017), in search of creative balancing and transcendent integration (Smith & Lewis, 2011). Further, existing scholarship offers empirical examples that apply paradox insights. Attuned to tensions, several paradox scholars have turned the lens on their own research tensions and resulting decisions (e.g., Andriopoulos & Gotsi, 2017; Clegg, Pina e Cunha & Berti, 2022; Fairhurst & Putnum, 2019). For example, Langley and Klag (2019) address tensions of closeness and distance in

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3 qualitative methods. Instead of championing a single approach, they surface the underlying
4 paradox and apply synergistic practices across the competing demands. Further, paradox
5 scholars tap into wide ranging epistemologies and methodologies, rendering tensions in their
6 own research particularly salient (Smith et al., 2017a, 2017b).
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13 Leveraging this lens, we lay foundations toward a Paradox Approach to Methods, expanding a
14 conversation on research tensions across organization studies. Our goal is not to adjudicate
15 specific methodological debates. Rather, we offer a basis from which organizational scholars
16 may further a mindset, process and practices for ‘working through’ research tensions to unleash
17 their creative potential (i.e., Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). First, we review research tensions and
18 paradox theory’s insights into their challenges, value and navigation. Next we explicate our
19 development of the paradox approach using empirical paradox examples, expert interviews,
20 and case studies. We then present the Paradox Approach to Methods, unpacking tensions that
21 surface at six methodological decision points: research scope, construct definition, underlying
22 assumptions, data collection, data analysis and interpretation. To aid navigation, we illustrate
23 practices of *accepting* the paradoxical nature of tensions, *differentiating and integrating* their
24 competing demands, and *knotting* methodological decisions across tensions.
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42 A Paradox Approach to Methods can unleash the creative potential of tensions. Toward this
43 aim, we, first, contribute generative yet structured practices that help scholars across
44 organizational studies navigate tensions of research, namely accepting, differentiating and
45 integrating, and knotting research tensions. Applying a paradox lens to organizational methods
46 helps scholars reframe tensions from obstacles into opportunities. In doing so, scholars shift
47 from viewing decisions as singular, linear choices to be adjudicated toward engaging
48 conflicting interdependencies that persist over time (Berti et al., 2021). Doing so can enable
49 creativity (Miron-Spektor et al., 2011) and spark methodological innovation (e.g., Lê &
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3 Schmid, 2022). Second, we offer guidance for authors and reviewers to further nurture diverse,
4 novel and rigorous methods. Our paper invites scholars and reviewers to embrace
5 methodological diversity within literatures and fields, offering guidance to apply these varied
6 practices with rigor. Methodological diversity, when applied with thoughtful consideration, can
7 enable study and field-level creativity. Yet authors and reviewers need to ensure quality and
8 alignment. Our paper offers guidance to do so, unleashing creativity with rigor. Finally, our
9 paper offers a comprehensive, integrative insight across methodological decisions. Extant
10 methods scholarship pinpoints specific challenges at particular decision points in the research
11 process. Instead, we enable scholars to zoom out and consider the alignment across all decision
12 points. Taken together, this Paradox Approach to Methods advances organizational methods
13 toward more creative, insightful scholarship (Fairhurst et al., 2016; Lê & Schmid, 2022; Schad
14 et al., 2016).

32 **RESEARCH TENSIONS AND PARADOX THEORY**

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36 Scholarly methods inherently embed tensions. To aid rigor that creates and extends knowledge,
37 research necessarily and paradoxically ‘flattens’ the multidimensional, dynamic and messy
38 phenomena being studied. Tensions arise as scholars make methodological decisions among
39 competing demands, delimiting what is ‘in’ and ‘out’ (Turner et al, 2017). For example, early
40 stages invite questions about the specificity versus complexity of research scope. Specificity
41 enables more targeted, reliable and valid constructs, measurements and analysis, but results in
42 less generalizable applications. Engaging with greater phenomenological complexity expands
43 impact and insights, but requires more abstracted approaches and crude measurements.
44 Similarly, as scholars enter the field, they grapple with choices among qualitative and
45 quantitative data, emic or etic approaches, inductive or deductive analysis. Interpreting data
46 generates tensions between advancing or challenging existing insights. Research tensions
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4 become particularly salient as scholars draw on varied paradigms or disciplines, where varied
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6 underlying assumptions, epistemologies and ontologies often directly clash with one another
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8 (i.e. Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Yet such tensions pervade scholarship, challenging authors
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10 throughout the research process.

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14 Early scholarship encouraged researchers to view these tensions as either/or tradeoffs (Turner
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16 et al., 2017), choosing between alternatives to ensure study-level alignment and field-level
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18 consistency. Foundational multiparadigm and interdisciplinary scholarship, as example,
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20 depicts alternative approaches as incommensurable (Lewis & Grimes, 1999). Authors and
21
22 reviewers reinforce convergence - a sharpening and narrowing of accumulating knowledge -
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24 as past experiences reinforce uses of more predominant approaches. Doing so enables clarity,
25
26 yet can be limiting and problematic. Over time theoretical fields and disciplines become tied
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28 to specific methodological choices, enabling convergence but minimizing creativity and
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30 expansion. Similarly, construct clarity fosters knowledge accumulation, but can limit novelty
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32 and imagination.

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38 Paradox theory has proven a useful aid for navigating tensions broadly, inviting scholars to
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40 apply these insights to enhance methodological creativity (e.g., Andriopoulos & Gotsi, 2017;
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42 Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Langley & Klag, 2019; Lewis & Grimes, 1999). Paradox denotes
43
44 “contradictory yet interdependent elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time”
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46 (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 382). While paradox insights are ancient (see Keller et al., 2021),
47
48 applications in organizational studies have intensified over recent decades (see Putnam et al.,
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50 2016; Schad et al., 2016). As a ‘big tent’ theory, scholars study paradox across phenomena,
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52 disciplines, paradigms and levels of analysis, applying methodological diversity that often
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54 amplifies their experience of research tensions (Bednarek et al., 2021a, 2021b). For example,
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56 some scholars have applied in depth, inductive data to study systemic tensions embedded in
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3 interorganizational relationships (Jarzabkowski et al., 2022). Others apply deductive,
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5 experimental approaches to understand individual and team-level tensions (Miron-Spektor et
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7 al., 2011; Miron-Spektor et al., 2022).
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11 Paradox theory investigates the double-edged sword of tensions (see Lewis & Smith, 2022).
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13 Scholars find that the emotional and cognitive discomfort of tensions can raise defenses that
14
15 trigger paralysis, polarization and intractable conflict (Berti & Simpson, 2021; Vince &
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17 Broussine, 1996). Yet tensions can also spark innovation, learning and change (Miron-Spektor
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19 et al., 2011). Unleashing this creative potential, however, requires careful navigation. Paradox
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21 theory invites scholars to surface and value underlying research tensions as a source of
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23 generative creativity.
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28 Understanding paradoxical tensions as both inherent to systems and socially constructed by
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30 actors (Hahn & Knight, 2021; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2023), paradox theorists identify several
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32 keys to navigating tensions (see Smith & Lewis, 2011). Some call for a mindset shift, enabling
33
34 acceptance of tensions and their paradoxical nature. Lüscher & Lewis (2008) find that a process
35
36 of questioning one's underlying assumptions aids a cognitive and emotional shift. Moving from
37
38 either/or dilemmas toward more holistic, circular, both/and thinking, actors come to accept
39
40 tensions as natural, even beneficial, and gain comfort in their discomfort. Developing a paradox
41
42 mindset measure, Miron-Spektor and colleagues (2018) find benefits for those having a greater
43
44 awareness of tensions and propensity to lean into their positive potential. Others investigate a
45
46 practice of differentiating and integrating (e.g., Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Smets et al.,
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48 2015, Smith, 2014), diving deeply into the opposing poles of tensions. In tandem,
49
50 differentiating serves to accentuate each pole's distinctive value, while integrating seeks to
51
52 identify their paradoxical links. Building from paradox studies, Smith and Lewis (2022) stress
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54 that tensions are knotted and interwoven (see also Sheep et al., 2017a; Jarzabkowski et al.,
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4 2022), often requiring intentional variation among decisions. Described as consistent
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6 inconsistency, they use a ‘tightrope walking’ metaphor (Lewis & Smith, 2022) . Iteratively
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8 leaning toward one pole then another, within guardrails to avoid trapping extremes, aids
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10 progression toward an overarching vision.
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14 Valuing this approach to navigating tensions, scholars have applied a paradox lens inward
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16 toward addressing research tensions, suggesting that ‘navigating paradox is paradoxical’
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18 (Cameron & Quinn, 1988; Smith & Lewis, 2022). Indeed, early scholars championed a paradox
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20 approach to organizational theorizing (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989). More recently, scholars
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22 applied this lens to examine specific methodological decisions. Andriopoulos and Gotsi (2017)
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24 introduced methodological insights for scholars studying paradox, inviting awareness of
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26 research tensions in core constructs and ontologies. Langley and Klag (2019) drew on a
27
28 paradox lens to unpack tensions between engagement and disengagement in inductive,
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30 qualitative research, which they label as the involvement paradox. Bartunek and Rynes (2014)
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32 invoke paradox theory to surface and navigate research tensions between academics and
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34 practitioners.
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40 Building from these insights, we develop the foundations of a more comprehensive Paradox
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42 Approach to Methods. Our approach extends existing work in several ways. First, rather than
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44 narrow our focus on a particular challenge, we introduce a broad-based approach. Doing so
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46 allows us to offer insights into navigating specific tensions, while also exploring how varied
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48 tensions intertwine across a research project. Second, even as we draw on paradox exemplars
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50 to illustrate our approach, our insights apply to scholarship across organizational studies. Even
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52 as a method or theory may tend to surface particular tensions, we argue that a paradox lens can
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54 apply across all of these research tensions. As such, we aim toward a paradox approach agnostic
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56 to theory, method or ontology.
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METHODS

To understand the nature and navigation of research tensions, we integrated empirical induction and extant theory (Tracy, 2013). Beginning with an awareness of research tensions from theory, we sought empirical examples to explore specific methodological tensions and responses. Next, we interviewed scholars to understand their experiences with these tensions and then focused on two key papers - one qualitative and one quantitative - helping identify practices for weaving together approaches across tensions. Linking empirical evidence with existing paradox theory aided explication of specific research tensions and navigation practices across tensions. As an important note, we examined empirical paradox studies to sharpen our focus and serve as exemplars. Paradox research, however, is emblematic, not exceptional, in terms of research tensions, fitting our methodological aims yet not limiting our goal of initiating an approach valued well beyond paradox scholarship.

Data collected

We examined empirical papers to explore how scholars navigated research tensions. To enable comparison across exemplars, we sought papers that share a theoretical lens (Eisenhardt, 1989). Paradox theory offered a valued research setting for empirical examples for two reasons. First, as a 'big tent' theory (Lewis & Smith, 2022), studies canvas an exceptional array of phenomena and methodologies (Bednarek et al., 2021b). Such diversity helps inform a more generalizable approach across methods, while their common theoretical lens aids study comparisons. Second, paradox scholars are acutely aware of tensions, increasingly stressing their value in the research process and discussing their navigation in community forums (Andriopoulos & Gotsi, 2017). Therefore, paradox studies inform our proposed approach through both theory and empirical examples. In our discussion, we generalize our approach across theories to apply our insights

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3 to organizational scholarship broadly. We drew on three data sources: reviewing empirical
4 paradox studies, interviewing scholarly experts, and leveraging two case studies.
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9 *Empirical paradox studies.* Following Langley and Klag (2019) and Köhler, Smith and Bhakoo
10 (2022), we first reviewed existing papers, surveying empirical paradox studies broadly in order
11 to identify research tensions. Our sample was not exhaustive, but rather sought illustrative,
12 diverse and insightful examples of methodological challenges and solutions. We began with
13 special issues on paradox in *Organization Studies* (see Smith et al., 2017) and *Organizational*
14 *Behavior and Human Decision Processes* (see Waldman et al., 2019). We further included
15 paradox research in three key organizational journals - *Academy of Management Journal*,
16 *Administrative Science Quarterly*, and *Organization Science*. We categorized works by their
17 methods (qualitative, quantitative and sub-categories) and levels of analysis. We then selected
18 exemplars (Huff, 1999) to ensure representation across methods and journals (e.g., North
19 American and European, generalist and specialist). For sufficient methodological diversity, we
20 shared our initial sample with 19 paradox experts and asked them to assess the collection for
21 breadth and depth of methods, and contribute any papers in areas they deemed lacking
22 representation. The final result, shown in Table, included 60 empirical exemplars.
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47 *Interviewed scholarly experts.* To better understand how scholars experienced and navigated
48 research tensions in crafting their research, we engaged experts directly. To select interviewees,
49 we read all 60 papers, then chose five papers (noted in bold in the Table) representing different
50 methods and levels of analysis. We contacted their lead authors, asking for semi-structured
51 expert-conversations on their paper's research question, paradox definitions, assumptions,
52 methods, and contributions (Köhler et al., 2022). Our review of empirical paradox papers
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3 informed our questions. During interviews, which lasted between 55 to 70 minutes, we
4 encouraged the scholars to describe their ‘backstage’ sensemaking and emotional experiences
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6 of research tensions and their navigating practices. Specifically, we interviewed Katsuki Aoki
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8 (e.g., Aoki, 2020), Paula Jarzabkowski (e.g., Jarzabkowski & Lê, 2017), Josh Keller (e.g.,
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10 Keller et al., 2017), Ella Miron-Spektor (e.g., Miron-Spektor et al., 2018), and Linda Putnam
11
12 and Gail Fairhurst (e.g., Fairhurst & Putnam, 2019). Two interviewers joined each interview;
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14 one guiding the primary questions, the other asking follow-up, probing questions to explore
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16 statements further. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.
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23 *Leveraging case studies.* We conducted a deeper dive into two research projects to better
24 understand how scholars addressed multiple tensions within one paper. The papers were: (1)
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26 ‘We Have To Do This and That? You Must be Joking: Constructing and Responding to Paradox
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28 Through Humor’, a qualitative study by Jarzabkowski and Lê (2017), and (2) ‘Culture,
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30 Conditions and Paradoxical Frames’, a quantitative study by Keller, Loewenstein, and Yan
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32 (2017). These cases were chosen for their contrasting methodologies, aiding generalizability;
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34 and for their common publishing in *Organization Studies*, facilitating comparison. We
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36 extended our coding and analysis of these papers and our interviews of their lead authors,
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38 returning to the lead authors when we had additional questions about their decision choices.
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40 Diving deeply into these papers helped us explore how varied tensions and authors’ responses
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42 informed methodological decisions across the research process.
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50 **Data analysis**

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53 The purpose of our data analysis was to identify research tensions, while gaining insights into
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55 scholars’ navigation of these challenges. As such, we iterated between existing theory and our
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57 emergent findings. Our analysis progressed in three stages.
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4 *Coding Empirical Exemplars.* In the first stage, two co-authors coded the 60 empirical
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6 exemplars. Using a shared spreadsheet, we noted each study's research tensions embedded
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8 within the research question, unit of analysis, ontological assumptions, methods of data
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10 collection and analysis, and contributing literature streams. Initially, we focussed on the
11
12 introduction and methods sections of the papers, but later broadened our analysis to the entire
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14 text recognizing the implications of research tensions for other decision points in the paper.
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16 Through our review, we used a shared Excel file to store semi-structured notes and
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18 representative quotes highlighting key tensions. In regular meetings, we discussed our
19
20 representative quotes highlighting key tensions. In regular meetings, we discussed our
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22 emerging insights as an author team. We drew on an analysis strategy of using insiders and
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24 outsiders (Gioia et al., 2010; Rerup & Feldman, 2011). The two coding co-authors offered
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26 emerging inductive insights, seeking reactions from the other two co-authors who brought a
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28 lens of paradox theory to inform continued exploration of the data. This iterative process
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30 surfaced recurring tensions at six decision points (e.g. research scope, construct definition,
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32 underlying assumptions, data collection, data analysis and interpretation).
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37 *Analyzing interviews.* In the second stage, we drew on interviews to understand scholars' lived
38
39 experience of and response to research tensions. Continuing our insider-outsider iterations, two
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41 co-authors conducted and coded the interviews, leveraging the fresh perspectives of the other
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43 co-authors to discuss insights surfacing across interviews. Informed by the categories that had
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45 emerged from our review of empirical papers, we identified passages that described how
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47 scholars understood and responded to tensions. Our analysis highlighted that, for instance,
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49 managing emic-etic tensions during data collection requires balancing closeness with
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51 objectivity. As example, during an interview, Jarzabkowski described her acceptance that data
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53 collection involves striving for objectivity while acknowledging the inherent subjectivity of
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55 ethnography. We coded this practice as "accepting". By further analyzing the interviews, we
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57 identified two additional, reinforcing practices for navigating the six decision points:
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3 “differentiating” and “integrating”, which referred to interviewees separately calling out
4 tensional poles (differentiating) and discussing how they combined or linked them
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6 (integrating).
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11 *Analyzing case studies.* In the third stage, we conducted a more comprehensive assessment of
12 tensions and their navigation within two, focal studies (Jarzabkowski & Lê, 2017; Keller et al.,
13 2017). Two co-authors re-read these papers and the authors’ interviews, applying our emerging
14 model to assess tensions and navigation practices. They then sought to understand the
15 alignment of decisions across the papers. All the co-authors analyzed these insights as a team
16 and integrated existing literature. Our analysis identified a fourth navigating practice, *knotting*
17 - the dynamic weaving together of entangled, co-occurring tensions (see Jarzabkowski et al.,
18 2022; Sheep et al., 2017a). For instance, Jarzabkowski and Le (2017), while navigating the
19 complexities of data collection, discovered humor as a recurring pattern. This discovery
20 spurred the authors to revisit their initial scope, knotting data collection tensions with tensions
21 of research scope enabled an iterative process of alignment.
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38 **TOWARD A PARADOX APPROACH TO METHODS**

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42 Taken together, our review, interviews and case studies enabled the basis for a Paradox
43 Approach to Methods; a framework toward surfacing and navigating research tensions in
44 organization studies. As illustrated in Figure 1, we came to envision a web of tensions
45 embedded within research projects. Different tensions surface at six methodological decision
46 points regarding research scope, construct definition, underlying assumptions, data collection,
47 data analysis, and interpretation.
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4 Iterating between paradox theory and our empirical exemplars and interviews helped us
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6 identify a process of four, reinforcing practices for navigating research tensions - accepting,
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8 differentiating, integrating and knotting (see Figure 2). *Accepting* involves recognizing
9
10 tensions as paradoxical, posing conflicting yet interdependent demands that raise challenges
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12 and opportunities. Surfacing tensions, scholars shift their mindset from either/or tradeoffs to
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14 both/and thinking, rendering the tug-of-war workable and triggering more expansive
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16 exploration (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008; Miron-Spektor et al., 2018). *Differentiating and*
17
18 *integrating* work in tandem as dual practices (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Smith, 2014;
19
20 Lewis & Smith, 2022). Differentiating entails identifying distinct characteristics of opposing
21
22 demands in order to value each option. Integrating aims to discover synergies and links across
23
24 alternatives, exploring how advancing one pole can enable, rather than limit, its opposite.
25
26 Together differentiating and integrating reinforce one another, helping scholars decide whether
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28 to oscillate between opposing demands with ‘consistent inconsistency’ or find a synergistic
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30 ‘creative integration’ (Smith, 2014; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Finally, through *knotting*, scholars
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32 weave together their responses across tensions. Dynamically bringing together entangled, co-
33
34 occurring tensions, scholars may build creative coherence within a project. To craft a clear and
35
36 compelling narrative that achieves one’s research aim, knotting entails piecing together
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38 accumulating decisions and insights via methodological bricolage (Pratt, Sonenshein &
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40 Feldman, 2020).¹
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51 To present the model, we examine the six methodological decision points in turn. Zooming in,
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53 we explicate *accepting* and *differentiating and integrating* practices to navigate each decision
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55 point. While we unpack tensions in a sequence, methodological decisions shape one another
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60 ¹ We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for connecting us to the methodological bricolage literature.

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3 through an iterative, even circular process. Using the case studies as illustration, we conclude
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5 this section by zooming out to examine *knotting* as a practice that spans a full research project.
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8 Knotting serves to help scholars interweave multiple research tensions and related decisions
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10 across a paper to craft a cohesive narrative. Applying and expanding these insights to
11
12 navigating research tensions, a paradox approach may foster methodological creativity while
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14 ensuring consistency, clarity and rigor. [Note: in this section, illustrations from the two case
15
16 studies are highlighted by presenting their authors' names in italics].
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20 21 **Research Scope**

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24 Research scope denotes the boundaries of a study - its focal phenomena, level(s) of analysis,
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26 and research question - and determines its explanatory potential (Wooley & Fuchs, 2011). This
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28 methodological decision point raises a core *complexity-simplicity* tension. Scholars seek a
29
30 research scope complicated enough to capture systemic intricacies and phenomenological
31
32 accuracy, yet simple enough to deliver reliable and generalizable contributions. To
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34 organization scholars, complexity vs. simplicity can seem an inevitable research trade-off
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36 (Turner et al., 2017). As Thorngate (1976, p. 126) notes: "It is impossible for an explanation
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38 of social behavior to be simultaneously general, simple, and accurate." A paradox approach,
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40 however, moves beyond trade-offs to explore mutual value and synergies.
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46 *Accepting.* Scholars begin to engage the complexity-simplicity tension by surfacing its
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48 underlying paradox, thereby accepting its opposing and interwoven demands (Smith & Lewis,
49
50 2011). Leaning into the paradoxical nature of research scope can energize scholars' search for
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52 explanatory power via relevance and rigor; for broad patterns and focused depth. Paula
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54 Jarzabkowski explained in an interview the importance of embracing this tension:
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57 *If you deny it, then you have no way of explaining this thing that is happening or trying*
58 *to control it. So in that sense, the very fact that [...] [paradoxes are present] make it not*
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4 *just acceptable, but even imperative and good [...] sense to say, 'This is really*
5 *challenging'. (Paula Jarzabkowski, interview).*
6

7 Analyzing the exemplars, complexity-simplicity tensions were particularly evident when
8 choosing level(s) of analysis. While most paradox exemplars focus on a primary level of
9 analysis (see Table), some are multilevel, hence leaning towards the pole of a more complex
10 research scope. For example, Schrage and Rasche (2022) sought insights into both meso-level
11 organizational practices and macro-level institutional forces. Simplifying the complexity of
12 this multilevel research scope, they use a 2x2 matrix to examine both levels (see Table 4 of
13 their paper).
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16 To accept complexity-simplicity tensions, scholars widen their lens to sharpen their focus;
17 needing complex realism and simplified rigor to aim their research (e.g., Sheep et al., 2017a).
18 This is also evidenced in the two case studies. *Jarzabkowski and Lê (2017)*, for instance, note
19 their conflicting yet interwoven research goals at different levels of analysis, accepting them
20 as a given tension of their research project (Paula Jarzabkowski, interview). They seek
21 understanding of how a new strategy ripples tensions across a telecommunications company at
22 the organizational level, and of actors' micro-practices in response (Jarzabkowski & Lê, 2017).
23 Similarly, our analysis reveals how scoping sparked an insightful tug-of-war for *Keller et al.*
24 (2017), as they grappled with focusing on macro sociological patterns (e.g., how culture and
25 conditions influence the framing of tensions) and micro cultural nuances (e.g., how American
26 and Chinese actors frame a specific tension).
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50 *Differentiating and integrating.* These dual practices aid navigation of scoping tensions:
51 differentiating to value opposing options, and integrating to embrace their interconnections.
52 Exploring complexity widens the research aperture, enabling a more holistic view of field
53 intricacies and consideration of theoretical and methodological variations (i.e., 'what if we use
54 X to examine...' scenarios). Assessing for simplicity, in contrast, narrows the lens to gauge
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4 research rigor and manageability (i.e., the feasibility of methodically addressing varied
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6 questions). As illustration, in order to navigate the complexity brought by their level-spanning
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8 research goals, *Jarzabkowski and Lê* (2017, p. 435) begin by reviewing 12 well-studied
9
10 paradoxes across levels. Cataloging organizing paradoxes at a macro-level, belonging
11
12 paradoxes at a meso-level, and performing paradoxes at a micro-level helps them convey field
13
14 intricacies, while positioning their deep dive into actors' repertoire of micro-responses.
15
16 Accentuating complexity, they widen their lens to various, complex tensions, then sharpen their
17
18 focus on a specific unit of analysis, thereby simplifying their research endeavor (Jarzabkowski
19
20 & Lê, 2017, p. 442). *Keller et al.* (2017) also start from an expansive stance. Seeking to
21
22 understand when and why actors respond to paradoxes differently, they review the impact of
23
24 societal cultures, environmental conditions, and personal characteristics. They then turn a laser-
25
26 focus on their intersection, thereby sharpening and simplifying their research scope.
27
28 Specifically, they test interactions among cultures (Chinese and American), situational
29
30 conditions (cooperation-competition tensions) and personal characteristics (paradox mindset)
31
32 on actors' responses to paradox (Keller et al., 2017). Exposing distinctive benefits of
33
34 complexity and simplicity can clarify their shared value, helping scholars frame an insightful
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36 and workable scope. One interviewee explained how she and her co-author gain comfort with
37
38 their scoping choice by appreciating scholars' different, accumulating and complementary
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40 approaches to the field.
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47 *[We] see that [our data] are operating as a contradiction, or an interplay of tensions,*
48 *pushing and pulling dialectically and... that it's so complex; it is evolutionary; it is*
49 *changing... So we move to looking at this as being a holistic thing. There's studies out*
50 *there looking only at dialectical tensions. And they tend to just focus narrowly on that*
51 *part, and I think that's just fine. Because that narrows them in not to look at kind of the*
52 *way it ends up or the way it starts, or in some ways because they're just playing the*
53 *evolution in and the push pull. But I also think there are others that can say these things*
54 *are interwoven (Linda Putnam, interview).*
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Construct Definition

Theoretical constructs can be built on different construal levels, raising tensions between loose and tight definitions (Trope & Liberman, 2010). Loose constructs are more generalizable, relating to a wider array of organizational settings and theories. Tight constructs specify characteristics of the focal phenomenon, building from and speaking to targeted scholarly audiences, and enabling more reliable and replicable research. In organization studies, some stress a trend toward the former (Buchanan & Bryman, 2007), while others note that more prescribed processes foster greater conformity and tightening of construct definitions (Lambert & Newman, 2023).

Accepting. Acknowledging the benefits of *tight-loose* tensions can empower intentional, reflexive and creative consideration of research constructs. For example, in paradox studies, scholars grapple with defining their core construct, asking ‘what is - and is not - paradox?’ This question is often a valued subject of conference talks and debates within the community. Seeking greater generalizability and flexibility, some scholars define paradox loosely as tensions (e.g., Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009). In contrast, tight definitions build on more specific constitutive elements (e.g., Gümüşay et al., 2020; Sheep et al., 2017b; Smith, 2014). Most exemplars using an extant paradox definition apply three, well-developed criteria: contradiction, interdependence, persistence (Smith & Lewis, 2011; Schad et al., 2016, p. 6).

Definitional tensions may also surface at different times. For example, Ella Miron-Spektor noted how this tension can resurface during the review process. “It depends on the extent to which reviewers are familiar with paradox in general. When we started [doing paradox research], the challenge was ‘what is paradox?’ How to define paradox? How is it different from other related constructs? I still get these comments when reviewers are less familiar with

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3 paradox” (Ella Miron-Spektor, interview). Accepting the value of loose-tight tensions, Gail
4
5 Fairhurst depicts how the ebbing and flowing of paradox definitions throughout her research
6
7 process and her career have enabled greater insight:
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10 *People need to get their arms around the definition and that's what a lot of paradox*
11 *writers say, 'find a definition and, by god, stick to it!' I have become a little looser on*
12 *that subject. Because I think when you're attempting to analyze data, you have to sort*
13 *of hold these definitions lightly... You may see one very clear example of a tension that's*
14 *not a contradiction, not dialectical, and not paradoxical...but then you may see tensions*
15 *that actually qualify for one of those other three. And yet, you're in a study where you*
16 *have multiple tensions. And so do you call one a dialectic and one a tension or do you*
17 *just use the broader term paradoxical tension? I mean, there's a lot of language games*
18 *to play around definitions. And my approach would be to [...] get people to educate*
19 *themselves as to what these ideal types are, but also to know that you're going to have*
20 *difficulties with data or the way actors articulate or how articulate they are. You may*
21 *have to hold those definitions lightly and make some choices about what those*
22 *definitions are. And just be clear about them as you write (Gail Fairhurst, interview).*
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26 *Differentiating and integrating.* Differentiating entails taking stock and assessing the value of
27
28 tight versus loose constructs, aiding their vetting, yet also exposing conceptual gaps.
29
30 Integrating aims to link varied approaches, seeking synergies within one paper or across a
31
32 research field. Osigweh (1989, p. 579) positions constructs as the ‘building blocks of science’,
33
34 tight definitions offering a base for conceptual clarity, consistency and justification, while loose
35
36 definitions enable conceptual flexibility. Together, their interplay fosters greater insight and
37
38 options at varying levels of abstraction ‘from situational concepts to generalizable universals’.
39
40 He calls for a paradoxical stance, applying definitions that are both general and precise, serving
41
42 the research problem by specifying what it does not cover while valuing broader approaches.
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48 Differentiating and integrating tight and loose definitions aids clarity in individual papers and
49
50 advances the overall field. Drawing on tight definitions within a particular paper enables
51
52 creativity across insights and more expansive understanding of other constructs. Yet loose
53
54 definitions invite discussion that can then sharpen definitions. For example, our analysis
55
56 suggests that most scholars draw from established, tighter definitions (e.g., Pamphile, 2021;
57
58 Schrage & Rasche, 2022). Well-established constructs offer a foundation from which these
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3 papers introduce new constructs. Miron-Spektor illustrated how tight, existing definitions
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5
6 fueled their broader conceptualization of a paradox mindset:
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8 *... for the 2018 paper... there wasn't a clear definition [of a paradox mindset]. So one*
9 *challenge was to say, 'Okay, how is it different from paradox?' So whenever you move*
10 *to that, you have to be very clear in defining the construct and the boundaries. So we*
11 *spent a lot of time thinking about, for example, what is the difference between*
12 *paradoxical frames and paradox mindset? (Ella Miron-Spektor, interview).*
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16 In our exemplars, we found studies that opted for a looser vocabulary of 'tensions' (e.g.,
17 Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009), seeking greater conceptual breadth, while others sought the
18 depth of tighter specifications of 'paradox' (e.g. Gümüşay et al., 2020; Sheep et al., 2017b;
19 Smith, 2014). Still others spanned loose and tight definitions. For instance, Sheep et al. (2017a)
20 in their paper on knotted tensions begin their literature review by contrasting paradoxes and
21 tensions, drawing on definitions by Schad et al. (2016), then choosing the broader vocabulary
22 of 'tensions' for their own study.
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33 Both case studies converge on the tight paradox definition of Smith and Lewis (2011), yet - as
34 we read it - do so for differing methodological purposes. Jarzabkowski and Lê (2017) leverage
35 this base to creatively explore how paradox is embedded in actors' everyday actions and
36 reflected in their micro-practices. In contrast, Keller et al. (2017) use the definition to guide
37 operationalizations of related measures (paradoxical framing and paradox mindset), aiding
38 their quantitative study of interactions (Josh Keller, interview). While a tight definition of
39 paradox helps these two papers sharpen their research focus, they recognized that holding
40 tensions more loosely might have made their work more broadly applicable (Josh Keller,
41 interview; Paula Jarzabkowski, interview).
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54 Differentiating and integrating can also occur across the research field. For example, paradox
55 theory offers a 'big tent' accommodating both loose and tight definitions of the core construct.
56 Several authors compare and contrast varied tight definitions, leading to valued expansion and
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3 integration of constructs (see Hargrave & Van de Ven, 2017; Putnam et al., 2016). Varying
4 definitions invite more inclusive and creative approaches, yet challenge reviewers who seek
5
6 certainty and clarity. Valuing tight and loose constructs within a field therefore requires
7
8 reviewers to assess the validity, clarity and consistency of definitions within each manuscript,
9
10 while remaining wary of their personal preferences and biases.
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16 **Underlying Assumptions**

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18 Assumptions refer to the ontological, epistemological and ideological choices driving
19 methodologies, and raise *singularity-plurality* tensions. In organization studies, underlying
20 assumptions frame distinct theoretical lenses (Lounsbury & Gehman, 2024). The ‘paradigm
21 wars’ of the 1980s identified co-existing and conflicting sets of assumptions, such as those of
22
23 Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) typology: objective vs. subjective, managerialist vs. critical .
24
25 These debates helped expand paradigmatic options, while pushing scholars to specify their
26 assumptions and thereby justify and guide subsequent research choices. Operating within a
27
28 singular set of assumptions sharpens one’s lens and project boundaries. Yet studies also
29 demand plurality, as integrative assumptions may surface novel insights into organizational
30 dynamics and intricacies. Buchanan and Bryman (2007, p. 485) observe that organizational
31 research ‘displays a variety of positivist, critical, phenomenological, constructivist,
32
33 interpretative, feminist, and postmodern perspectives’, each with assumptions to vet, select
34 and/or blend.
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50 *Accepting.* Coming to accept the paradoxical nature of underlying assumptions helps scholars
51 see, carve out, and act upon our world differently, sharpening yet limiting our worldview and
52 resulting representations (Chia, 2019). Singular assumptions aid convergence of thought within
53 a particular research project, while plural assumptions invite divergence and novelty.
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55 Accepting this tension, paradox scholars, as illustration, often surface singularity-plurality
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4 tensions by asking about ontological assumptions: is paradox in the minds of actors or an
5
6 objective part of ‘reality’? One’s response poses substantive methods issues, rippling through
7
8 later decisions of analytics and interpretation. Reviewed exemplars surface underlying
9
10 assumptions in varied formats. For example, some make clear declarations, positioning
11
12 paradox as objective and thereby observable (e.g., Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009). Such is the
13
14 example of Zhang et al (2015: 538), noting in their abstract: “As organizational environments
15
16 become increasingly dynamic, complex, and competitive, leaders are likely to face intensified
17
18 contradictory, or seemingly paradoxical, demands.” In contrast, others select constructivist
19
20 ontologies. Sheep et al. (2017a), for instance, explicate their assumption of paradox as socially
21
22 constructed, accessible via “discursive formulations in which members construct tensions, not
23
24 only as co-occurring, but as Gordian (inseparable) entanglements of interdependence (2017a:
25
26 465). Similarly, Ella Miron-Spektor embraces singularity-plurality tensions, while harnessing
27
28 her own assumptions: “So think about it, the notion of paradox, whether it's socially constructed
29
30 or it’s out there. For people like us, like me [researchers in psychology], I believe everything
31
32 is socially constructed [... so] focus on mindset and framework” (Ella Miron-Spektor,
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34 interview).
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41 For other scholars, recognizing these tensions helps clarify their emphasis on plurality. Some
42
43 reviewed exemplars explore paradox by unpacking insights across ontological assumptions
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45 (e.g., Schrage & Rasche, 2022; Smets et al., 2015). For instance, Gümüşay et al. (2020) explore
46
47 paradoxical institutional logics between commercial and religious ambitions of an Islamic
48
49 bank. They depict how study participants ask themselves both ‘What kind of Islamic bank
50
51 would the market allow us to be?’ (viewing conflicting logics as deriving from the external
52
53 environment) and ‘What kind of Islamic bank do we want to be?’ (viewing conflicting logics
54
55 as internally constructed) (Gümüşay et al., 2020, p. 135). Such work aligns with views of
56
57 paradox as both socially constructed and inherent (Hahn & Knight, 2021; Smith & Lewis,
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4 2011), and explorations of multiparadigm methods (e.g., Lewis & Grimes, 1999; Lewis &
5
6 Kelemen, 2002). Both case studies represent this turn. *Keller et al. (2017, p. 539)* view
7
8 organizational contexts as creating conditions—“systems, structures, and practices”—that
9
10 actors may interpret as contradictory. *Jarzabkowski and Lê (2017)* similarly frame paradoxes
11
12 as inherent yet whether deemed opportunities or challenges depend on how actors construct
13
14 their experience.

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17 *Is market and regulation paradoxical? I would say that they are interpreted as*
18 *interdependent and often contradictory. But is that due to external forces or is that*
19 *internally constructed? For us they have a propensity to be so because of the way they*
20 *are organized. Is it from outside? Well, yes, if a regulator sets it up with particular*
21 *kinds of controls, structurally, that will create the contradictions that will become*
22 *prevalent. But then, how do people respond to that? How do they construct that sort of*
23 *situation? (Paula Jarzabkowski, interview).*

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26 *Differentiating and integrating.* Dual differentiating and integrating practices help challenge
27
28 and clarify underlying assumptions. Differentiating pushes scholars to unpack divergent lenses
29
30 on the focal phenomena. Contrasting alternatives highlights the benefits and gaps of distinct
31
32 lenses. Differentiation also renders scholars' initial assumptions explicit and open to question,
33
34 expand and confirm. As such, differentiation aids integration, helping scholars set guiding
35
36 assumptions to best serve the research at hand. For example, *Keller et al. (2017)* view paradox
37
38 as socially constructed within one's external, cultural environment (Josh Keller, interview).
39
40 They examine interpretive studies of paradox sensemaking, then apply more positivist lenses
41
42 on observed cultural, situational and individual variations. In contrast, *Jarzabkowski and Lê*
43
44 *(2017)* map studies of externally identified paradoxes and responses, then examine socially
45
46 constructed experiences within their data. Differentiation sharpened their focus, finding that
47
48 scarce attention had been paid to how paradox responses ‘are actually constructed in [...] micro-
49
50 interactions’ (p. 434). While analyzing their data, this awareness sensitized the scholars to
51
52 micro-practices of humor.

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58 *[The clarity of our assumption that paradox is socially constructed] gave us confidence,*
59 *because the thing, that really kind of ‘core thing’, in that paper, for us the real ‘A-ha’*
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4 *was that pre-response moment; that humor is a pre-response to paradox. And within*
5 *that pre-response, before you're even responding, the laughter is constructing it in a*
6 *particular way (Paula Jarzabkowski, interview).*
7

8 9 **Data Collection**

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12 Methodological decisions swirl around data collection as scholars consider how to enter the
13 research field and what data to collect. Aguinis, Hill and Bailey (2021) offer a thorough
14 checklist to enable research transparency. As they note, deciding which data to collect raises
15 interwoven issues of when, how, and from whose perspective. Such questions reflect long-
16 standing methodological debates on *emic-etic* tensions and related approaches. An emic
17 approach collects situated data to gauge perceptions, meanings and uses from an inside view.
18 In contrast, an etic approach applies an outside view, gathering data observable and comparable
19 across settings. While early scholars deemed these approaches incommensurable such that
20 scholars would need to choose one or the other, Morris and colleagues (1999) value their
21 paradoxical interplay, each exposing and filling the other's gaps. They offer the example of
22 tension with language scholars who might study meanings ascribed and varying by users and
23 historically and culturally embedded (emic), or might isolate and measure units, such as
24 sounds, to compare across contexts (etic). Langley and Klag (2019) label this the 'involvement
25 paradox.' Scholars seek proximity that builds deep understanding of how actors see, touch and
26 feel phenomena, yet minimizes possible bias of directly or indirectly influencing data.
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48 *Accepting.* Accepting emic-etic tensions as paradoxical first starts with scholars actively
49 grappling with competing demands for both greater closeness to and distance from their focal
50 phenomenon. A paradox approach invites scholars to lean into these tensions. For example,
51 paradox scholars value these varied approaches across research, resulting in data collection
52 approaches offering close, even participative, proximity - such as case studies and action
53 research (e.g., Lüscher & Lewis, 2008) - to greater distance and controls - as with surveys (e.g.,
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3 Keller & Loewenstein, 2011) and experiments (e.g., Miron-Spektor et al., 2011). For instance,
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5
6 Andriopoulos and Lewis (2009) used interviews, observations and archival data to capture
7
8 paradoxical phenomena in the 'wild'. Rich case studies help them unpack how the exploitation-
9
10 exploration paradox is experienced in situ, while archival data serves to illustrate ambidexterity
11
12 cycles over time. Accepting the emic vs. etic tension of data collection, *Jarzabkowski and Lê*
13
14 (2017) had to familiarize themselves with the industry, organization, internal processes and
15
16 people to build trust in a complex organization. As they write:

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18
19 *Our study follows the case of Telco, a regulated but publicly-traded European*
20
21 *telecommunications company implementing a complex new strategy with inherently*
22 *paradoxical elements. Such major restructuring efforts offer an opportunity to observe*
23 *salient paradoxes (Jarzabkowski & Lê, 2017, p. 440).*

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26 Yet, this familiarity had to be counterbalanced by ensuring objectivity, as they reflect:

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29 *Ensuring that you're trying to keep objectivity here, within so much as an ethnographer*
30 *always socially constructs their relationship with the field anyway, but you know, so*
31 *but there we were helped by the fact that we could provoke each other. We're always*
32 *helped by the review process because your reviewers will push you hard so they are*
33 *like an external analyst (Paula Jarzabkowski, interview).*

34
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36 *Differentiating and integrating.* Differentiation efforts highlight the benefits of both emic and
37
38 etic approaches, while integration practices sharpen focus of data collection to empower their
39
40 creative synergies. Examining alternatives and varied researcher positions helps scholars
41
42 remain open to new data, collection methods and viewpoints during the research process.
43
44 Qualitative paradox scholars, for instance, often draw on data sources that require distance to
45
46 objectively observe events (e.g., gestures, laughter, emotions, unique archives), yet close
47
48 enough proximity to understand their nuances, meaning and value (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2019).
49
50 Differentiating means highlighting the value of both distance and proximity. Quantitative
51
52 scholars face the challenge of building metrics and measurements with enough proximity to a
53
54 phenomenon that they capture a core construct, and enough distance from it to be generalizable.
55
56 As Ella Miron-Spektor described:
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4 *People who are experts in scale development recommend not using double-barreled*
5 *descriptions, meaning two competing statements in the same sentence, because when*
6 *you answer this item, you don't really know if people answered high, because they are*
7 *high on one aspect of the sentence and the other let's say or both. Now, the question is,*
8 *how do we capture paradox if you cannot do that, right? This is a challenge (Ella*
9 *Miron-Spektor, interview).*
10

11 Integrating means striking a balance between distance and proximity. To address this tension,
12
13 Miron-Spektor et al. (2018) decided to begin with broad and abstract items and then narrow
14
15 them down to something that they could capture. They also debated whether they should create
16
17 scales that can be generalized to many situations, contexts and/or tasks or on measurements
18
19 that focus on a specific situation. For instance, if a respondent scores high in the paradox
20
21 mindset construct, does this mean that s/he is really good in managing tensions generally (at
22
23 work, life, and relationships) or does it mean that s/he can do really well with tensions only at
24
25 work, and may not be good in other parts of their lives?
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31 *So we spent a lot of time thinking about, first conceptually, what do we think? Secondly,*
32 *when we were developing the items we also had the question, should we develop items*
33 *that are more tension specific or develop items that are more generic? We ended up*
34 *doing both (Ella Miron-Spektor, interview).*
35
36

37 In their 2018 paper, Miron-Spektor et al. (2018) developed items specific to tensions of
38
39 performing, learning, and belonging (differentiation), and included items to capture the general
40
41 paradox mindset (integration). Stressing their use of more generalizable items, they also invited
42
43 scholars to adapt the instructions toward more specific tensions as needed. Similarly, *Keller et*
44
45 *al. (2017, p. 540)* came to innovate, applying survey and experiment approaches to gather data
46
47 on actors' uses of paradoxical frames to navigate cooperation-competition tensions.
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49 Differentiating and integrating for them meant being close enough to their research context to
50
51 develop a novel experimental approach, expanding upon their use of more standard survey
52
53 methods. When interviewed, Josh Keller explained:
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4 *I found something interesting...because we couldn't find an existing experimental*
5 *paradigm that had... allowed people to cooperate and compete with each other at the*
6 *same time, or even to, you know, to see their response, because everything in all of the*
7 *previous experiments, were all designed in a way that here's the cooperation*
8 *manipulation and here's the competition manipulation right? (Josh Keller, interview).*
9

10 Differentiating and integrating might also mean seeking explicit sample boundaries within
11 which scholars can examine phenomena deeply. Reminiscent of improvisation (Smith &
12 Lewis, 2011), firm boundaries enable sharper focus and more controlled data comparisons that
13 can spur creativity. As example, Aoki (2020) weighed varied means of data collection - some
14 of which are more emic, others more etic in character - to help understand how actors'
15 experience tensions of kaizen (continuous improvement). He then rigorously set the boundaries
16 of an emic-etic mix, employing archival, observational, and interview data that allowed
17 elucidating the role of material artifacts as actors navigate the learning-performing paradox
18 (Katsuki Aoki, interview).
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32 **Data Analysis**

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36 Long-standing debates create a tug-of-war between more deductive and inductive analysis,
37 often associated with quantitative or qualitative data, respectfully. Deduction enables a top-
38 down approach, imposing then testing theory-based predictions against collected data, while
39 induction aids bottom-up opportunities, expanding theory through data-informed insights and
40 surprises. Torn between opposing analytical approaches, authors traditionally choose one. Yet
41 as Shepherd and Sutcliffe (2011) warn, this either/or view oversimplifies data analysis and
42 misses their mutual benefits for scholarly curiosity. Mantere and Ketokivi (2013) further
43 critique either/or approaches to analysis, claiming that analytical approaches - deduction,
44 induction and abduction - overplay rationality. They implore scholars to embrace heterogeneity
45 and better address limits of data, of analytic tools, and of scholars, such as our own bounded
46 rationality and biases. As scholars increasingly surface the *deduction-induction* tension, they
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3 also search for their paradoxical interplay. Scholars argued that a full cycle of research depends
4 on alternating between induction and deduction at varied stages in knowledge development
5
6 cycles and even within distinct projects. Inductive approaches generate insights to be tested by
7
8 deductive analysis. Deductive testing raises anomalies that require more inductive processes.
9
10 (Chatman & Flynn, 2005). Others describe methods that integrate both types of reasoning
11
12 (Proudfoot, 2022). Abduction involves noting anomalies in data compared with previous
13
14 explanations, and generating and assessing new theoretical explanations (Golden-Biddle, 2020;
15
16 Sætre & Van de Ven, 2021). Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) draws inductive
17
18 reasoning to explore configurations across data and deductive approaches to test these patterns
19
20 against theoretical expectations. Others describe iterative approaches that begin with pragmatic
21
22 problem statements and shift between inductive and deductive analysis (Sharma & Bansal,
23
24 2023; Tracy, 2013; 2018).

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32 *Accepting.* For paradox scholars, accepting the value of top-down and bottom-up analytical
33
34 approaches can help leverage data to discover and unpack, and test and theorize insights.
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36 Qualitative scholars, for example, often lean into language, helping embrace deductive-
37
38 inductive tensions as valuable to data analysis. For example, Andriopoulos and Gotsi (2017)
39
40 encourage paradox researchers to initially define then continuously expand their paradox
41
42 vocabulary to support data coding and analysis. In their interview, co-authors Gail Fairhurst
43
44 and Linda Putnam shared their ‘backstage’ experiences with this data analysis tension in
45
46 studying paradoxes.
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51 *Language can be so idiosyncratic and so tied to context and uniqueness of the moment*
52 *that unless that researcher brings that kind of sensitivity to it, as opposed to a lens that's*
53 *going to be pretty simplistic overall, because you're looking at the situation in broad*
54 *strokes rather than fine strokes (Gail Fairhurst, interview).*
55

56
57 *Look at your data ... and see that it's operating as a contradiction, or an interplay of*
58 *tensions, pushing and pulling dialectically... it's so complex, it is evolutionary, it is*
59 *changing. Yeah. And so if you just follow those tensions, you can see they can develop*
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4 *into a paradox fast, or you can know there's paradox or implications in the beginning*
5 *and then see the tensions reenact in some of that (Linda Putnam, interview).*

6
7 Analyzing our exemplars revealed how paradox scholars accept and value both inductive and
8
9 deductive analysis. For instance, Andriopoulos and Lewis (2009) sought to understand
10
11 exploration and exploitation tensions. Drawing on inductive approaches, they found language
12
13 indicators within their data demonstrating how practitioners understood paradoxical
14
15 relationships, then used deductive reasoning to evaluate these language indicators across their
16
17 data:
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20
21 *Examining all interview transcripts, we identified patterns and variance in descriptions*
22 *of innovation tensions using language indicators such as: tension, friction, yet, but, on*
23 *one hand...on the other hand, juggle, balance, it can swing both ways, there is a fine*
24 *line,...how can you...and still. We also looked for contradictory statements within the*
25 *same transcript (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009, p. 701).*

26
27
28 Similarly, to develop and enhance second-order coding of their inductive study, Schrage and
29
30 Rasche (2022, p. 12) deductively coded incidents of paradox against existing theoretical
31
32 criteria, resulting in a table with descriptive data on the categories of “contradiction”,
33
34 “interrelatedness” and “persistence” in Smith & Lewis’ (2011) definition of paradox.
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39 *Differentiating and integrating.* Differentiating means examining the distinct value of data
40
41 analysis from both inductive and deductive approaches. Integrating helps scholars identify
42
43 unexpected nuances within their data while comparing to existing theory. For example,
44
45 qualitative scholars depict efforts to stay in the uncertainty and draw on inductive approaches
46
47 without straining, thereby helping avoid focusing too quickly on patterns that then become
48
49 subjected to deductive analysis. Gail Fairhurst describes this practice of differentiating and
50
51 integration in relation to discourse study on paradox in her interview:
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55 *I think that's very important to begin really close to your data and to let your data talk*
56 *to you before you move to form repertoires of kinds of ways of operating and before*
57 *you can move to assumptions of what people are doing and why. And before you can*
58 *even move to try to look at how people are managing or coping with that. It's very easy*
59 *to see some patterns very early on and say okay, here's what's really going on here ...*
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4 *So I do think that there is a challenge with the discourse stuff, but it's well worth it if*
5 *you put in a little bit of time, and you don't have to just, you know, climb the mountain*
6 *immediately. It's really just one foot in front of the other in terms of sticking to it and*
7 *saying, you know, there's something interesting going on here (Gail Fairhurst,*
8 *interview).*
9

10 Balancing the inductive-deductive tension, Jarzabkowski and Lê (2017, p. 433) first sought to
11 deductively gauge patterns of paradox in their data. Yet their analysis surprisingly pointed to
12 extensive uses of humor. Consulting the literature revealed humor as a potential, yet under
13 explained, indicator of paradox. Abductively, they pursued this anomaly seeking to understand
14 and theorize the uses of laughter. Going through the transcripts, they realized that people were
15 often using the words “impossible”, “difficult”, “challenging”, and “tension”. They asked
16 themselves: ‘Is there a pattern in place?’ As they progressed in their analysis, they started
17 asking themselves: ‘Why are they always laughing?’ (Paula Jarzabkowski, interview).
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29 *And then we said like, you know, it's a really difficult situation, they're worried all the*
30 *time about what's going to happen, and yet they're laughing, so we thought we should*
31 *start just making a notice that whenever, you know, so that when we're writing our*
32 *notes, we just put in brackets “Laugh, laugh, laugh”, so that later we can just come*
33 *back and check our impressions. Is there really laughter going on? And we found it was*
34 *really going on. So, then we thought “well laughter is doing something in a tense*
35 *situation. more than half of them were specifically about these things that engage in the*
36 *tensions, and that's why we said ... Wow, laughter, that's not random or coincidental.*
37 *Laughter is clearly very key to handling these tensions. So that's when we started to*
38 *look at what laughter is doing. So then we went back and looked at every one of those*
39 *incidents, to try and understand what laughter was doing in each paradoxical incident*
40 *(Paula Jarzabkowski, interview).*
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43 In contrast, Josh Keller described an analytical approach to quantitative data which iterated
44 between inductive and deductive reasoning throughout the study (Keller et al., 2017):
45

46 *[This was] sort of weird in the sense that it was quantitative micro, but also inductive,*
47 *using a very different type of methodological technique to surface how people think*
48 *about what cooperation means to them... similar to what qualitative people do... but*
49 *using quantitative methods. We inductively discovered that, hey, you know what, when*
50 *it comes to these sort of relationships between cooperation and competition, and*
51 *cooperation and confrontation, we're seeing that the Chinese and the Americans are*
52 *thinking about these things in very, very different ways. And so it really wasn't, it wasn't*
53 *like we sort of said, ‘Hey, let's study tensions between cooperation and competition’... it*
54 *really was like the data revealed this. (Josh Keller, interview)*
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4 In his interview, Katsuki Aoki noted feeling that his analyses were hampered by language
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6 barriers. To further potential insights, he engaged his translator, carefully explaining the
7
8 concept of Yin Yang to help them collaboratively identify both/and moments in the data.
9
10 Engaging a translator required a deductive logic with clear insight and instructions to enable
11
12 an inductive analysis.
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15 *Actually, so the concept of Yin Yang [...] always has bright and dark aspects. So that*
16 *means there is no separation between different poles. Something that is integrated but*
17 *also has opposite aspects. [...] actually the challenge was with the interpreter, who*
18 *mediated the conversation [with the Chinese interviewees] because the Chinese*
19 *employees speak only Chinese, they don't speak Japanese. And I only speak Japanese,*
20 *and also they don't speak English. So very much the interpretation also depended on*
21 *the Chinese interpreter in that sense, as I clarified many things directly with the*
22 *interpreter (Katsuki Aoki, interview).*
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25 26 27 **Interpretation** 28

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30 Interpretation involves processes using scientific reasoning to make the creative leap from data
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32 to theoretical findings (Mantere & Ketokivi, 2013) and situating insights within existing
33
34 literature. Doing so surfaces *novelty-continuity* tensions. According to Clegg and colleagues
35
36 (2022), *novelty-continuity* tensions stretch scholars to challenge or change current insight with
37
38 new knowledge, yet leverage extant scholarly foundations and 'grammar'. Jarzabkowski and
39
40 colleagues (2021, p. 72) explain this as "the iterative process of rendering creativity credible
41
42 through the structure of its presentation, but never substituting structure for creativity."
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47 *Accepting.* Working through the *novelty-continuity* tension begins with embracing its
48
49 paradoxical nature as opportunities for interpretations and theorizing. Empirical exemplars in
50
51 paradox theory seek a delicate balance, showing how their study expands well-worn paradox
52
53 insights, while questioning its limits and engaging non-paradox literatures (e.g., Knight &
54
55 Paroutis, 2017; Schrage & Rasche, 2022; Sheep et al. 2017a; Smith, 2014). Paradox offers a
56
57 meta-theoretical lens, drawing on and offering insight to a variety of theories (Andriopoulos &
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4 Lewis, 2009). As such, scholars have to decide whether paradox is in the foreground or the
5
6 background in their study. They grapple with whether extant paradox insights offer a novel
7
8 approach to an alternative theory or whether drawing on alternative theories can help inform
9
10 new insights into paradox. Jarzabkowski et al. (2022), for instance, used paradox in the
11
12 foreground to explain the dynamics through which different actors in interorganizational
13
14 systems navigated the contradictions that are generated. *Keller et al. (2017)* describe their
15
16 reasoning from data to confirm, extend and reshape existing understandings of paradoxical
17
18 frames. Likewise, *Jarzabkowski and Lê (2017)* strive to further the practice approach yet spark
19
20 bold insights and new applications for it within the realms of paradox theory. Akin to paradoxes
21
22 of organizational ambidexterity (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009), scholars embrace the novel
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24 and interesting, while valuing validated, existing structures.

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30 *Differentiating and integrating.* Differentiating by distinguishing between new and reaffirmed
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32 insights, scholars may identify vital linkages as opportunities for integration - aiding theorizing
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34 that provokes curiosity yet enables understanding. In moving from data to theorizing, scholars
35
36 may leverage foundational knowledge, building from existing clarity, validity and trust to
37
38 anchor novelties. In their ethnographic study, Smets et al. (2015) harness institutional and
39
40 paradox theory, contributing new insights into tension between market and community logics.
41
42 *Keller et al. (2017)* subtly challenge the culture-condition debate. While their theorizing builds
43
44 from existing studies, they posit novel insights at their intersection. Reasoning from their data,
45
46 they demonstrate how unique conditions (outperforming and out-helping) interact with cultural
47
48 differences to influence paradoxical framing. Likewise, Paula Jarzabkowski (interview on
49
50 *Jarzabkowski & Lê, 2017*) noted turning toward then away from paradox theory to examine
51
52 systemic, inter-organizational, grand challenges. 'I think that paradox is a really great lens to
53
54 understand those things... But I found I would have to move a little bit beyond transcendence
55
56 and dynamic equilibrium toward more dynamic theories of balancing'. Other experts shared
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3 the value of review processes in helping better position their work. For instance, Katsuki Aoki
4 thanked an editor who encouraged him to tap into existing, albeit scarce, paradox studies that
5
6 examine the role of materials. The resulting interpretation helped ‘expand that literature and
7
8 focus on paradoxical leadership and objects’ (Katsuki Aoki, interview).
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13 14 **Knotting**

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17 In this final subsection, we propose *knotting* as a practice for weaving together research
18 tensions and related decisions across a paper. Rigorous scholarship requires cohesive methods.
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20 Building on early systems models of congruence (i.e., Fry & Smith, 1987), scholars sought
21 alignment across methodological decision points to ensure internal fit and consistency (i.e.,
22 Kashan et al, 2022; Luciano et al., 2018). A paradox approach, however, expands a
23 conventional view of alignment, by instead embracing tensions as nested and interwoven
24 (Jarzabkowski et al., 2022; Sheep et al., 2017a). Rather than a linear approach, as one decision
25 dictates the next, knotting entails a dynamic bricolage (Pratt et al., 2022). Through an iterative
26 dance between decision points, scholars craft a cohesive, compelling narrative aligned to their
27 research aim.
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41 To illustrate knotting, we zoom out from specific methodological decision points, examining
42 its practice in the two case studies. The cases demonstrate that scholars need not apply knotting
43 at every decision point, but rather as serendipitous opportunities arise, spurring rethinking of
44 prior and future decisions. *Jarzabkowski and Lé (2017)* conducted an ethnography. Grappling
45 with complexity-simplicity tensions, they initially set a broad scope - actors’ responses to
46 organizational change. Yet they adapted as opportunities arose. Staying open to surprises and
47 bounded by their goals enabled serendipity or planned luck (Smith & Lewis, 2022). Later,
48 while navigating emic-etic tensions of data collection, humor surfaced as a recurring pattern.
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3 This discovery spurred the authors to revisit their scope, knotting data collection tensions with
4 tensions of research scope (Paula Jarzabkowski, interview). Seeking to retain a simple, sharp
5 focus, and now awash in complicated qualitative data, they carefully expanded their scope -
6 the role of humor in actors' response to organizational change. This seemingly minor shift,
7 rippled through other research tensions and their corresponding decisions. Their data collection
8 efforts moved closer to their subjects, helping identify more subtle signs of humor, while their
9 analyses iterated between inductive - discovering further insights into humor - and deductive -
10 testing their prevalence and impact. The authors crafted a rigorous and provocative narrative
11 in the resulting paper, contributing a novel micro-practice to the well-studied realm of
12 organizational change. Paula Jarzabkowski explained their iterative process:
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So the research wasn't designed to collect humor. It was actually designed to look at a very paradoxical situation (of disruptive organizational change)... We certainly did not expect to find humor in that sense, but what we realized is that people were laughing... And then we said 'Why is there always laughing?' Like, you know, it's a really difficult situation. They're worried all the time about what's going to happen, and yet they're laughing. So we thought we should start just making a notice... When we're writing our notes, we just put in brackets 'Laugh, laugh, laugh', so that later we can just come back and check our impressions. Is there really laughter going on? And we found it was really going on. (Paula Jarzabkowski, interview)

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38 While such dynamic knotting practices may be more familiar for qualitative scholars (Gioia et
39 al., 2013), Ella Miron-Spektor praised its value in quantitative research. In her interview, she
40 noted how her initial theory, chosen method, and analytical results came to form a narrative
41 through iterative sensemaking. In their quantitative case study, Keller et al. (2017) illustrate,
42 seeking to examine influences on how individuals frame tensions. Their literature review,
43 however, raised research tensions as setting a relatively simple, manageable scope proved
44 challenging, given the extent of potential cultural, situational and individual influences. They
45 stayed flexible, using their next key decision point, construct definition, to help sharpen their
46 scope. The authors chose to study a specific situation, cooperation-competition tensions, and
47 apply a tight definition of paradox (i.e., cooperation and competition as conflicting and
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3 interwoven pressures). This decision helped them recognize a gap, previously missed, in their
4 reviewed literature, knotting scoping tensions with tensions of construct definition (Josh Keller,
5 interview). Existing studies assessed whether and why actors framed a situation as either
6 cooperation *or* competition, and not as a paradoxical tension (Josh Keller, interview). In
7 response, they innovated. Within strict sample and analysis specifications, they expanded their
8 scope to conduct a highly complex study of interaction effects. Using survey and experimental
9 methods, the scholars examined individual differences, conditions of outperforming and out-
10 helping, across contrasting cultures, Chinese and American, in response to one paradoxical
11 tension, cooperation-competition. Their resulting narrative contributes insights into “how
12 culture and conditions interact to shape whether individuals adopt paradoxical frames.” (2017,
13 p. 539).

DISCUSSION

33 We identified research tensions and navigating practices at key methodological decision points,
34 leveraging a paradox lens and empirical exemplars, expert interviews and case studies. As
35 noted previously, paradox studies sharpened our focus and served as exemplars, yet we
36 envision this approach contributing to the broader field of organizational studies. Building from
37 this base, the Paradox Approach to Methods offers at least three contributions that may advance
38 organizational methods.

47 First, applying paradox theory to methods invites an expansive approach to empowering
48 research creativity and rigor. Early methods scholars highlight complex and conflicting
49 research pressures, encouraging clear and consistent choices in methodological design and
50 implementation (e.g., Campell et al., 1963; Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2008). Other examples
51 specify tensions in research design phases and offer targeted strategies for resolution (e.g.,
52 Aguinis et al., 2021; Hoffman, 2021; Köhler et al., 2022; Langley & Abdallah, 2011; Turner
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3 et al., 2017). In contrast, we build on a handful of studies (e.g., Bartunek & Rynes, 2014;
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5 Andriopoulos & Gotsi, 2017; Langley & Klag, 2019) that depict research tensions as
6
7 paradoxical. Applying a paradox lens to organizational methods helps scholars reframe
8
9 tensions from obstacles into opportunities. In doing so, scholars shift from viewing decisions
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11 as singular, linear choices to be adjudicated toward accepting conflicting interdependencies
12
13 that persist over time (Berti et al., 2021). Reframing underlying tensions as paradoxical and
14
15 seeking alternative responses can empower creativity (Miron-Spektor et al., 2011) and spark
16
17 methodological innovation (e.g., Lê & Schmid, 2022). Rather than seek the 'right' solution, a
18
19 paradox approach invites scholars to generate strategies for 'working through' tensions
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21 (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). Efforts may foster a creative integration that accommodates
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23 opposing poles within a particular paper, or enables consistent inconsistencies by prioritizing
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25 each pole in different papers across a research portfolio (Smith & Lewis, 2011).
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32 A paradox approach also demands rigor in methodological choices. Framing research tensions
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34 as paradoxes does not mean that 'anything goes'. Doing so would foster sloppy or incoherent
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36 methods. Instead, we draw on paradox theory to identify specific navigating practices that offer
37
38 guidelines and guardrails - accepting, differentiating and integrating, and knotting. Extant
39
40 scholarship suggests that effective navigation starts with accepting - noting the contradictory,
41
42 yet interdependent tensions that underlie vexing dilemmas (Lewis & Smith, 2022; Miron-
43
44 Spektor et al., 2018). Accepting paradox, however, can be a double-edged sword, fostering
45
46 paralysis or opening creative possibilities (Lewis, 2000). Effectively moving toward
47
48 opportunities depends on differentiating - pulling apart options to understand and value each -
49
50 and integrating - seeking synergies and connections (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Smith,
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52 2014). Such dual practices generate novel ideas, yet also impose guardrails that bound these
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54 ideas within clearly defined parameters (Besharov et al., 2019).
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4 Knotting practices further such guardrails. Paradoxes do not occur independently, but are
5
6 knotted within a system (Jarzabkowski et al., 2022; Sheep et al., 2017a). Rather than depict
7
8 varied tensions as independent, knotting practices require that scholars negotiate responses in
9
10 relationship to one another. Scholars have agency in confronting the web of tensional decision
11
12 points of the research process. Knotting extends scholarship on alignment. For example,
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14 Luciano, Mathieu and Tannenbaum (2018) invite scholars to explore the consistency between
15
16 construct definitions and measurement approaches. As such, alignment practices often suggest
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18 allowing an overarching ontology and methodology to dictate a set of decisions. For example,
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20 adopting process ontologies invites a set of methodological choices across varied decisions (i.e.
21
22 Langley, 1999; Langley & Tsoukas, 2010). Knotting invites scholars to explore fit, while also
23
24 accommodating tensions across various decision points. Moreover, rather than anchoring on
25
26 an overarching methodology or ontology, knotting involves a more dynamic, iterative process
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28 of bricolage, through which responses to varied research tensions influence one another.
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34 Importantly, our Paradox Approach to Methods generalizes across theoretical domains. While
35
36 our paper drew from examples in paradox scholarship, research tensions surface across
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38 literatures. For example, institutional theorists grapple with loose-tight definitions and novelty-
39
40 continuity interpretations (i.e. Tolbert & Zucker, 1999); culture and cognition scholars
41
42 experience tensions between constructivist and realist perspectives (i.e., DeSouza, 2014);
43
44 inductive scholars across theories confront emic-etic tensions (Langley & Klag, 2019). These
45
46 tensions become more salient as scholars juxtapose multiple theories (Clegg et al., 2022). Our
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48 Paradox Approach to Methods generalizes to offer insight about the nature and navigation of
49
50 methods tensions across these theoretical domains.
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56 Second, our paper invites scholars and reviewers to embrace methodological diversity within
57
58 our literatures and fields, offering guidance to apply these varied practices with rigor (Bednarek
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3 et al., 2021b). Complex organizational challenges require diverse methods to generate and test
4
5 insights. Advancing theory requires a full cycle of research. Inductive studies generate new
6
7 theories to be tested with more deductive approaches, which eventually leads to novel
8
9 curiosities to explore inductively (Chatman & Flynn, 2005). While diverse methods
10
11 collectively contribute to scholarly development, theories may become reified with a specific
12
13 set of methods. Reviewers often engage with papers because of their theoretical expertise, yet
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15 bring along methodological preferences or biases. Doing so reinforces a strong connection
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17 between theory and methods. Single case, processual studies dominate institutional theory,
18
19 while large, archival data analysis informs most of upper echelon theory and survey studies
20
21 primarily shape social network theory.
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27 A Paradox Approach to Methods invites scholarly insight by accommodating competing
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29 methodological priorities, enabling study and field-level creativity, while challenging
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31 reviewers to ensure quality. We encourage reviewers to assess whether scholars effectively
32
33 recognize and navigate their research tensions. The key practices identified here offer guidance
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35 to authors, while also providing reviewers and editors guiding questions for consideration: Do
36
37 authors recognize and accept methodological tensions? Do their methodological responses
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39 value and confront, even harness, competing demands? Are responses to varied tensions
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41 knotted and aligned across decision points in the paper?
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47 Finally, our paper offers a more comprehensive, integrative insight across methodological
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49 decisions. Extant methods scholarship pinpoints specific challenges at particular decision
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51 points in the research process. For example, while some studies highlight research scope issues
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53 with constructive literature reviews (e.g., Hiebl, 2023), others zoom in to offer data analysis
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55 recommendations (e.g., Rönkkö et al., 2022). Moreover, insights about methods frequently
56
57 differentiate recommendations for qualitative, inductive studies (e.g., Gioia et al., 2013; Köhler
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3 et al., 2022) versus for quantitative, deductive research (e.g., Alfons et al., 2022; Zyphur et al.,
4
5 2020). By zooming in, such scholarship presents targeted insight and pragmatic tools, yet
6
7 obscures broader application. By zooming out to unpack patterns across varied decision points
8
9 and methods types, we offer generalizable insights that invite more expansive applications.
10
11 Beyond a particular problem, pattern-thinking invites critical questions and creative responses
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13 across challenges (Edmondson, 2012; Grandin, 2008). In addition, a paradox approach
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15 encourages scholars across methods to engage with one another in dialogue, spurring further
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17 intellectual richness and fostering conditions for ongoing methodological advances.
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21 22 **CONCLUSION**

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25 Methods offer vital means to empower theory building. While paradox scholars have
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27 highlighted how tensions might inform our theories (e.g., Poole & Van de Ven, 1989), we apply
28
29 this lens to our methods. Further, labeling research tensions as paradoxical normalizes the tug-
30
31 of-war scholars feel as they confront opposing demands during research projects (i.e., Locke
32
33 et al., 2008). Doing so can reduce the isolation, anxiety and frustration that scholars often
34
35 experience. Indeed, in writing this paper, we often commiserated with one another, recognizing
36
37 how acutely various paradoxes challenged our own previous work. Such tensions even surfaced
38
39 in this manuscript, as we sought broad applications across organizational studies, while
40
41 sharpening the focus on commensurate examples within paradox theory. Junior scholars can
42
43 find comfort in knowing that senior mentors also confront research tensions. Likewise, authors
44
45 should note that their reviewers and editors, too, face paradoxes when developing their own
46
47 research. Such awareness - accepting and navigating paradoxes within the research process -
48
49 invites scholars to value these tensions and seek novel and creative approaches to address them.
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51 By doing so, we hope that our Paradox Approach to Methods can advance knowledge
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53 development in organization and management theory.
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TABLE AND FIGURES

Table: Exemplars of Empirical Paradox Research

Method	Papers	Level of analysis
<i>Qualitative</i>		
Action research	Lüscher & Lewis, 2008 Pradies et al., 2020	meso (organization micro / meso)
Cross-case study	Jarzabkowski et al., 2022 Ramus et al., 2021 Sharma & Bansal, 2017 Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009 Aoki, 2020 Bednarek et al., 2017 Knight & Paroutis, 2017 Smith, 2014 Pamphile, 2021 Petriglieri & Peshkam, 2021 Pradies, 2023	macro / multi-site field-level meso (organizations) meso (teams) micro (individuals)
Single-case, longitudinal study	Aoki & Wilhelm, 2017 Ashforth & Reingen, 2014 Jay, 2013 Smith & Besharov, 2019 Ansari et al., 2016 Cornelissen et al., 2021 Schrage & Rasche, 2022 Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016	meso (organization) macro (multiple organizations)
Secondary sources	Gaim et al., 2021	meso/micro
Ethnography	Jarzabkowski & Lê, 2017 Ashforth & Reingen, 2014 Gümüşay et al., 2020 Kwon et al., 2020 Michaud, 2014 Smets et al., 2015 Tuckermann, 2019	micro (practices) meso (groups) meso (organization)
Discourse/ Rhetoric analysis	Bednarek et al., 2017 Dameron & Torset, 2014 Sheep et al., 2017a Wenzel et al., 2019	meso (organization) micro (individuals)
Literary analysis	O'Connor, 1995	meso (organization)
Grounded theory	Cañibano, 2019 Child, 2019	micro (individuals)
Images (informants' drawings)	Clarke & Holt, 2017 Halgin et al., 2018 Vince & Broussine, 1996	micro (individuals)

Table (continued): Exemplars of Empirical Paradox Research

Method	Papers	Level of analysis
<i>Quantitative</i>		
Survey	Ahearne et al., 2014 Miron-Spektor et al., 2018 Zhang et al., 2015	micro (individuals)
	Lewis et al., 2002 Keller et al., 2020	meso (teams)
	Schmitt & Raisch, 2013	multi-level
Experimental	Keller et al., 2017 Miron-Spektor et al., 2011 Leung et al., 2018	micro (individuals)
Computational	Calic & Hélie, 2018	micro (individuals)
<i>Methods papers</i>		
Qualitative methods	Langley & Klag, 2019	
Discourse analysis	Engeström & Sannino, 2011 Fairhurst & Putnam, 2019 Hatch & Ehrlich, 1993	
Paradox & grand challenges	Jarzabkowski et al., 2019	
Document research	Michaud, 2017	
Practice approaches	Lê & Bednarek, 2017 Jarzabkowski et al., 2018	
Social Systems Theory	Tuckermann & Rüegg-Stuerm, 2011	
Literature reviews	Sharma & Bansal, 2020	
Video research	Whiting et al., 2018	

Figure 1: Paradox Methods Approach**Research Scope: Complexity-Simplicity**

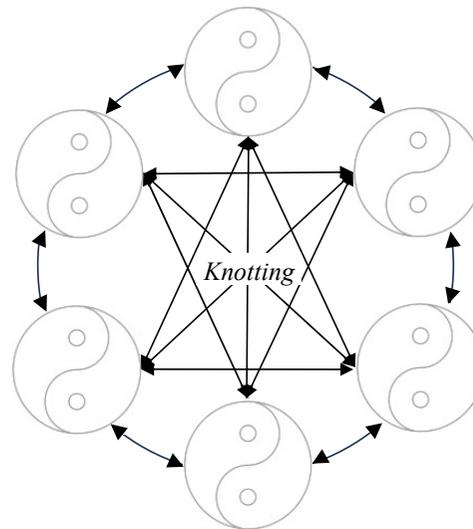
- *Accepting*: seeking explanatory power via relevance and rigor; broad patterns and focused depth
- *Differentiating and Integrating*: widening for holistic and varied considerations; narrowing for rigor and manageability; intersection helps frame an insightful, workable scope

Interpretation: Novelty-Continuity

- *Accepting*: valuing the new and interesting as well as the foundational and validated
- *Differentiating and Integrating*: theorizing novel insights anchored in trusted foundations

Data Analysis: Deduction-Induction

- *Accepting*: embracing value of top-down and bottom-up analyses to harness insights from data
- *Differentiating and Integrating*: exploring nuances within the data and in tests against expectations fosters openness and curiosity

**Construct Definition: Loose-Tight**

- *Accepting*: selecting abstraction level enabling generalizability and precision
- *Differentiating and Integrating*: taking stock of and experimenting with options, while providing justification and consistency

Underlying Assumptions: Singularity-Plurality

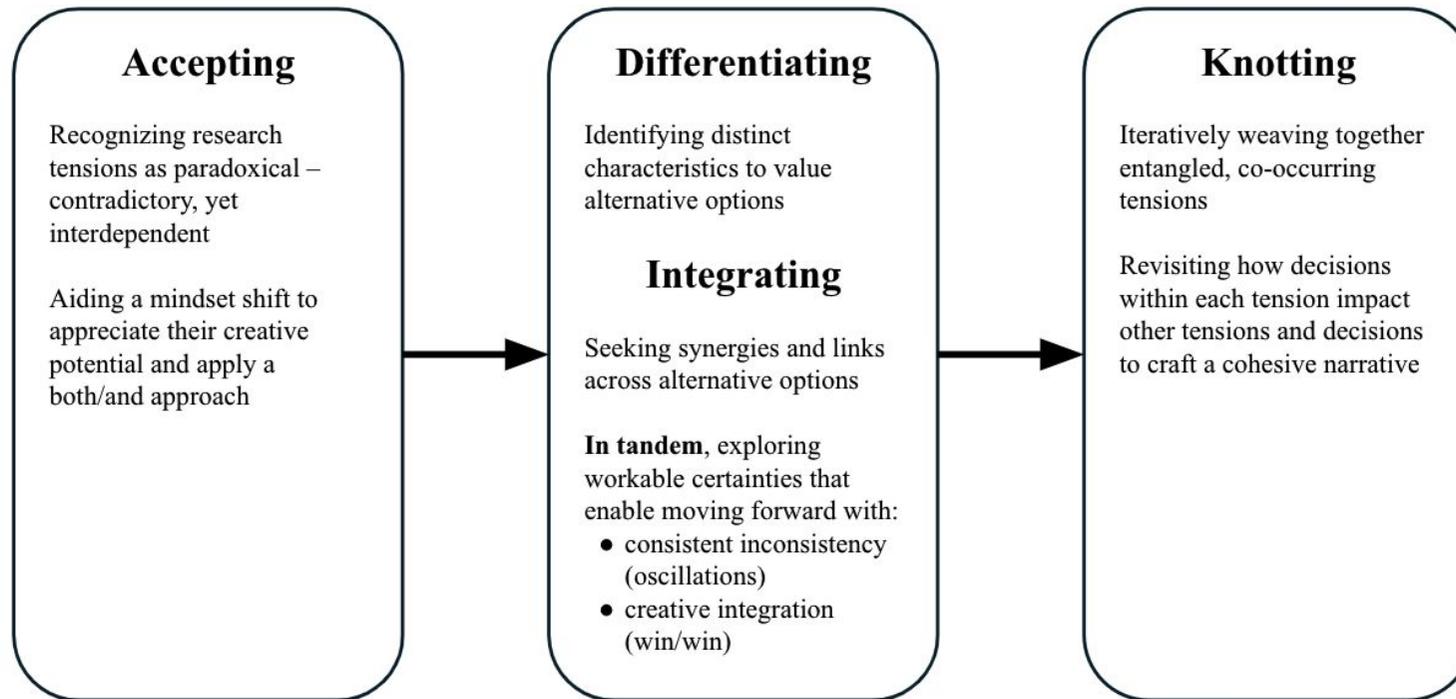
- *Accepting*: building appreciation of how varied paradigmatic assumptions sharpen and limit worldview
- *Differentiating and Integrating*: seeking divergent lenses to help critique, confirm and/or expand guiding assumptions

Data Collection: Emic-Etic

- *Accepting*: actively grappling with need for closeness to and distance from subject to explore their distinct and linked value
- *Differentiating and Integrating*: assessing varied researcher positions, while setting sample boundaries within which to build depth and empower creativity

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Figure 2: Process of Navigating Research Tensions



Author Biographies

Stephanie Schrage is Associate Professor (tenure track) at the Institute of Business, Kiel University, Germany. Drawing on ethnographic research methods, her research focuses on sustainability in global supply chains, business ethics and related (interorganizational) paradoxes. Stephanie's research has been published in *Organization Studies*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Business Ethics Quarterly* and *Journal of Management Inquiry*, among others.

Constantine Andriopoulos is a Professor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Bayes Business School, City St George's, University of London. His research focuses on the management of creativity and innovation paradoxes, organizational ambidexterity, and curiosity. His work has been published in journals such as *Organization Science*, *Human Relations*, *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, *Long Range Planning*, and *California Management Review*, among others.

Marianne W. Lewis is dean at the Lindner College of Business, University of Cincinnati. Prior she was dean at Cass (now Bayes) Business School, City University of London. Renowned for her research on organizational paradoxes surrounding innovation and leadership, her latest book *Both/And Thinking* (HBSP, 2022) has been a Top 10 book of the year from Thinkers 50, a finalist of the Next Big Idea Club. *Both/And Thinking* is published by Harvard Business Review. Lewis has been recognized among the world's most-cited researchers in her field (Web of Science) and received the Decade Award (2021) from the *Academy of Management Review*. Her work also appears in such journals as *Harvard Business Review*, *Academy of Management Journal*, and *Organization Science*.

Wendy Smith is the Dana J. Johnson Professor of Management at the Lerner College of Business and Economics, University of Delaware. She earned her PhD in organizational behavior at Harvard Business School, where she began her intensive research on strategic paradoxes—how leaders and senior teams effectively respond to contradictory, yet interdependent demands. Her latest book, *Both/And Thinking* (HBSP, 2022) has been a Top 10 book of the year from Thinkers 50, a finalist of the Next Big Idea Club. Smith has been recognized among the world's most-cited researchers in her field (Web of Science) and twice received the Decade Award (2021, 2024) from the *Academy of Management Review*. Her work also appears in such journals as *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Academy of Management Journal*, and *Organization Science*.