

## Ambidextrous leadership, paradox and contingency: evidence from Angola

Cunha, Miguel Pina E; Fortes, Armanda; Gomes, Emanuel; Rego, Arménio; Rodrigues, Filipa

DOI:

[10.1080/09585192.2016.1201125](https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2016.1201125)

License:

Creative Commons: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs (CC BY-NC-ND)

*Document Version*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Citation for published version (Harvard):*

Cunha, MPE, Fortes, A, Gomes, E, Rego, A & Rodrigues, F 2016, 'Ambidextrous leadership, paradox and contingency: evidence from Angola', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2016.1201125>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

### General rights

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

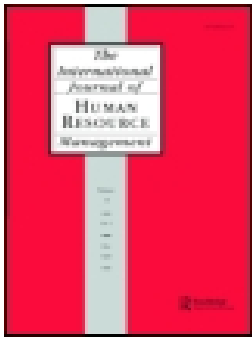
Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

### Take down policy

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact [UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk](mailto:UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk) providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.



# The International Journal of Human Resource Management

ISSN: 0958-5192 (Print) 1466-4399 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rijh20>

## Ambidextrous leadership, paradox and contingency: evidence from Angola

Miguel Pina e Cunha, Armanda Fortes, Emanuel Gomes, Arménio Rego & Filipa Rodrigues

To cite this article: Miguel Pina e Cunha, Armanda Fortes, Emanuel Gomes, Arménio Rego & Filipa Rodrigues (2016): Ambidextrous leadership, paradox and contingency: evidence from Angola, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, DOI: [10.1080/09585192.2016.1201125](https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2016.1201125)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2016.1201125>



© 2016 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 06 Jul 2016.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 115



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at  
<http://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rijh20>

## Ambidextrous leadership, paradox and contingency: evidence from Angola

Miguel Pina e Cunha<sup>a</sup>, Armanda Fortes<sup>b</sup>, Emanuel Gomes<sup>a,c</sup>, Arménio Rego<sup>d,e</sup> and Filipa Rodrigues<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Nova School of Business and Economics, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal; <sup>b</sup>Faculdade de Economia, Universidade Agostinho Neto, Luanda, Angola; <sup>c</sup>Birmingham Business School, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK; <sup>d</sup>Católica Porto Business School, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Porto, Portugal; <sup>e</sup>Business Research Unit (UNIDE-IUL), Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Lisboa, Portugal

### ABSTRACT

The study departs from two assumptions. First, it considers that organizations, their leaders and the HRM function are inherently paradoxical and that, in that sense, dealing with paradox is a necessary component of the leadership process which requires ambidexterity capabilities. Second, it explores whether the paradoxes of leadership may manifest differently in different contexts. We explore the emergence of paradox in the leadership of Angolan organizations. Angola is an economy transitioning from a centrally planned to a market mode, and this makes it a rich site for understanding the specificities of ambidextrous paradoxical processes in an under-researched, 'rest of the world', context. The findings of our inductive study led to the emergence of four interrelated paradoxes and highlight the importance of ambidextrous paradoxical work as a HRM contingency.

### KEYWORDS

Ambidexterity; ambidextrous paradox work; HRM in Angola; leadership

The idea of a 'paradox turn' has not been articulated yet, but it is building momentum in the field of management and organization, in areas such as ambidexterity (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009), leadership (Fletcher, 2004; Ibarra, 2015; Warner, 2007), corporate sustainability (Hahn, Pinkse, Preuss, & Figge, 2014), the family firm (Ingram, Lewis, Sarton, & Gartner, 2014), organizational culture (Castilla & Benard, 2010; Takeuchi, Osono, & Shimizu, 2008), corporate strategy (Hundsnes & Meyer, 2006), and business education (Dobrow, Smith, & Posner, 2011). Recent research has revealed that paradoxes are pervasive forces in organizational and

**CONTACT** Emanuel Gomes  e.gomes@bham.ac.uk

We are grateful to all those individuals who contributed to the study, in particular to our direct informants. Support from Marta Sousa and Raquel Fernandes was greatly appreciated. The paper was presented at the NovAfrica research seminar and at the 31st EGOS Colloquium, Athens. We thank the participants in both sessions for their feedback. Miguel Cunha collaborates with NovAfrica and greatly acknowledges support from Nova Executive Education.

© 2016 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.  
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

broad institutional processes at every level of analysis. *Institutions*, such as marriage, can be paradoxical, as they contain the potentially contrary demands of romantic involvement with the binding, non-romantic dimension of a legal contract (Nilsson, 2015). *Organizations* have been portrayed as paradoxical, as they necessarily imply opposing institutional logics, such as the logic of the family and the logic of the business in the case of family firms, the logic of commerce and the logic of education, the logic of service to the public and the logic of budgetary discipline, the logic of short term and the logic of long term (e.g. Pache & Santos, 2010; Schuman, Stutz, & Ward, 2010). *Teams*, including top management teams (Amason, 1996), are paradoxical as they require a balance between collaboration and competition, dedication to the collective and a desire to stand out, and so forth (Doz & Hamel, 1998; Silva et al., 2014; Smith & Berg, 1987). *Individuals* have also been presented as struggling with paradoxical forces, namely because their protection of personal excellence leads them to become rigid (DeLong & DeLong, 2011), because they have motives for being both good citizens and star performers (Bergeron, 2007), and are confronted with conflicting identity pressures, such as those coming out of work and family demands (Kets de Vries, 2012). The ‘paradox turn’, in summary, stresses that organizing is replete with opposite demands and tensions that somehow need to be reconciled and put to a productive use.

In this paper we explore the role of ambidextrous leadership paradox work as a way of managing existing tensions, with a focus on the management of people. In doing so, we attempt to respond to one important theoretical question: could there be a contingency theory of paradox? This constitutes a pertinent conceptual issue as previous work by Smith and Lewis (2011) persuasively argued that as environments become more global, dynamic and competitive, paradoxical thinking can constitute a fruitful alternative to more established contingency reasoning. We explore whether even paradoxes can have a contingency component, with different contexts eliciting the emergence of different types of paradoxes. In this sense, contingency and paradox theories would not exist in opposition but instead could be synthesized through ambidextrous leadership paradox work. In so doing, we conduct our work at the interface of the theories of paradox and contingency, therefore contributing to a contingency-informed theory of paradox, an important conceptual endeavor.

In line with Zoogah (2008) we postulate that: (1) paradox may be a relevant organizational phenomenon *per se*, i.e. regardless of context, and that (2) the functional form it takes may express local and singular features (e.g. Zhang, Waldman, Han, & Li, 2015). On the a-contextual side lies the assumption that organizations and their leadership are inherently paradoxical and fraught with opposite demands. This dimension does not depend on context, as every organization articulates paradoxical tensions and requires ambidexterity capabilities. Contextually, we aimed to study the specific manifestations of paradox in a transitioning African context, Angola. This need is substantiated for example in Kiggundu, Jorgensen, and Hafsi (1983), who noted that the contingencies confronting leaders in Western

settings, including institutional contingencies (Musacchio, Lazzarini & Aguilera, 2015) are not necessarily valid for developing countries and, as such, do not conceptually exhaust the range of paradoxical manifestations confronting leaders. Cultural, economic and institutional idiosyncrasies of developing countries may produce paradoxical demands and challenges not identified in other contexts. Leadership paradoxes in Africa may, according to previous literature, involve the need to develop short-term flexibility while preparing organizations for the long run (Bock, Opsahl, George, & Gann, 2012; Kamoche & Cunha, 2001; Sarala, Cooper, Junni, & Tarba, *in press*), combine foreign management practice with local culture (Gomes, Sahadev, Glaister, & Demirbag, 2015). Over the last decade, Africa in general and Angola in particular have been experiencing a remarkable economic growth. This has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of multinational firms (MNEs) entering this market. However, the fact that most African countries, including Angola, are still facing major development challenges (Kamoche, Debrah, Horwitz, & Muuka, 2004), increases the potential for institutional contradictions (formal vs. informal) between the host and home-country logics.

In such context, foreign MNE subsidiaries will need to be able to take decisions considering management practices characteristic of their own home markets, as well as the institutions and business systems of the host country. Managing paradoxes that result from these differences can be difficult as managers from more developed countries, characterized by individualist and instrumentalist practices, will be confronted with a context dominated by hierarchical paternalistic practices (Horwitz, 2012; Horwitz & Smith, 1998; Newenham-Kahindi, 2013), and a collectivistic and interdependent relational network of reciprocal obligations (Gomes et al., 2015; Horwitz, 2013; Horwitz & Smith, 1998; Kamoche, Chizema, Mellahi, & Newenham-Kahindi, 2012). This trait of philosophical and cultural form of communal humanism, 'Ubuntu', is not only evident in Angola, but also across most other sub-Saharan countries, and influences the decision-making process across all areas of society, including in business organizations. Decisions that do not take sufficient account of the local context (Jackson, 2012; Kamoche et al., 2004), have been indicated as a main reason for creating conflict and frustration among internal and external stakeholders (Anakwe, 2002; Nwankwo, 2012). Our research question is: *how do Angolan ambidextrous leaders handle the paradoxes confronting them in their work, and what are the emic and the etic dimensions of their management of paradoxes?*

To answer this question, we organized the study in the following sections. First, we briefly lay the theoretical ground for the discussion, articulating leadership and paradox with a particular attention to the African context. Next, we present the methods, and subsequently the findings and their implications. We have uncovered four paradoxes, some contextual, others a-contextual. These paradoxes led us to conclude that researchers need to consider not only the presence of paradox, as well as the way managers *work* with and around paradox. This practice is called

ambidextrous paradox work. We observed that it is not enough to be aware of the presence of paradox but also to develop ambidexterity capabilities to be able to transform such awareness into some productive outcome in terms of articulating good HRM and cultural intelligence.

### Paradoxes of leadership in an African context

Paradox has been identified as a central characteristic of contemporary organizations (Eisenhardt, 2000). It refers to ‘contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time’ (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 382). In the case of leadership, the defense of paradoxical demands as intrinsic to practice is now well established (see, e.g. Costanzo & Di Domenico, 2015; Kets de Vries, 2015 for recent discussions). In this study, we explore the paradoxes involved in leadership processes in an African context.

This is a relevant endeavor as work on leadership paradoxes implicitly assumed the universality of paradox. In this paper we study the manifestation of leadership paradoxes in Angolan organizations in order to learn more about the universality and contingency of paradox. We do so with the conceptual support of three theoretical streams of literature: (1) paradox as intrinsic to leadership and organizing; (2) paradox as resulting from institutional contradictions, such as those found in transitioning contexts; and (3) ambidextrous leadership as an activity that renders paradoxes salient due to the need to articulate opposing organizational interests. We consider the contributions of these three streams of literature next.

First, on the basis of previous research, paradoxes may be thought of as inherent to leadership and organization (Smith & Lewis, 2011). Organizations may contain the forces of paradox because opposing but mutually constituting demands have to be articulated, such as the need for both exploration and exploitation (Glaister, Ahammad, & Juni, 2015; Junni, Sarala, Taras, & Tarba, 2013; Junni, Sarala, Tarba, Liu, & Cooper, 2015; Nemanich & Vera, 2009; O’Reilly & Tushman, 2004; Zhang et al., 2015), past and future performance incentives (Ahammad, Lee, Malul, & Shoham, 2015), change and stability (Farjoun, 2010), control and autonomy (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997), innovation and routine (Feldman, 2000), positive and negative (Cameron, 2008). Leaders may have to lead these, as well as other contrasting demands, such as being authentic *and* not showing the true self (Goffee & Jones, 2005; Ibarra, 2015), sharing power *and* exercising authority (De Vries, Pathak, & Paquin, 2011), and empowering *and* controlling (Warner, 2007).

Second, Angola, our national research context, has cultural idiosyncrasies and is undergoing an important transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy. This suggests that Angola could provide a rich site for the study of leadership as paradoxical process, because the transition from a centrally planned to a market economy implies a number of deep level changes that take time to stabilize. Transitions create instability which opens institutional contradictions between new logics and old ones (Seo & Creed, 2002). These logics operate

over historically constituted factors, such as weak states and ethnic identities (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2015) that render inconsistencies even more prevalent. Those divides are not exclusive of Africa but have specificities that should not be ignored. In the case of Angola, the historical circumstances, including a colonial past and a recent post-independence civil war debilitated the state and countered the solidification of independent institutions, the rule of law, and effective educational systems.

Though Angola has been moving toward a market economy, it can neither be considered as a 'liberal market economy' in which organizational strategies and decisions are mostly mediated by competitive markets, and more short-term performance oriented, nor as a 'coordinated market economy' in which the decision-making process tends to be more relational and participative, and have more developmental longer term multiple stakeholder perspectives (for an extensive discussion about varieties of capitalism see Hall and Soskice [2001]). Instead, like Mozambique (Dibben & William, 2012), Angola can be considered more as an 'informally dominated market economy' in which organizational decisions are more influenced by informal institutions, defined as 'socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels' (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004, p. 727).

The emergence of the informal economy in this context can, to a great extent, been seen as a legacy of colonialism and subsequent processes of independence, economic and political restructuring, neo-liberalism, and privatization (Dibben & William, 2012; Lindell, 2009). The transitory nature of the Angolan market creates some paradoxes which exacerbate the difficulties and challenges presented to managers. Similar to several other African countries, two different logics permeate the Angolan economy: one that is more capitalist based and export oriented, and another more diversified and domestic focused mostly comprised of smaller firms operating in the informal sector (Dibben & William, 2012; Frynas & Wood, 2006). This is probably a major contradiction in Angola, where recent investments have increased significantly the production capacity of the country in various diversified areas, including agriculture. Though the Angolan government is the legal owner of the lands of the country, it has been issuing more and more land rights for private agricultural exploitation. However, in many cases, new entrepreneurs are too focused on short-term profits and dividend distribution, instead of having longer term business development approach. In addition to this, the potential capacity to supply domestic as well external export markets is not realized due to other factors such as lack of know-how and logistics and distribution issues.

Third, we articulate the African context with paradox via ambidextrous leadership. Previous research indicates that leaders must confront paradoxes to be effective (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; DeLong & DeLong, 2011; De Vries et al., 2011; Goffee & Jones, 2005; Ibarra, 2015) and to build sustainable organizations (Hahn et al., 2014; Lewis, Andriopoulos, & Smith, 2014; Manz, Anand, Joshi, & Manz, 2008). We define ambidextrous leadership as the ability to switch

flexibly between seemingly paradoxical leadership behaviors in order to reconcile conflicting interests and fostering organizational ambidexterity. Ambidextrous leaders are capable of putting in place supportive mechanisms necessary to reconcile tensions and conflicts resulting from contradictory logics and tradeoffs involved in decision-making processes (Burgess, Strauss, Currie, & Wood, 2015; Smith & Tushman, 2005; Stokes et al., 2015). For instance, they are required to resolve conflicts and reconcile the paradox of simultaneously combining long-term experimental exploratory actions and short-term efficiency exploitative actions, while maintaining strategic coherence (Halevi, Carmeli, & Brueller, 2015; Jansen, George, Van den Bosch, & Volberda, 2008; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2004). Leaders face trade-offs when pursuing exploration and exploitation concurrently because exploration requires 'search, variation, and experimentation that result from decentralization, loose cultures, and less formalized processes' while exploitation requires 'refinement, efficiency, and improvement that succeed by reducing variance and increasing control and formalization' (Jansen et al., 2008, p. 983). As suggested by Rosing, Frese, and Bausch (2011), ambidextrous leaders are capable of switching between more open leader behaviors that encourage autonomy, openness, tolerance, exploration and experimentation, and more closed leader behaviors by setting stricter guidelines and specific goals, and by closely monitoring progress and taking any necessary corrective action. The continuous switching between opening and closing leader behaviors can be unpredictable and complex, and depend to a great extent on the expertise and needs of other organizational members. While some employees may need more direct instructions and guidelines, others may be more productive and committed if they are given more autonomy to explore new solutions and different directions.

However, we do not know much about how paradoxes manifest in the case of African organizations, where some challenges are different from those of the West, as discussed above. Research established that culture operates as a boundary condition for the management of paradox in ambidexterity (Xing, Liu, Tarba, & Wood, *in press*; Yoon & Chae, 2012), and for the types of behavioral expectations that people develop about leadership (House, Javidan, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002). This seems to be a relevant research endeavor given that the poor quality of leadership and management processes in many African contexts has been presented as an obstacle to economic development and to human progress (e.g. Bloom, Lemos, Sadun, Scur, & Van Reenen, 2014; Kamoche, 1997; Zoogah, Peng, & Woldu, 2015). But developing ambidextrous leaders cannot be done without considering the cultural boundary condition and its impact on the choices, including the paradoxical choices that confront their organizations and themselves. As such, ambidextrous leaders need to be sensitive to the context in which they operate and possess a varied behavioral repertoire, in order to be able to flexibility adapt their behavior according to the situational contingencies they face (Hooijberg, 1996; Rosing et al., 2011). The above reasoning thus suggests that the research question is relevant for both conceptual and pragmatic reasons.



## Method

### *Selection of the research setting and methodological approach*

To explore both a-contextual (etic i.e. universal, meaning that organizing and leadership necessarily involve elements of paradox and contradiction no matter the context) and contextual (emic, i.e. specific forms of paradox emergence in a particular context, in this case a transitioning economy) dimensions of paradox in the leadership process, we adopted the following methodological approach. We used an inductive analysis, in order to explore the process without rigid preconceptions. Angola offered a suitable research setting, given the country's deep transitions, first from a colonial to an independent condition, in November 1975, and then from a centralized to a decentralizing economy (Sidaway & Simon, 1993). Because we were interested in extending/modifying theory (Lee, Mitchell, & Sablinski, 1999), an inductive logic could serve the purpose of building knowledge about the Angolan context in a conceptually unconstrained way. We composed an insider–outsider research team, with researchers combining diverse levels of familiarity with the setting, including three Angolan nationals, a foreigner with regular contact with Angolan organizations, and one unacquainted with Angola. The goal of this approach was to reach diverse perspectives that could counter biases and prejudices and help to build a balanced interpretive theorizing. Data were collected through interviews with managers and a review of the literature dealing with Angolan history (Table 1). Another source of information (e.g. Kets de Vries, 2001) consisted in several forms of contact between members of the research team and Angolan people and organizations, as nationals and foreigners with diverse degrees of familiarity with the context. The above procedures allowed us to triangulate sources and to reduce the pitfalls and prejudices caused by both proximity and distance.

### *Sample and data collection*

We considered participants in a leadership development program in a management school to collect and to critically discuss the data coming out of semi-structured

**Table 1.** Data sources.

Method	Data sources and empirical examples
Interviews with managers	A total of 91 interviews with managers working in a variety of organizations, at different levels
Review of literature on Angolan history	Documents of African history, culture and organization were consulted. These include typical academic sources but also companies' annual reports and other documents that could help to understand the context
Different levels of personal experience in the context	We composed an insider–outsider research team (Bartunek & Louis, 1996). Members of the research team have a variety of exposure and knowledge of the Angolan context. This offers personal experience that is not irrelevant (see Kets de Vries, 2001). The team includes a local national, a foreigner that travels regularly to Angola and that worked closely with several Angolan academics, and foreigners with no direct experience of the country. This combination of experiences was intended to provide a zooming in–zooming out approach to the topic (Nicolini, 2009)

interviews with experienced Angolan managers. Participants (31 male, 13 female) were asked to use four broad leadership questions as the script for the interviewing process: What are the major strengths of leadership practices in Angola? What are the major challenges confronting local leaders? What are the explanations for current strengths and weaknesses? How can leadership practices be improved? We kept our interview script deliberately open as we were following an inductive approach, not influenced by our own preconceptions. We expected our informants to reflect about the *whats*, *hows* and *whys* of leadership paradoxes in Angola. Instead of directly asking about paradox we adopted an indirect way: to make inferences about paradox without forcing people to think about their practice as paradoxical. This indirect access strategy may be less efficient but will be more naturalistic, less intrusive and will not bias respondents toward paradox.

The interviews and the critical analysis of the professional managers participating in the leadership development program thus constitute the central empirical material for the present study. We secured permission to use the data from the participants, and meta-reflected upon the reflections of our informants in such a way that we build our interpretation upon previous interpretations, in an iterative process of collective sensemaking.

In total, 91 interviews and the reflections they elicited formed our primary database. These managers were mainly male ( $n = 74$ ), between 28 and 65 years old, operated in public and private organizations, both big and small, and presented different levels of seniority (from low-level managers to CEOs). They worked in sectors such as banking, utilities, retail, mining and services. Interviews were mainly conducted face to face in their respective work sites (with the exception of three interviews which, due to geographical distance, were conducted with electronic intermediation). The interviews lasted from 20 to 90 min.

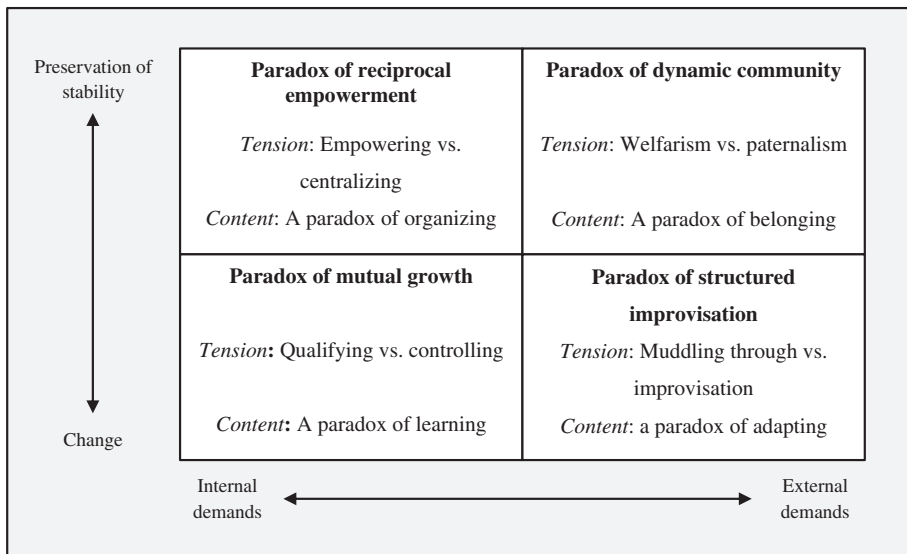
### **Analytical strategy**

We followed a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to analyze our data inductively. We read the transcripts and created original first-order categories as suggested by Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2012). During this phase, and in line with Delmestri and Greenwood's (in press) approach, we compared emerging themes with the existing literature on Africa and paradox through repeated iterations, conducting a dialog between the data and the theory. We had several discussions during this process in order to clarify the meaning of more ambiguous quotes. During this progressive process of categorization (Gioia et al., 2012), we ended up having to move backward and forward between sources and interpretations through constant comparison, until we reached a stabilized interpretation. We then submitted our interpretation to experts to test the conceptual adequacy of our interpretations, as well as to assess interpretive accuracy. We compiled habitual measures of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), resulting from personal prolonged exposure to the context by some team members as well as

the composition of a team with diverse degrees of proximity to the case. These measures gave us the reassurance that the interpretation was plausible and trustworthy for the purpose of theory elaboration (Lee et al., 1999).

**Table 2.** Illustrative first-hand evidence (i.e. quotations from the interviews) representing the four paradoxes.

Paradox	Poles in the paradoxical tension	Illustrative quotations
Organizing	Empowering	Leaders 'should develop the habit of delegating' 'Leaders incentivize members to participate in the discussions and in decision making' 'We need more communication and more decentralization of work'
	Centralizing	There is 'an excess of hierarchical levels, too much bureaucracy, rules, internal regulations; all those add rigidity which inhibits creativity; team members do not feel confident or safe to bring new ideas' 'we still are in an era of boss and subordinate, the boss occupies a very formal role and not often takes preferences and opinions into account' 'Lack of humility and democracy (...) are the main weaknesses' Proposition 1: When leaders define which responsibilities to centralize and which to retain centralized leaders will be more effective than when centralizing or decentralizing too much or too little
Learning	Qualifying	'We have to overcome the old dogmas that are based on the idea that the leader owns certain characteristics that make her/him more apt to lead the others on the execution of tasks, as the others play the role of followers' 'We need to abolish the figure of the boss and to adopt that of the leader because the leader motivates, values the potential of each collaborator'
	Controlling	'We sometimes fear that our weaknesses be known' 'When the leadership is unprepared, it is the blind leading the blind. This dimension is so important that some people claim that this is the only weakness of an organization. All the others derive from this one' Managers express 'Adverse response to criticism, lack of communication and worker recognition (...) are other weaknesses of the Angolan business leadership' Proposition 2: When leaders actively engage in self.-development, they will engage more often in the qualification of their subordinates
Belonging	Welfarism	'(...) sensitivity toward the wellbeing of the employees and of the community where it operates' 'The appreciation of the worker and respect for family life are characteristic of the Angolan society and have an impact on the management of organizations. Keeping that tradition will help to facilitate communication between managers and employees'
	Paternalism	'We have to impose limits. The level of familiarity cannot be so high that people ignore their duties' 'it is a very friendly leadership, a more personalized leadership, I mean, it is directly from person to person' 'Familiarity sometimes becomes a problem' Proposition 3: There is a curvilinear relationship between leader-subordinate proximity and effectiveness; after a threshold, proximity will project detrimental effects
Adapting	'Muddling through' as everyday practice	'Even at the top level, sometimes we are focused on the day to day type of decisions' 'Our recent past forged in ourselves creativity given scarcity and the difficulties of several sorts; these have only been overcome due to significant levels of creativity and ingenuity'
	Improvisation within structure, around plans	'There is need to reinforce the long term planning (...) and execute accordingly, avoiding management of the firefighting type' 'There has been great difficulty in planning work, which makes the emergence of great leaders more difficult' Proposition 4: Leadership is more effective when they stimulate improvisation as a complement for plans rather than its substitute



**Figure 1.** Four paradoxical tensions: contextual and a-contextual paradoxes.

## Results

Four tensions emerged from the data analysis and were clear in the explanations of the managers. A first tension opposed (1a) the felt need to empower employees and (1b) the fear that delegation and empowerment may be perceived as a weakness. A second tension opposed (2a) the need to increase the followers' qualifications and (2b) the possibility that more qualified and demanding subordinates would expose the limitations of leaders themselves. Third, respondents mentioned the tension between (3a) respect for a tradition of communal welfarism and (3b) the inclination toward paternalism. Finally, (4a) a propensity for 'muddling through' as a preferential problem-solving mindset was contrasted with (4b) the limitations that it provokes in terms of perfecting efficient routines. Table 2 offers firsthand evidence in the form of quotations from the interviews that illustrate the thinking of the managers in the sample and derives propositions amenable to further empirical testing. Figure 1, at the end of the section, graphically depicts the tensions. We next elaborate the four emerging paradoxes.

### ***Paradox of reciprocal empowerment (a paradox of organizing)***

The data suggested a tension between the need to empower employees and the fear that empowering and delegating could be represented as a sign of leader weakness, a perception that emphasized the possible personal benefits of centralization, especially in settings where leader self-effacement is not necessarily seen as adequate (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). This can be interpreted as a paradox of organizing as it deals with issues of organizational

design. The possibility that leaders are respected when they centralize and when they 'own' power, and that they will be perceived as weak when they give up on centralizing power, limits the motivation to empower and influences an organization's design. Structural empowerment (i.e. the managerially induced policies and processes aimed at cascading power and authority down to lower organizational levels [Sun, Zhang, Qi, & Chen, 2012]), thus, is viewed as a double-edge sword.

This tension is conceptually underpinned by the distinction between the reified representation of power as a thing, something powerful people 'own', and the process view of power as a circulatory process (Clegg, Courpasson, & Phillips, 2006). In the minds of some of our interviewees, the prevalence of the reified version of power as contained in the hierarchy constitutes an obstacle against the desire to invest in empowering employees. This reinforces the enactment of organizations as traditional hierarchies, as mentioned by two informants:

There is 'an excess of hierarchical levels, too much bureaucracy, rules, internal regulations; all those add rigidity which inhibits creativity; team members do not feel confident or safe to bring new ideas.'

One constraint to leadership is the distance between the leadership at the top and the middle management, which causes a lack of boldness. This reflects their results negatively.

Yet, as Kamoche (1997, p. 554) pointed out, African 'managers will also need to be more proactive and pay more attention to developing and retaining the existing labor force owing to the scarcity of highly skilled labor. This requires more empowerment of middle and lower level managers who are currently unprepared to take risky decisions and prefer to rely on the 'higher authorities.' From this perspective, managers may gain power by giving power away (Gloor & Cooper, 2007, p. 81). In this case, power and, namely the power to decide, is not a privilege to conserve but a force to expand organizational talent, as our interviewees told:

We should cultivate the habit of delegating detail to competent subordinates and not for convenience reasons only.

Leaders should 'help others become better members of the organization.'

In summary, the opposition between the need to develop and empower, the notion of power as a zero-sum game, and the deference to the higher-ups, seem to confuse the leaders in our study, as paradoxes typically do. While stimulating participation, ambidextrous leaders may just abdicate too much authority (Seo, Putnam, & Bartunek, 2004). Moving in the direction of a new organizational, post-hierarchical paradigm seems promising but risky.

### ***Paradox of mutual growth (a paradox of learning)***

Associated, in part, with the previous tension, yet distinct from it, this paradox relates the need to qualify people and the risk of losing control over them. Interviewees mentioned the need to contribute to the qualification of their

subordinates. But they also expressed fear that that qualification will expose the limitations of the leaders themselves. This constitutes a paradox of learning, in the sense that it influences the organization's capacity to enrich its action repertoire via new knowledge acquired by members. Given the knowledge/power correlation (Foucault, 1980), transmitting knowledge may mean giving up on power. We interpret this dimension as being distinct from the 'Empowering vs centralizing' tension in the sense that empowerment refers to authority and power distance (Hofstede, 1980) whereas this tension refers to development, more precisely self-development and the development of others.

In this category, interviewees mentioned the development and qualification of people as a major requirement for contemporary Angolan organizations. This may be facilitated by the adoption of new, people-oriented management leadership styles. Here is how an Angolan manager explained such a need:

We have to overcome the old dogmas that are based on the idea that the leader owns certain characteristics that make her/him more apt to lead the others on the execution of tasks, as the others play the role of followers.

The country is now letting a long destructive war behind, a system of centralized economy, with organizational fragilities in its public and private organizations. Over the years the investment in education has been very low (...) which explains the current lack of highly qualified human resources ...

On the other hand, managers who participated in the study considered that leaders may have reservations about supporting development because they fear that this will expose their own limitations as leaders, often trained in the old hierarchical mode mentioned above, in which *fiat* precedes persuasion. The situation was described as follows:

We sometimes fear that our weaknesses be known.

When the leadership is unprepared, it is the blind leading the blind. This dimension is so important that some people claim that this is the only weakness of an organization. All the others derive from this one.

Adverse response to criticism, lack of communication and worker recognition (...) are other weaknesses of the Angolan business leadership.

### ***Paradox of dynamic community (a paradox of belonging)***

This dimension contrasts (a) the community facet of business, welfarism, which Kamoche (1997) described as meaning that people expect to be 'looked after' by an organization, with (b) a form of lenient paternalism. On the one hand, respondents mentioned the importance of the communal view of management, i.e. the fact that managers, *individually*, should be sensible to the specific needs of their employees as members of family and community. This self-other connection is now well-known as characteristic of the African ethos under the notion of the Ubuntu (Gomes et al., 2015; Horwitz & Smith, 1998; Kamoche et al., 2012; Mangaliso, 2001). Kamoche (2001, p. 214) explained that 'communalism stipulates that one does not merely exist as an individual separate from the community

but as a member of a community which gives him/her a sense of identity and belonging'. Managers are thus bound to communal activities, their relationship with employees extending beyond the work sphere.

We interpret this as a paradox of belonging, one that articulates the organization with its external environment. As one interviewee explained, managers should express:

sensitivity toward the wellbeing of the employees and of the community where it [the organization] operates.

The appreciation of the worker and respect for family life are characteristic of the Angolan society and have an impact on the management of organizations. Keeping that tradition will help to facilitate communication between managers and employees (...)

This dimension is both similar and different from the situation in most Western organizations. In the West, the organization adopts a number of corporate social responsibility initiatives. In the representation of our interviewees, managers in Angola are expected to cultivate an individual sensitivity to the problems of their members at the boundary between work and non-work. Consideration for problems associated with personal matters, such as illness, and tolerance for non-work duties, are viewed as an obligation of a manager.

This, however, may have a downside. As an illustration, managers, especially foreigners, tell the joke that the same elder family member may die several times, given the number of occasions in which the worker justified missing work to attend the funeral of the same person. In other words, a certain degree of leniency may result from the fact that individual discretion sometimes prevails over company rules. This is not specific to the Angolan or African context (Aram & Walochik, 1996), but it may be more widespread there, given the more personalized nature of the relationship. This 'bad proximity', as another informant called it, may have the effect of mutual accommodation and protection between managers and employees. Here is how a manager explained the process:

We need to promote a more professional and ethical attitude. I can care about the wellbeing of my employees, which is clearly good (...) but I have to impose limits.

There can be no such a degree of familiarity that the employee will adopt a careless way towards work.

### ***Paradox of structured improvisation (a paradox of adapting)***

This last tension echoes Kamoche's (1997, p. 553) compact observation that 'strategic management in Africa is a combination of short-term planning, "muddling through", passive compliance and the use of politics'. This propensity for reaction rather than planning may result from the perception that the environment is unpredictable and that it is better to 'muddle through' and to 'manage by deciding' (Kamoche, 1992), i.e. managing issues on ad hoc basis, instead of planning and anticipating (Munene, 1991). We see this as a paradox of adapting in the sense

that it aims to maintain fit between an organization and its' unpredictable and sometimes hostile environment (Munene, 1991). This preference is in line with the observation that there is a dimension of improvisation in Indian management that distinguishes it from adaptation challenges in more structured environments (Cappelli, Singh, Singh, & Useem, 2015; Gomes et al., 2015). We have found evidence of the presence of comfort with 'muddling through' in excerpts such as:

Even at the top level, sometimes we are focused on the day to day type of decisions

Our recent past forged in ourselves creativity given scarcity and the difficulties of several sorts; these have only been overcome due to significant levels of creativity and ingenuity.

But interviewees were also keenly aware of the downside of this operating mode. They were generally confident that comfort with 'muddling through' added flexibility, but also that it carried a number of negative implications. The following quotation summarizes this view and suggests the need for more ambidextrous leaders capable of managing the tension between improvisation and long-term planning:

There is need to 'reinforce the long term planning (...) and execute accordingly, avoiding management of the firefighting type'.

## Discussion and implications

### *Implications for theory and research*

Results supported the theoretical prediction that leaders in Angola were confronted with relevant specific paradoxes that emerge in function of contingencies and institutional factors that may combine present and historical forces, as recent research in the case of a former Portuguese colony, Mozambique, indicates (Dibben et al., 2016). This suggests that a contingency theory of paradox will possibly contribute to a more granular view of paradox in organization and, more specifically, in HRM. This is not surprising in itself given that, as discussed in the theory section, organizations can be understood as inherently paradoxical. As Bartunek and Rynes (2014, p. 12) explained, 'tensions are core to organizing itself'. We interpret the findings as meaning that ambidextrous leadership can be represented as paradox work i.e. as the tackling of opposing, mutually contradictory demands, in such a way that a unit (team/organization) is kept functional. Such ambidextrous paradoxical work involves two axes. The first represents a tension between change and the preservation of stability. The second represents the tension between internal and external demands. The typology emerging from these conceptual axes covers emic and etic elements, and presents ambidextrous paradox work as constituted by interrelated rather than independent paradoxes. The implications for HRM, especially in its international dimension, seem pertinent. In a way, preparing HR managers implies the development of sophisticated forms of understanding paradox as emerging from local reality and developing



genuinely *contextual* forms of ambidexterity. The study advances three important contributions in this regard.

First, the emergence of paradoxes of adapting to an uncertain environment led to the recognition of paradoxes at the boundary between the organization and its environment (paradoxes of belonging and of adapting), which were less salient in previous studies and that may be contextual i.e. influenced by contingencies. Therefore, paradox and contingency theories can be articulated rather than mutually excluded as the previous literature sometimes indicated (Smith & Lewis, 2011). Second, these paradoxes relate to other paradoxes, an observation that opens interesting possibilities for future research in terms of the multiple connections between paradoxes. For example, our paradox of learning may be influenced by the ambidextrous management of the paradox of organizing. Third, we explored the idea of ambidextrous *paradox work* as a process that extends beyond the recognition of the paradox and that highlights the importance of a number of process elements in the unfolding of paradox management. For example, the way an organization is structured may stimulate strategies for tackling tensions involved in learning in such a way that, over time, a selection approach (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989) becomes a default mode of solving the qualifying vs. controlling dilemma.

This observation may constitute a fruitful way of extending ambidexterity and paradox theories as, so far, the human and cross-cultural elements of organizational paradoxes have been neglected, which creates possible conceptual blind spots, such as the importance of articulating paradoxes that reach out to the articulation between organization and its environment, in terms of community and high environmental uncertainty (Munene, 1991; Uzo & Mair, 2014). *Contextual paradoxes* include the response to specific local features such as the practices associated with transition to a new economic model, as well as immature institutions that render predictability and planning less effective than in other contexts (the ambidextrous paradox of structured improvisation), or the supportive and dysfunctional sides of community (the ambidextrous paradox of dynamic community). *A-contextual* paradoxes may include the notion that leadership is an inherently paradoxical process, as well as a number of tensions associated with status (the paradox of reciprocal empowerment) and development (the paradox of mutual growth).

In line with recent research, we observed that managers tend to feel confused or possibly to prefer selection, i.e. choosing one pole over the other, rather than other possibilities to handle paradoxical demands in a sustainable and persisting way, which may constitute a formidable practical challenge. As Jules and Godard (Jules & Godard, 2014, p. 125) pointed out, 'managing paradox is hard and is not for the faint of heart'. We derive this conclusion from the observation that very few times was some form of duality mentioned by interviewees as need or possibility. This observation is consistent with previous research (Bartunek & Rynes, 2014), but selection does not constitute the most fruitful way of benefiting from the

generative power of paradox. The fact that a tension was identified does not mean that tackling it will be easy or even likely, as managers may approach paradoxes via selection (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989), which impedes them from untapping the generative potential of paradox (Luscher & Lewis, 2008) by preventing the adoption of a genuine ambidextrous duality lens (Farjoun, 2010; Jackson, 1999).

As a general theoretical conclusion, our work suggests that managers are faced with the need to engage in ambidextrous paradox work and that paradox work may be inherent to ambidextrous leadership work. By ambidextrous paradox work we refer not only to *what* (i.e. the paradoxes that managers have to solve) but also to *how*: how can paradoxes be approached and tackled, and how can paradox be viewed as process rather than as episode, as implied in concepts such as duality, synthesis and paradoxification (Bergstrom, Styhre, & Thilander, 2014), as well as others that approach tension as a process to be embraced rather than a problem/episode to be solved. Ambidextrous paradox work involves a component of reflexivity about paradox and its manifestation in specific cultures (Silva, Roque, & Caetano, 2015). One of our informants explained how paradox work may occur:

Very often, the more we try to cover our weaknesses the more we make them visible and some people, recognizing that movement, use this artifice as an opportunity for manipulating us and making us their hostages. Recognizing and accepting that we have competences that need to be developed help us to position ourselves better in front of situations.

Ambidextrous paradox work can be defined as the development and maintenance of a state of comfort with paradox and the capacity to use tension in a generative way through recognizing, reflecting and acting over paradoxical tensions. Recognizing the presence of opposites is important, but is not necessarily generative, as the selection approach, for example, 'solves' the paradox through denial without actually dealing with the core tension it contains. Our study suggests, in summary, that recognizing a paradox is only the beginning of the process of ambidextrous paradox work, a form of practice that needs to be considered along with other varieties of work, such as those identified by Phillips and Lawrence (2012).

### ***Implications for practice***

What practical implications can be derived from this study? We respond by revisiting the four major tensions uncovered in the previous section. In terms of 'empowerment vs. centralizing', the study indicates that a hierarchical mindset tends to prevail, which is in line with previous research (Gannon & Pillai, 2013). The flattening of firms in the West (Rajan & Wulf, 2006) has been concomitant with the rise of knowledge-based economies and a new understanding of authority (Hirschhorn, 1997). In the case of the Angolan economy, most firms are now learning how transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy. Empowerment, as our interviewees mentioned, is important but it should be done in a way that respects leader face. Leaders will need to pedagogically explain the

role of empowerment in creating new, more nimble organizations, better prepared to operate under conditions of market competition. Presenting empowerment as a response to changing environmental conditions will probably help to reduce the fear that it will represent a loss of authority. In addition, leaders can explain the importance of adopting new habits and organizational processes in response to markets that no longer necessarily offer the time to consult higher organizational authorities. A combination of empowerment, clarification of boundaries for such a practice, perfected management systems, and pedagogy of new ambidexterity leadership models, will be appropriate to empower without appearing weak or losing face. In practice, leaders will gain from initiating empowerment in a gradual way.

In terms of managing the ‘qualifying vs. controlling’ tension, companies may simultaneously invest in two parallel processes. First, they can support leader development, not only in terms of technical skills but also on the personal and social dimensions of leadership. The adoption of coaching practices for top and low-level managers may offer a mix of challenge and support that will respond to the challenges at the core of this tension. If this occurs, managers may feel better equipped to respond to more demanding subordinates. In fact, preparing employees to operate in less hierarchical environments will imply preparing the leaders to be able to expose themselves to some personal discomfort. As Ibarra (2015) defended, discomfort may constitute a sign of readiness for personal growth. Training processes, coaching and other possibilities of personal development will be necessary to support this effort. The qualification of others should thus be complemented by the qualification of the leaders themselves. As indicated by recent research this effort will predictably be more effective in case it crosses domains of personal development, namely work and non-work (Hammond, Clapp-Smith, & Palanski, 2016). Given the fluid boundaries between work and non-work. Cross-domain development will be important to help leaders deal with, for example, the work and non-work dimensions of the relation with subordinates who expect these lines of demarcation to be blurred.

With regard to the ‘welfarism vs. paternalism’ tension, Angolan organizations may manage to protect a sense of community without being overly protective and paternalistic. Companies in other parts of the world may learn from Angolan firms about the importance of a spontaneous care for the communitarian side of organization, a common feature of companies in the African context (Adler, 1997), but a generative balance can result from a synthesis of challenge and protection (Cunha, Rego, & Vaccaro, 2014; Sutton & Hargadon, 1996). As previous work indicated, organizations can use protection to create safety and a sense of safety to foster acceptance of challenge. Leaders can be coached to practice a hard *and* soft form of leadership.

Finally, ‘muddling through’ has been associated with some pre-modern features of management that tend to manifest in contexts with limited regulation and compliance (Cunha, Neves, Clegg, & Rego, 2014). Some authors have underlined the

fact that this measure of flexibility can be beneficial and context-specific (Cappelli, Singh, Singh, & Useem, 2010; Uzo & Mair, 2014), but our interviewees defended the advantages of combining such flexibility with a higher degree of structuration. Improving the quality of planning and substituting 'muddling through' with structured forms of improvisation, which synthesize freedom to adapt with rules for organizing (Clegg, Cunha, & Cunha, 2002; Kamoche & Cunha, 2001), may constitute a first step to increase structure without violating the need for 'muddling through', which may be adaptive when facing highly unstructured and unpredictable environments. In summary, the four tensions uncovered offer ample space for organizational intervention. They all point in one direction: to support the process of leadership development, it is crucial to articulate mainstream management theory with indigenous knowledge (Iwowo, 2015). Otherwise managers will potentially be trapped in the dilemmas uncovered here.

Overall, the paper contributes to the literature on HRM, paradox and ambidexterity by adding to the literature on the tensions confronting HR managers and explicating the contingent nature of paradox (e.g. Havermans, Den Hartog, Keegan, & Uhl-Bien, 2015) and by studying a context that is culturally highly diverse from Western cultures, as recent data has evidenced (Silva et al., 2015). The study clarifies the importance of developing contextual ambidexterity and to do so with local sensitivity. In other words, the tensions and dilemmas confronting managers in some contexts have a local component that cannot be discounted. As Silva et al. (2015) have pointed out, Angolan cultural patterns may not impede modern management but they certainly demand complex and non-obvious forms of synthesis between Western and indigenous knowledge. The challenge applies equally to local managers and to expatriates although for different reasons. Specifically, indigenous managers can benefit from adopting mainstream management practices in a way that suits their local stakeholders, the most important challenge being in how to use management best practice, whereas expatriates need to understand the context they are in. The HRM literature on paradox and ambidexterity is still scarce (Aust, Brandl, & Keegan, 2015) but the significance of a number of business drivers including internationalization, suggests that the preparation of HR managers to work productively with paradox will not decrease in relevance.

### ***Limitations and avenues for further research***

The design introduces some limitations. First, we aimed to collect data from a sample of managers operating at a variety of levels in a diversity of industries, in the public and the private sectors. The advantages of such an approach are obvious, but so are its disadvantages. We managed to overcome the boundaries of our personal networks, but the conclusions may be too broad to capture, with precision, the specific aspects of some particular type of leader (e.g. CEOs of private firms, leaders of state-owned companies). In addition, in this process of randomization, the data collection was conducted by a variety of different individuals. Differences

between interviewers may have resulted in a less than homogeneous approach to data collection. This heterogeneity has disadvantages but allowed us to collect managerial representations in a broader way, overcoming the borders of our potentially small networks. It, in other words, reduced the researchers' bias as well as some possible liabilities of foreignness related to the composition of the research team. It was this weighing of advantages and disadvantages that led us to select this approach in spite of the problems it posed.

A limitation belonging to a different order can also be considered: we tried to build knowledge from our informants, on the basis of their information and interpretation. To stay close to our intention we composed an insider–outsider research team and use a grounded theory approach that seeks to build theory from data rather than from preexisting theory. Nonetheless, the theories that framed our theorizing are dominated by a Western epistemology, which means that, at the end, we may not have escaped a 'universalizing' mode of theory building rather than a truly endogenous understanding of the topic (Jackson, 2013). Our Western management theories may fail to capture non-Western concepts and philosophies (Holtbrugge, 2013).

### ***Boundary conditions***

This study explored the presence of paradox in the ambidextrous leadership process. It did so by considering the case of Angolan managers. The challenges faced by these professionals incorporate specific and contextual elements. The study was conducted to discuss and problematize these specificities, but they nonetheless draw a boundary to the applicability and generalization of the conclusions. Before considering the applicability of the results to other settings, we should mention that institutional and social-psychological factors vary worldwide (Barkema, Chen, George, Luo, & Tsui, 2015; Smith & Bond, 1993) and that the social-historical-institutional conditions found here may combine general and specific facets that may apply to some contexts but not to others.

### **Conclusion**

As Andriopolous, Miron-Spektor, and Smith (2014) pointed out, paradoxical tensions 'provoke questions and confusion, encouraging both scholars and practitioners to pause and reflect'. We reflected about the contextual and a-contextual paradoxical dimensions confronting managers in Angolan companies, thereby contributing to the literature by integrating the usually separate literatures on paradox and contingency, with a focus on leadership. Angola is a transitioning economy, a contingency that adds texture and complexity to the inherent presence of paradox in the work of managing. We concluded that managers recognize the tensions, and that paradoxes appear as intriguing and possibly, sometimes, paralyzing. This may lead to the preference of selection over other, more fruitful

possibilities of articulating the poles of the paradox. We observed that some paradoxical features are associated with a-contextual elements belonging to the domain of the work of leadership, in general, whereas others seem to result from local conditions and institutions. The study points in two promising avenues for further research: a cross-cultural theory of organizational paradoxes confronting HRM, and the ambidextrous paradox work involved in the managerial profession.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## References

- Adler, N. J. (1997). *International dimensions of organizational behavior* (3rd ed.). Cincinnati, OH: South-Western.
- Ahammad, M. F., Lee, S. M., Malul, M., & Shoham, A. (2015). Behavioural ambidexterity – The impact of financial incentives on employee motivation, productivity and performance of commercial bank. *Human Resource Management*, 54, S45–S62. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21668>
- Amason, A. C. (1996). Distinguishing the effects of functional and dysfunctional conflict on strategic decision making: Resolving a paradox for top management teams. *Academy of Management Journal*, 39, 123–148.
- Anakwe, U. P. (2002). Human resource management practices in Nigeria: Challenges and insights. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 13, 1042–1059
- Andriopolous, C., Miron-Spektor, E., & Smith, W. K. (2014). Call for papers: Paradoxes and unreason: Provoking greater examinations into organizational life. *EGOS conference 2015*, Athens, Greece.
- Andriopoulos, C., & Lewis, M. W. (2009). Exploitation-exploration tensions and organizational ambidexterity: Managing paradoxes of innovation. *Organization Science*, 20, 696–717.
- Aram, J. D., & Walochik, K. (1996). Improvisation and the Spanish manager. *International Studies of Management and Organization*, 26, 73–89.
- Aust, I., Brandl, J., & Keegan, A. (2015). State-of-the-art and future directions for HRM from a paradox perspective. *Zeitschrift fur Personalforschung*, 29, 194–213. Introduction to the special issue.
- Barkema, H. G., Chen, X. P., George, G., Luo, Y., & Tsui, A. S. (2015). West meets East: New concepts and theories. *Academy of Management Journal*, 58, 460–479.
- Bartunek, J. M., & Louis, M. R. (1996). *Insider-outsider team research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bartunek, J. M., & Rynes, S. L. (2014). Academics and practitioners are alike and unlike: The paradoxes of academic-practitioner relationships. *Journal of Management*, 40, 1181–1201. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0149206314529160>
- Bergeron, D. M. (2007). The potential paradox of organizational citizenship behavior: Good citizens at what cost? *Academy of Management Review*, 32, 1078–1095.
- Bergstrom, O., Styhre, A., & Thilander, P. (2014). Paradoxifying organizational change: Cynicism and resistance in the Swedish armed forces. *Journal of Change Management*, 14, 384–404.
- Bloom, N., Lemos, R., Sadun, R., Scur, D., & Van Reenen, J. (2014). Jeea Fbbva lecture 2013: The new empirical economics of management. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 12, 835–876.

- Bock, A. J., Opsahl, T., George, G., & Gann, D. M. (2012). The effects of culture and structure on strategic flexibility during business model innovation. *Journal of Management Studies*, 49, 279–305.
- Brown, S. L., & Eisenhardt, K. M. (1997). The art of continuous change: Linking complexity theory and time-paced evolution in relentlessly shifting organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 42, 1–34.
- Burgess, N., Strauss, K., Currie, G., & Wood, G. (2015). Organizational ambidexterity and the hybrid middle manager: The case of patient safety in UK hospitals. *Human Resource Management*, 54, s87–s109.
- Cameron, K. S. (2008). Paradox in positive organizational change. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 44, 7–24.
- Cappelli, P., Singh, H., Singh, J., & Useem, M. (2010, May). The India way: Lessons for the U.S. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 24, 6–24.
- Cappelli, P., Singh, H., Singh, J., & Useem, M. (2015). Indian business leadership: Broad mission and creative value. *Leadership Quarterly*, 26, 7–12.
- Castilla, E. J., & Benard, S. (2010). The paradox of meritocracy in organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 55, 543–576.
- Clegg, S., Courpasson, D., & Phillips, N. (2006). *Power and organizations*. London: Sage.
- Clegg, S., Cunha, J. V., & Cunha, M. P. (2002). Management paradoxes: A relational view. *Human Relations*, 55, 483–503.
- Costanzo, L. A., & Di Domenico, M. L. (2015). A multi-level dialectical-paradox lens for top management team strategic decision-making in a corporate venture. *British Journal of Management*, 26, 484–506. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12073>
- Cunha, M. P., Neves, P., Clegg, S., & Rego, A. (2014). Organizational improvisation: From the constraint of strict tempo to the power of avant-garde. *Creativity and Innovation Management*, 23, 359–373.
- Cunha, M. P., Rego, A., & Vaccaro, A. (2014). Organizations as human communities and internal markets: Searching for duality. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 120, 441–455.
- De Vries, R. E., Pathak, R. D., & Paquin, A. R. (2011). The paradox of power sharing: Participative charismatic leaders have subordinates with more instead of less need for leadership. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 20, 779–804.
- Delmestri, G., & Greenwood, R. (in press). How Cinderella became a queen: Theorizing radical status change. *Administrative Science Quarterly*. Retrieved from <http://asq.sagepub.com/content/early/2016/04/01/0001839216644253.full.pdf+html>
- DeLong, T. J., & DeLong, S. (2011). The paradox of excellence. *Harvard Business Review*, 89, 119–123.
- Dibben, P., Brewster, C., Brookes, M., Cunha, R., Webster, E., & Wood, G. (2016). Institutional legacies and HRM: Similarities and differences in HRM practices in Portugal and Mozambique. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2016.1164225>
- Dibben, P., & Williams, C. C. (2012). Varieties of capitalism and employment relations: Informally dominated market economies. *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society*, 51, 563–582.
- Dobrow, S. R., Smith, W. K., & Posner, M. A. (2011). Managing the grading paradox: Leveraging the power of choice in the classroom. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 10, 261–276.
- Doz, Y. L., & Hamel, G. (1998). *Alliance advantage: The art of creating value through partnering*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (2000). Paradox, spirals, ambivalence: The new language of change and pluralism. *Academy of Management Review*, 25, 703–705.

- Farjoun, M. (2010). Beyond dualism: Stability and change as duality. *Academy of Management Review*, 35, 202–225.
- Feldman, M. (2000). Organizational routines as a source of continuous change. *Organization Science*, 11, 611–629.
- Fletcher, J. K. (2004). The paradox of post heroic leadership: An essay on gender, power, and transformational change. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15, 647–661.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972–1977*. New York, NY: Pantheon.
- Frynas, J., & Wood, G. (2006). The institutional basis of economic failure: Anatomy of the segmented business system. *Socio-Economic Review*, 4, 239–277.
- Gannon, M. J., & Pillai, R. (2013). *Understanding global cultures* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2012). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16, 15–31.
- Glaister, K. W., Ahammad, M. F., & Junni, P. (2015). Special issue of International Journal of Human Resource Management: Organizational ambidexterity and human resource practices. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 26, 1785–1789.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- Gloor, P. A., & Cooper, S. M. (2007). The new principles of a swarm business. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 48, 81–84.
- Goffee, R., & Jones, G. (2005, December). Managing authenticity: The paradox of great leadership. *Harvard Business Review*, 84, 86–94.
- Gomes, E., Sahadev, S., Glaister, A. J., & Demirbag, M. (2015). A comparison of international HRM practices by Indian and European MNEs: Evidence from Africa. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 26, 2676–2700.
- Hahn, T., Pinkse, J., Preuss, L., & Figge, F. (2014). Tensions in corporate sustainability: Towards an integrative framework. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 127, 297–316. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2047-5>
- Halevi, M., Carmeli, A., & Brueller, N. (2015). Ambidexterity in SBUs: Top management team integration and environmental dynamism. *Human Resource Management*, 54, s223–s238.
- Hall, P. A., & Soskice, D. (2001). *Varieties of capitalism: The institutional foundations of comparative advantage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hammond, M., Clapp-Smith, R., & Palanski, M. (2016). Beyond (just) the workplace: A theory of leader development across multiple domains. *Academy of Management Review*. Retrieved from <http://amr.aom.org/content/early/2016/03/16/amr.2014.0431.short>
- Havermans, L. A., Den Hartog, D. N., Keegan, A., & Uhl-Bien, M. (2015). Exploring the role of leadership in enabling contextual ambidexterity. *Human Resource Management*, 54(S1), s179–s200.
- Helmke, G., & Levitsky, S. (2004). Informal institutions and comparative politics: A research agenda. *Perspectives on Politics*, 2, 725–740.
- Hirschhorn, L. (1997). *Reworking authority*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Holtbrugge, D. (2013). Indigenous management research. *Management International Review*, 53, 1–11.
- Hooijberg, R. (1996). A multidirectional approach toward leadership: An extension of the concept of behavioral complexity. *Human Relations*, 49, 917–946.
- Horwitz, F. M. (2012). Evolving human resource management in Southern African multinational firms: Towards an Afro-Asian nexus. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23, 2938–2958.



- Horwitz, F. M. (2013). An analysis of skills development in a transitional economy: The case of the South African labour market. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 24, 2435–2451.
- Horwitz, F. M., & Smith, D. A. (1998). Flexible work practices and human resource management: A comparison of South African and foreign owned companies. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 9, 590–607.
- House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P., & Gupta, V. (2004). Culture, leadership, and organizations. The GLOBE study of 62 societies. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- House, R., Javidan, M., Hanges, P., & Dorfman, P. (2002). Understanding cultures and implicit leadership theories across the globe: an introduction to project GLOBE. *Journal of World Business*, 37, 3–10.
- Hundsnes, T., & Meyer, C. B. (2006). Living with paradoxes of corporate strategy: A complexity perspective. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 19, 437–446.
- Ibarra, H. (2015). The authenticity paradox. *Harvard Business Review*, 93, 53–59.
- Ingram, A. E., Lewis, M. W., Sarton, S., & Gartner, W. B. (2014). Paradoxes and innovation in family firms: The role of paradoxical thinking. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 40, 161–176. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/etap.12113>
- Iwowo, V. (2015). Leadership in Africa. Rethinking development. *Personnel Review*, 44, 408–429.
- Jackson, W. A. (1999). Dualism, duality and the complexity of economic institutions. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 26, 545–558.
- Jackson, T. (2012). Cross-cultural management and the informal economy in sub-Saharan Africa: Implications for organization, employment and skills development. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23, 2901–2916.
- Jackson, T. (2013). Reconstructing the indigenous in African management research: Implications for international management studies in a globalized world. *Management International Review*, 53, 13–38.
- Jansen, J. J., George, G., Van den Bosch, F. A., & Volberda, H. W. (2008). Senior team attributes and organizational ambidexterity: The moderating role of transformational leadership. *Journal of Management Studies*, 45, 982–1007.
- Jules, C., & Godard, D. (2014). Introduction to the special issue on paradox in context: Advances in theory and practice. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 50, 123–126.
- Junni, P., Sarala, R., Taras, V., & Tarba, S. (2013). Organizational ambidexterity and performance: A meta-analysis. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 27, 299–312.
- Junni, P., Sarala, R. M., Tarba, S. Y., Liu, Y., & Cooper, C. L. (2015). Guest editors' introduction: The role of human resources and organizational factors in ambidexterity. *Human Resource Management*, 54, s1–s28.
- Kamoche, K. (1992). Human resource management: An assessment of the Kenyan case. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 3, 497–521.
- Kamoche, K. (1997). Managing human resources in Africa: Strategic, organizational and epistemological issues. *International Business Review*, 6, 537–558.
- Kamoche, K. (2001). Human resource management in Kenya. In P. S. Budhwar & Y. A. Debrah (Eds.), *Human resource management in developing countries* (pp. 209–220). London: Routledge.
- Kamoche, K., Chizema, A., Mellahi, K., & Newenham-Kahindi, A. (2012). New directions in the management of human resources in Africa. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23, 2825–2834.
- Kamoche, K., & Cunha, M. P. (2001). Minimal structures: From Jazz improvisation to product innovation. *Organization Studies*, 22, 733–764.

- Kamoche, K., Debrah, Y., Horwitz, F. M., & Muuka, G. (Eds.). (2004). Preface. In *Managing human resources in Africa* (pp. xv–xiv). London: Routledge.
- Kets de Vries, M. F. R. (2001). The anarchist within: Clinical reflections on Russian character and leadership style. *Human Relations*, 54, 585–627.
- Kets de Vries, M. F. R. (2012). Star performers: Paradoxes wrapped in enigmas. *Organizational Dynamics*, 41, 173–182.
- Kets de Vries, M. F. R. (2015). Vision without action is a hallucination: Group coaching and strategy implementation. *Organizational Dynamics*, 44(1), 1–8. Retrieved from [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2439749](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2439749)
- Kiggundu, M. N., Jorgensen, J. J., & Hafsi, T. (1983). Administrative theory and practice in developing countries: A synthesis. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 28, 66–84.
- Lee, T. W., Mitchell, T. R., & Sablinski, C. J. (1999). Qualitative research in organizational and vocational psychology, 1979–1999. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 55, 161–187.
- Lewis, M. W., Andriopoulos, C., & Smith, W. K. (2014). Paradoxical leadership to enable strategic agility. *California Management Review*, 56, 58–77.
- Lincoln, E. G., & Guba, Y. S. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. London: Sage.
- Lindell, I. (2009). Glocal movements: Place struggle and transnational organizing by informal workers. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 91, 123–136.
- Luscher, L. S., & Lewis, M. S. (2008). Organizational change and managerial sensemaking: Working through paradox. *Academy of Management Journal*, 51, 221–240.
- Mangaliso, M. P. (2001). Building competitive advantage from Ubuntu: Management lessons from South Africa. *Academy of Management Executive*, 15, 23–33.
- Manz, C. C., Anand, V., Joshi, M., & Manz, K. P. (2008). Emerging paradoxes in executive leadership: A theoretical interpretation of the tensions between corruption and virtuous values. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 19, 385–392.
- Michalopoulos, S., & Papaioannou, E. (2015). On the ethnic origins of African development: Chiefs and pre-colonial political centralization. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 29, 32–71.
- Munene, J. C. (1991). Organizational environment in Africa: A factor analysis of critical incidents. *Human Relations*, 44, 439–458.
- Musacchio, A., Lazzarini, S. G., & Aguilera, R. V. (2015). New varieties of state capitalism: Strategic and governance implications. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 29, 115–131.
- Nemanich, L. A., & Vera, D. (2009). Transformational leadership and ambidexterity in the context of an acquisition. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 20, 19–33.
- Newenham-Kahindi, A. (2013). Managing sustainable development through cross-cultural management: Implications for multinational enterprises in developing countries. In A. Kahindi, K. Kamoche, A. Chizema, & K. Mellahi (Eds.), *Africa* (pp. 152–179). Palgrave: Basingstoke.
- Nicolini, D. (2009). Zooming in and out: Studying practices by switching theoretical lenses and trailing connections. *Organization Studies*, 30, 1391–1418.
- Nilsson, W. (2015). Positive institutional work: Exploring institutional work through the lens of positive organizational scholarship. *Academy of Management Review*, 40, 370–398.
- Nwankwo, S. (2012). Renascent Africa: Rescoping the landscape of international business. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 54, 405–409.
- O'Reilly, C. A., & Tushman, M. L. (2004). The ambidextrous organization. *Harvard Business Review*, 82, 74–83.
- Pache, A. M., & Santos, F. (2010). When worlds collide: The internal dynamics of organizational responses to conflicting institutional demands. *Academy of Management Review*, 35, 455–476.
- Phillips, N., & Lawrence, T. B. (2012). The turn to work in organization and management theory: Some implications for strategic organization. *Strategic Organization*, 10, 223–230.

- Poole, M. S., & Van de Ven, A. H. (1989). Using paradox to build management and organization theories. *Academy of Management Review*, 14, 562–578.
- Rajan, R. G., & Wulf, J. (2006). The flattening firm: Evidence from panel data on the changing nature of corporate hierarchies. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 88, 759–773.
- Rosing, K., Frese, M., & Bausch, A. (2011). Explaining the heterogeneity of the leadership-innovation relationship: Ambidextrous leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22, 956–974.
- Sarala, R. M., & Cooper, C., Junni, P., & Tarba, S. (in press). A socio-cultural perspective on knowledge transfer in mergers and acquisitions. *Journal of Management*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0149206314530167>
- Schuman, A., Stutz, S., & Ward, J. L. (2010). *Family business as paradox*. London: Palgrave.
- Seo, M., & Creed, W. E. D. (2002). Institutional contradictions, praxis, and institutional change: A dialectical perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 27, 222–247.
- Seo, M., Putnam, L. L., & Bartunek, J. M. (2004). Dualities and tensions of planned change. In M. S. Poole & A. H. Van de Ven (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational change and innovation* (pp. 73–106). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Sidaway, J. D., & Simon, D. (1993). Geopolitical transition and state formation: The changing political geographies of Angola, Mozambique and Namibia. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19, 6–28.
- Silva, T., Cunha, M. P., Clegg, S., Neves, P., Rego, A., & Rodrigues, R. (2014). Smells like team spirit: Opening a paradoxical black box. *Human Relations*, 67, 287–310.
- Silva, M. R., Roque, H. C., & Caetano, A. (2015). Culture in Angola: Insights for human resources management. *Cross Cultural Management*, 22, 166–186.
- Smith, K. K., & Berg, D. N. (1987). *Paradoxes of group life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Smith, P. B., & Bond, M. H. (1993). *Social psychology across cultures*. London: Prentice-Hall Europe.
- Smith, W. K., & Lewis, M. W. (2011). Toward a theory of paradox: A dynamic equilibrium model of organizing. *Academy of Management Review*, 36, 381–403.
- Smith, W. K., & Tushman, M. L. (2005). Managing strategic contradictions: A top management model for managing innovation streams. *Organization Science*, 16, 522–536.
- Stokes, P., Moore, N., Moss, D., Mathews, M., Smith, S. M., & Liu, Y. (2015). The microdynamics of intraorganizational and individual behavior and their role in organizational ambidexterity boundaries. *Human Resource Management*, 54, s63–s86.
- Sun, L. Y., Zhang, Z., Qi, J., & Chen, Z. X. (2012). Empowerment and creativity: A cross-level investigation. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 23, 55–65.
- Sutton, R. I., & Hargadon, A. (1996). Brainstorming groups in context: Effectiveness in a product design firm. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41, 685–718.
- Takeuchi, H., Osono, E., & Shimizu, N. (2008, June). The contradictions that drive Toyota's success. *Harvard Business Review*, 86, 96–104.
- Uzo, U., & Mair, J. (2014). Source and patterns of organizational defiance of formal institutions: Insights from Nollywood, the Nigerian movie industry. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 8, 56–74.
- Warner, N. (2007). Screening leadership through Shakespeare: Paradoxes of leader-follower relations in Henry V on film. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 18(1), 1–15.
- Xing, Y., Liu, Y., Tarba, S. Y., & Wood, G. (in press). A cultural inquiry into ambidexterity in supervisor-subordinate relationship. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2015.1137619>
- Yoon, S. J., & Chae, Y. J. (2012). Management of paradox: A comparative study of managerial practices in Korean and Japanese firms. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23, 3501–3521.

- Zhang, J., Ahammad, M. F., Tarba, S., Cooper, C. L., Glaister, K. W., & Wang, J. (2015). The effect of leadership style on talent retention during Merger and Acquisition integration: Evidence from China. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 26, 1021–1050.
- Zhang, Y., Waldman, D. A., Han, Y. L., & Li, X. (2015). Paradoxical Leader Behaviors in People Management: Antecedents and Consequences. *Academy of Management Journal*, 58, 538–566.
- Zoogah, D. B. (2008). African business research: A review of studies published in the Journal of African Business and a framework for enhancing future studies. *Journal of African Business*, 9, 219–255.
- Zoogah, D. B., Peng, M. W., & Woldu, H. (2015). Institutions, resources, and organizational effectiveness in Africa. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 29, 7–31.