

RECONSIDERATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL AMBIDEXTERITY: A DIALECTICAL MULTILEVEL APPROACH

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Abstract

Background. Organizational ambidexterity theories operate at one organizational level analysis or another, however we lack clear explanation for multilevel phenomena.

Research aim. The purpose of his paper is to clarify the understanding of organizational ambidexterity.

Method. This paper is based on the critical review of the literature.

Key findings. I draw on paradox management theory to present a conceptual model framed in contradictions as articulated by dialectical approach.

Keywords: Organizational ambidexterity, Dialectical dynamics, Multilevel approach, Systematic review

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INTRODUCTION

Birkinshaw, Healey, Suddaby, & Weber (2014, pp. 38-55) argue that our understanding of organizations and management is far from complete because as a students of social processes, we are working with a moving target. This article expands organizational ambidexterity research directions to keep up with the times. Since, in none of previous studies have researchers specifically identified the dialectical dynamics, and relatively few specified the multilevel approach, I do so below.

Nowadays, firms are strongly challenged by global competitive pressures in a context that often become unstable as a result of changes that are difficult to foresee. Ambidexterity has thus become increasingly central to enhance competitiveness because, it is by exploration and exploitation activities that firms succeed in addressing the needs of both the customers of today and tomorrow. The organizational ambidexterity referred to is that sustained success requires firms to both exploit and capitalize on existing capabilities and remain adaptive and flexible to changes by exploring new options (Lubatkin, Simsek, Ling, & Veiga, 2006, pp. 646-672). Consistent with general ambidexterity hypothesis (He & Wong, 2004, pp. 362-373) or premise (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008, pp. 375-409) ambidexterity can be beneficial in terms of financial performance and increased organi-

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zational durability. Although interest in the concept of organizational ambidexterity has increased during recent years, the line of inquiry remains unfocused and limited, due to a lack of more encompassing conceptual efforts. Curiously, organizational ambidexterity remains undertheorized, underconceptualizing, and therefore, poorly understood phenomenon (Gupta, Smith & Shalley, 2006, pp. 693-706).

In the organizational design literature, few topics have been the subject of so much attention as organizational ambidexterity. Despite this, I have argued that we have limited understanding of this construct. I “socialize” the organizational ambidexterity dynamics by introducing dialectical logic. In so doing, I concentrate on specific dialectical processes, explicitly, assuming that dialectics can provide organizational context concerning the management of the exploration and exploitation contradictions. I explain the importance of incorporating a multilevel approach into the definition and measurement of organizational ambidexterity. In particular, I outline the importance of developing measures that capture the dynamics nature of individual, team and organization ambidexterity. In addition, I consider whether the importance of exploration and exploitation changes over time. Finally, I outline how adapting the multilevel perspective of organizational ambidexterity offers a range of insides that are as yet unexplored, including the need to devote additional attention to examine cross-level relationships, which explore whether variables at two levels of analysis interact to predict ambidexterity.

I offer two contributions to literature:

1. By developing and applying a dialectic approach, I aim to gain a more valid account of organizational ambidexterity that can enrich research and practice.
2. By redefining and extending the concept of organizational ambidexterity, I propose a multilevel framework for modelling the construct as a hierarchical latent variable.

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to a greater clarity and understanding of the organizational ambidexterity concept, by indicating ways in which researchers can use a dialectical multilevel perspective. The structure of this paper is as follows. First, I briefly review extant literature and present an overview of the state-of-the-art in research addressing organizational ambidexterity. Second, based on the organizational dialectics and dynamic capability literature, I propose a new definition of the concept. Then a framework that specifies a more encompassing, multi-level explanation of ambidexterity is reported. I illustrate how the firms have been able to combine exploration and exploitation across individual, team, and organization levels. Finally, I trace research and managerial implications and suggest some potential research avenues. I especially



discuss promising avenues for future inquiries on multiple examinations of organizational ambidexterity.

REVIEW

The Dialectical Nature of Organizational Ambidexterity

Duncan (1976, pp. 167-188), perhaps the first researcher to coin the term 'ambidextrous organization' characterized ambidextrous organizations as composing of dual structures. This type of ambidexterity is called structural as it is achieved by separating exploitative and explorative activities in the organization. Simsek (2009, pp. 597-624) after critically reviewing previous research identified three conceptualizations of organizational ambidexterity: structural, behavioural and realized. Clearly, these are not the only paths through which organizational ambidexterity can be achieved, but they are three important ones. Structural ambidexterity refers to an organizational design or form containing structural sub-units, competencies, systems, incentives, processes, and cultures. The behavioural view defines organizational ambidexterity as the organization's behavioural capacity to simultaneously demonstrate alignment and adaptability as the organizational context which enables individuals to consider both exploitative and explorative aspects in their work. The more prevalent realized view describes organizational ambidexterity in terms of organizations exploitation and exploration attainments.

Following the idea of the realized definition of organizational ambidexterity, the construct is defined as the state of attaining high levels of exploitation and exploration. Such understanding explains what organizational ambidexterity consists of, while structural ambidexterity and behavioural ambidexterity refer to the methods, practices, processes, and orientation that an organization uses to attain organizational ambidexterity. Exploitation and exploration as two processual components setting the stage for my re-definition of organizational ambidexterity.

This realized view is applicable to the capability to operate in both mature markets and develop new products or services for emerging markets [He & Wong, 2004, pp. 362-373], simultaneous investments in the exploitation of existing product innovation capabilities and exploration of new ones (Atuahene-Gima, 2005, pp. 61-83), balance opportunity - seeking (exploration strategy) and advantage seeking (exploitation strategy) behaviours (Sirén, Kohtamäki, & Kuckertz, 2012, pp. 18-41), pursue exploratory and exploitative innovations simultaneously (Jansen, Van der Bosch, & Volberda, 2006, pp. 1661-1674), exploit existing competences as well as exploring new opportunities with equal dexterity (Lubatkin et al., 2006, pp. 646-672), achieve alignment and adaptability simultaneously within the organizational learning process (Ceggara-Navarro & Dewhurst, 2007, pp.



1720-1735), reconcile agility and stability (Vinekar, Slinkman, & Nerur, 2006, pp. 31-42), adaptive fluidity and efficient stability (Schreyögg & Sydow, 2010, pp. 1251-1262).

The literature on organizational dialectics might provide a good starting point to advance our understanding of organizational ambidexterity dynamics. Acceptance of dialectical dynamics viewing tensions as an invitation for organizational ambidexterity (Beech, Burns, de Caestecker, MacIntosh, & MacLean, 2004, pp. 1313-1332). Over recent years, an increasing number of researchers have adopted a dialectical perspective on organization, strategy and management (Benson, 1997, pp. 1-21; Bledow, Frese, Anderson, Erez, & Farr, 2009, pp. 305-337; Brown & Eisenhardt, 1998; Bratnicki, 2006; Farjoun, 2002, pp. 848-874; Levis, Welsch, Dehler, & Green, 2002, pp. 546-564; Seo & Creed, 2002, pp. 222-247). These studies highlight the richness and scope of a dialectical perspective of organizational ambidexterity. The stream of research summarized above converges towards the inference that organizational ambidexterity has dialectical logic.

Therefore, to explicate the organizational ambidexterity from a conceptual standpoint, I adopt a dialectic reasoning perspective. Dialectical dynamics emphasises the merits of both/and integration as opposed to either/or division; thus, the notion of paradoxical syntheses (and/or interdependence) of opposites [Jay, 2013, pp. 137-159]. Such a view of ambidexterity emphasises tensions and offers solutions to overcome these tensions in favour of higher order integration [Bledow, Friese, Anderson, Erez, & Farr, 2009, pp. 305-337]. Dialectic perspective argues that the tension between exploration and exploitation can be managed within the same organizational context because they are interdependent and intertwined.

From the dialectical perspective, the organization is divided into mutually complementing and contradicting elements. It means coexistence and tension between juxtaposed tendencies in objects and processes. Neither of the two contradictory forces can be removed; their coexistence stimulates continuous movement. Such contradiction reconciliation enables the development of the organization by finding novel ways of synthesizing opposites, but none of such reconciliations will ever be the ultimate, fixed solution.

Some initial evidence suggest that organizational dialectics is likely to be associated with organizational ambidexterity. Exploration and exploitation are associated with different organizational structure (Hjelmgren & Dubois, 2013, pp. 96-105). Boudreau and Lakhani (2009, pp. 69-76) suggest that there are two opposing generic design principles governing inputs to the innovation process with different dynamics, with respect to organizational member behaviour. Raish, Birkinshaw, Probst, and Tushman (2009, pp. 685-695) argued that ambidexterity comprises four central tensions: differentiation/integration; individual/ organizational; static/dynamic; and internal/external.



An ambidextrous firm accommodates the opposing orientations of exploitation and exploration. Existing research suggests organizational ambidexterity as organization's capability (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009, pp. 696-717; Bodwell & Chermak, 2010, pp. 193-202; Cantarello, Martini, & Nosella, 2012, pp. 28-47; Im & Rai, 2008, pp. 1281-1296; Menguc & Auh, 2008, pp. 455-470; Luo & Rui, 2009, pp. 49-70) and even as a dynamic capability [Jansen, Tempelaar, Van den Bosch, & Volberda, 2009, pp. 797-811; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008, pp. 185-206]. Such capability is embedded in processes and actions that enable organizations to orchestrate resources and substantial capabilities to permit simultaneous exploitation and exploration. Indeed, what emerges is a clear agreement, apart from isolated cases, on the conceptual definition of organizational ambidexterity as an organization's capability.

The dynamic capabilities perspective has emerged as one of the most influential theoretical lenses in the study of strategic management over the past decade. Interest in dynamic capabilities stems from their potential influence on competitive advantage, the key outcome variable in dynamic capabilities theory (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997, pp. 509-533). A firm is said to have a competitive advantage when it enjoys greater success than current or potential competitors in its industry (Peteraf & Barney, 2003, pp. 309-323). Consistent with this conceptualization, superior firm performance relative to rivals commonly serves as an empirical indicator of competitive advantage. As such, dynamic capabilities can be viewed as 'strategic options' (Kogut & Zander, 1996, pp. 502-518) that allow firms to (re)shape their existing resource base when the opportunity or need arises.

Thus, rather than measuring a necessarily vague, generic dynamic capability, empirical researchers have been advised to carefully select a set of relevant business processes in which these capabilities exist to test their hypotheses (Gruber, Heinemann, Brettel, & Hungeling, 2010, pp. 1337-1356; Helfat & Peteraf, 2009, pp. 91-10; Helfat, & Winter, 2011, pp. 1243-1250). Although selecting a limited number of specific processes as proxies for dynamic capabilities may affect the universality of results, doing so is necessary for empirical research on dynamic capabilities to be practicable. It is through theoretical induction that such empirical research on specific types of dynamic capabilities 'sheds light not only on these specific processes, but also on the generalized nature of dynamic capabilities' (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000, p. 1108).

To begin with, in keeping with above discussion, I argue organizational ambidexterity as a dynamic capability. Such alternative conceptualization takes a temporally sensitive perspective, capturing differing combinations of exploitation and exploration and exploration in co-evolution with the species of organization's environment. Because of the organization's internal and external dynamics, an organization might constantly attempt



to reconcile exploitation and exploration, but may never achieve a lasting balance. Thus organizational ambidexterity might enable the organization to dynamically integrate, build, and reconfigure its strategic potential (resources and substantive capabilities).

My key methodological argument, following dialectic theory, is that organizational ambidexterity would not be achieved by finding some balance of exploration and exploitation, but by reconciling these components. Building on dialectical assumptions and following earlier definitions of organizational ambidexterity, I define organizational ambidexterity as organization's dynamic capability to reconciling exploration and exploitation. In summary, I posit here that organizations make use of dialectics to reconcile the contradictions between exploration and exploitation and pursue ambidextrous strategies.

Organizational Ambidexterity From A Multilevel Perspective

Aguinis and Edwards (2014, pp. 143-174) discuss seven methodological improvements that would stimulate important advancements in management research. One of them addresses incorporating multilevel design, measurement and analysis. Importantly, research to date has typically employed only one variable to explain organizational ambidexterity such as dual structure or behavioural context. Lacking integrative models spanning multiple level of analysis (Jensen, Van den Bosch, & Volberda, 2006; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008, pp. 375-409) previous studies thus far have not generated an overarching theory (Adler, Goldaftas, & Levine, 1999, pp. 43 - 68).

Raisch and Birkinshaw (2008, pp. 375-409) argued that the level of analysis is crucial in OA studies because OA can be examined at several different levels and the effects could be different. However, few studies have examined OA in teams (Huang & Cummins, 2011, pp. 669-699) or across individuals (Jasmand, Blazevic, & de Ruyter, 2012, pp. 20-37). It is important to examine whether the effects of OA are constant across different levels of analysis or whether they tend to accumulate at specific levels. What we have been missing so far, and what would be valuable, are studies that explicitly consider two or more levels of analysis simultaneously (see Jansen, Simsek, & Cao, 2012, pp. 1286-1303, for an exception).

Researchers have used organizational ambidexterity to analyse numerous significant organizational phenomena. Its importance has been noted across the levels of organization (Atuahene-Gima, 2005, pp. 61 - 83; He & Wong, 2004, pp. 362- 373; March, Sproull, & Tamuz, 1991, pp. 71-87; Wang & Rafiq, 2014, pp. 58-76), new venture (Fernhaber & Patel, 2012), team level (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004, pp. 209-226; Gilson, Mathieu, Shalley, & Ruddy, 2005, pp. 453- 470; Hirst, Zhu, & Zhou, 2012; Im, Montoya, & Workman, 2013, pp. 347-361; Taylor & Greve, 2006, pp. 723- 740), and in-



dividual level (Dover & Dierk, 2010, pp. 49-58; Mom, Van den Bosch, & Volberda, 2007, pp. 910-931; Rosing, Frese, & Bausch, 2011, pp. 956-974; Wang, Gibbons, & Heavey, 2014). Hence, these are conceptual reasons to believe that the logic underlying ambidextrous strategies can be extended to lower levels in an organization (Turner, Swart, & Maylor, 2013, pp. 317-332), including the team and individual levels. As a consequence, organizational ambidexterity subjects to individual volition, purpose, or will.

Raisch, Birkinshaw, Probst and Tushman (2009, pp. 685-695) posit that, in most cases, abilities and activities of individuals have an aggregate effect on the organizational ambidexterity. Ambidexterity has attracted increased attention at a managerial level of analysis. It is claimed that organizational ambidexterity is largely rooted in the managers ambidextrous behaviors (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2011, pp. 5-22; Taylor & Helfat, 2009, pp. 718-739). Research efforts in this stream have focused on the role of managers in organizational ambidexterity as such as transformational leadership (Nemanich & Vera, 2012, pp. 19-33), work locus of control, functional background and political skill (Wang & Gibbons, 2013), ability to deal with contradictory internal architectures (Tushman, Smith, Wood, Westerman & O' Reilly, 2010, pp. 1331-1366), shared vision and contingency rewards (Jansen, George, Van den Bosch & Volberda, 2008, pp. 982-1007), formal structural and personal coordination mechanisms (Mom, Van den Bosch, & Volberda, 2009, pp. 812-828), behavioural integration (Lubatkin et al., 2006, pp. 646-672); and finally joint impact of the CEO' and TMT (Cao, Simsek, & Zhang, 2010, pp. 1272-1296).

There is no unit of the organization, in other words, that only does one thing. We can resolve the ambidexterity "dilemma" at the organizational level, but we then create a new set of dilemmas at the operational unit level, with the unit managers having to decide for themselves what the relative balance should be between exploration and exploitation. This logic is then repeated down through the various levels

Again, this line of thinking suggests some important corollaries for research on ambidexterity. One is that ambidexterity is a "nested" concept, such that it transpires at multiple levels in the organization simultaneously. Organizations are, in Simon's (1962, pp. 467-482) famous phrase, nearly decomposable systems. If they were fully decomposable, the parts could each do their own thing without reference to each other. But the fact that they are nearly decomposable means that the parts have to build connective tissue with each other, which means that in an effectively managed organization there is likely to be some blend of exploration and exploitation at each level.

Although Gupta, Smith, and Shalley (2006, pp. 693-706) argue that it may be very difficult for an individual to excel at exploration and exploitation. Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004, pp. 209-226) prove that every indi-

vidual in an organization can concurrently deliver value to existing markets and also respond appropriately to a dynamic organization environment. Indeed findings reveal the individual ambidexterity of the shop-floor employees (Ajayi & Morton, 2013). Overall, this research suggests that individual-level analysis is an important perspective for studying organizational ambidexterity.

Therefore, in essence my framework posits that organizational ambidexterity is a three level construct which compounds organization ambidexterity, team ambidexterity, and individual ambidexterity. At all levels the framework specifies two components - exploration and exploitation. This formulation is broadly grounded in the multilevel approach, which suggest that exploration and exploitation reconciling processes can actually be achieved and maintained through a multilevel approach that integrates organization, team, and individual levels. The combination of the above three aspects is new: while there are many contributions that take into account one or two levels, to my knowledge only rare contributions address all three levels of organizational ambidexterity.

The recent review by Raisch and Birkinshaw (2008, pp. 375-409) called for ambidexterity research that examines multiple levels. Turner, Swart and Maylor (2013, pp. 317-332) use a systematic review to develop a research framework intellectual capital resources which specifies the mechanisms of ambidexterity across various levels of analysis - organization, group and individual. Smith (2009, pp. 338-343) proposed a dynamic approach to managing contradictions through differentiating and integrating. This differentiation and integration interplay to manage tensions can apply to different organizational ambidexterity levels. Andriopoulos and Levis (2009, pp. pp. 696-717) identify the same dialectic approaches at different levels. Their framework for examining exploitation-exploration tensions highlight three nested tensions, presented as paradoxes of innovation: personal drivers, customer orientation, and strategic intent. Managing these paradoxes involves a mix of integration and differentiation tactics. The identified tensions are interwoven across three levels and fuel virtuous cycles of ambidexterity. Blending integration and differentiation fosters this effect. The multilevel model of organizational ambidexterity I propose here has the same premise as these works.

One of the more pervasive and enduring principles of organizational design is that the optimal conditions for high performance are contingent on the attributes of the organizational context in which units operate (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Jansen, Simsek and Cao (2012, pp. 1286-1303) verify a cross-level model showing that the structural and resource attributes of the multi-unit organizational context significantly shape the relationship between unit ambidexterity and performance. Put simply, the unit ambidexterity - performance relationship is not invariant across structural



conditions of the organizational context. At the core of the model is the process of collective exploration and exploitation, which contrasts with the stance of methodological individualism. To be clear, I do not argue that it is held in check within a collective organizational standard of prudent reasonable behaviour.

I draw on this insight to identify two structural contingencies commensurate with the complexity of a multilevel setting: team ambidexterity which conditions individual ambidexterity, and organization ambidexterity as context shaping team ambidexterity. Some research incorporate contextual ambidexterity as a higher-order construct, consisting of exploration and exploitation as components (Atuahene-Gima, 2005, pp. 61-83; Wang & Rafiq, 2013). Following these ideas, such speculative deduction shows that the organizational ambidexterity is top-down hierarchical latent variable. Thus, while join Jansen, Simsek, and Cao (2012, pp. 1286-1303) in adapting the perspective that incorporates cross-level effects of specific attributes of organizational context, I propose a richer understanding, arguing that the ultimate effect can only be gained through a careful consideration of key interactions across organization, team, and individual levels.

DISCUSSION

My review indicates that much has been learned from previous research on organizational ambidexterity, but the topics remains ripe for additional research. Although numerous issues are yet to be explored (Simsek, Heavey, Veiga, & Souder, 2009, pp. 864-893; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008, pp. 375-409), I am encouraged by extant research on this important organizational construct. Motivated by the need to clarify the nature of the construct, I sought to provide a firm foundation for conceptualizing organizational ambidexterity. To the end, I believe my discussion of organizational ambidexterity as a hierarchical latent variable construct will help set the stage for what I hope will be new and exciting research on ambidexterity. I do not claim that this is a complete overview. However I am convinced that it has no systematic omissions or biases.

One of the most important contributions of this study is my finding that the organizational ambidexterity is highly dialectical and multilevel in nature. The resulting cross- fertilization of ideas and methodological approaches promises to develop new insights and invigorate the already vibrant canvas of research into organizational ambidexterity. In short, the dialectical model and multilevel model have, in fact, converged into the single framework. The inconsistent results in the literature – in past due to divergent methodological approaches, different study design, different construct operationalization, statistical issues, and non-comparable samples – may result from contingent factors that operate at multiple lev-



els. Therefore new theories of organizational ambidexterity should clearly explicate the causal relationships of direct and contingent factors at multiple and across organizational levels, and should therefore describe more precisely the boundary conditions (mediators and moderators) under which relationships between organizational ambidexterity and firm performance are valid.

Although extant research conceptualizes contextual ambidexterity as a multidimensional construct consisting of simultaneous exploration and exploitation (Menguc & Auh, 2008, pp. 455-470; Simsek, 2009, pp. 597-624), empirical work has largely deviated from the conceptual stance by treating exploration and exploitation as two different constructs using their interactions effect (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004, pp. 209-226) or aggregate dimension (He & Wong, 2004, pp. 362 - 373) as proxies of contextual ambidexterity. The misalignment between conceptualization and operationalization of contextual ambidexterity hinders its further development, possibly introducing bias to the understanding of the concept (Lubatkin, Simsek, Ling, & Veiga, 2006, pp. 646-672).

Like other models, my study has abstracted away a host of other issues, not because they are unimportant or uninteresting, but because they are outside of my key dynamic of interest: the dynamic, multilevel perspective on ambidexterity in organizations. Future research may shed light on how these issues may further complicate the punch line highlighted in my work. It is noteworthy as multilevel theory suggests that an important first step in examining my framework is to explicitly test my theoretical arguments that organizational ambidexterity is isomorphic across level. In this respect, I argue that all organizational members perceive ambidexterity along the same dimensions (exploration and exploitation) and that all organizational members consider organizational ambidexterity the same way (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000, pp. 3-90). As such, future research on organizational creativity should address the following issues: Is organizational ambidexterity isomorphic across levels of analysis? In other words, do organizational members, teams, and organizations consider organizational ambidexterity in terms of exploration and exploitation?

Another important implication that emerges from my multilevel approach to organizational ambidexterity is the need to examine relationships among organizational ambidexterity and its outcomes at three levels. Multilevel models postulate the relationships among variables apply at two or more levels (Rousseau, 1985). Chen, Bliese, and Mathieu (2005, pp. 375-409) argue that one of the first steps to developing a multilevel theory is to explicitly test the assumption of homology, which suggests that similar relationships exist between the parallel constructs across levels of analysis. Thus, it is essential to examine whether similar relationships exist between organizational ambidexterity and its outcomes across levels. Such



an analysis will allow us to determine whether the same outcomes are equally influenced across levels or whether distinct sets of organizational ambidexterity drive outcomes at three levels of analysis. Thus, future research questions should be addressed when considering organizational ambidexterity: Do reconciliation of exploration and exploitation predict the overall evaluation of organizational ambidexterity at all three levels of analysis?

My dialectical multi-level approach sets ambitious yet clear and specific directions to guide future research. It also expands what the scholarly consensus might consider as organizational ambidexterity. Others may disagree. In fact it is likely that almost every management scholar will disagree with one another or any aspect of my dialectical multi-level approach, or with many aspects thereof. In my question-focused-yet-eclectic-discipline, it may be especially difficult for advocates of one sub-area to engage in productive conversation over organizational ambidexterity issues with advocates of other areas (Koestler, 1971). The alternative ways in which we know organizational ambidexterity reflect advances in our science but also pose obstacles as they establish boundaries- in vocabularies, and/or topics- behind which knowledge is accumulated. Yet if such disagreements could ultimately stimulate clear and careful discussion about what the nature of organizational ambidexterity should be, I have achieved my purpose in writing this paper.

Responding to the call for more integrative and multilevel analyses on organizational ambidexterity, I advance a multilevel framework that concurrently extends and synthesizes research by specifying the dominant relationships between constructs at the organization, team and individual levels of analysis. In future, thorough examination of these interactive influences among these levels may be critical in gaining a more complete understanding of organizational ambidexterity. By recognizing the multidimensionality of this phenomenon, we can learn more about how organizations balance exploration and exploitation (Lavie, Stettner & Tushman, 2010, pp. 109-155). A related methodological challenge concerns the measurement of organizations efforts to reconcile exploration and exploitation. It may be worth exploring this point a little further, to have a sense of what you see, and thus to have a sense of what you see as important ways forward for organizational ambidexterity research and for the management discipline at large. Scholars can build on the firm ground of extant research when measuring and manipulating the organizational ambidexterity concept (Bratnicka, 2014).

The level of analysis of the study influenced the OA-performance relationship (Junni, Sarala, Taras, & Tarba, 2013, pp. 299-312). The results indicated that the influence of OA was consistently positive and significant at the firm level. There is a clear progression from weaker effects at lower



levels of analysis to stronger effects at higher levels. Specifically, at the individual and team levels, the performance effects of exploration and exploitation were insignificant. However, moving up to higher levels of analysis (the business unit, firm, and alliance) the effects increased to significant levels. This trend was consistent for both exploration and exploitation.

A possible explanation for this finding is that firms can create OA in several different ways, some involving separation and others integration, which in combination influence performance at the firm level. Also, it is possible that ambidexterity at higher organizational levels is needed to leverage individual and team-level OA (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004, pp. 209-226). All of this points to the nature of OA as a multilevel phenomenon (Birkinshaw & Gupta, 2013, pp. 287-298; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008, pp. 375-409). Saying that, I encourage future studies to focus on multiple levels of OA simultaneously to specify how linkages between OA at different levels contribute to performance.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, while my study builds on the general ambidexterity premise, I believe that my dialectical, multilevel framework represents a much needed fulcrum from which additional insights can be leveraged to examine an organizational ambidexterity at the organization, team, and the individual level. It contributes to research and managerial understanding of how organizations may reconcile exploration and exploitation, while providing novel insights into the multilevel nature of organizational ambidexterity. It also reveals that ambidexterity plays a more complex role in organizational life that might be immediately assumed. In the end, I hope that I have begun to pave the way for a more complete understanding of this construct.

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NOWE SPOJRZENIE NA OBUSTRONNOŚĆ ORGANIZACYJNĄ: DIALEKTYCZNE PODEJŚCIE WIELOPOZIOMOWE

Abstrakt

Tło badań. Badania obustronności organizacyjnej prowadzone są zazwyczaj na jednym poziomie analizy, brakuje natomiast jasnego wyjaśnienia tego konstruktów jako zjawiska wielopoziomowego.

Cele badań. Głównym celem niniejszego opracowania jest przedstawienie krytycznego przeglądu literatury z punktu widzenia definiowania, identyfikowania, a także wykorzystywania pojęcia obustronności organizacyjnej.

Metodyka. W pracy zastosowano krytyczną analizę literatury przedmiotu.

Kluczowe wnioski. Bazując na koncepcji zarządzania paradoksami, zaprezentowano konceptualny model zbudowany wokół sprzeczności dialektycznych.

Słowa kluczowe: obustronność organizacyjna, dialektyczna dynamika, wielopoziomowe podejście, systemowy przegląd

